International Cultural Exchange

BELIZE 2019
Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator

International Cultural Exchange 2019 Belize

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The mission of Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator, inc. is to promote, nurture and cultivate the vision and diverse talent of emerging artists from the Caribbean and Latin Diaspora through our exhibition programs, artist-in-residence programs, international exchange programs and educational and outreach activities that celebrate Miami-Dade’s rich cultural and social fabric.
Under the shade (Without a shadow)

This year, our first International Cultural Exchange to Belize took its inspiration from the country’s motto “Sub Umbra Florero” meaning “under the shade we flourish.” According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, “the Latin motto is a reference to the area’s forest and its establishment as colony under British protection.” While we visited the Image Factory Art Foundation gallery space in the heart of Belize City, its co-founder Yasser Musa stated in his introductory remarks, “Belize has 5,000 years of art practice.” It was a reminder that Belize was the center of Maya civilization. The Maya developed architecture, calendrical systems and hieroglyphic writing. They were also known for elaborate and highly decorated ceremonial architecture, including temples, palaces and observatories. The Maya were equally skilled as weavers and potters and cleared routes through the jungles and swamps to establish trade networks with distant people.

During our seven-day International Cultural Exchange, we navigated the contemporary art scene and verified the pertinence of Musa’s statement. From Belize City to San Ignacio to Santa Elena to Dangriga, we traveled an art route designed by Adrienne Chadwick, our expert collaborator on the ground, and Rosie-Gordon Wallace, DVCAI’s founding president. The itinerary highlighted the diversity and vibrancy of the art landscape.

Musa captured the essence of the 2010 project with its further observations. He declared that as a trans-shipment space, Belize is situated at the intersection of Guatemala and Senegal, referencing the forced migration of Africans to Central America during the slave trade and the encounter with the Amerindians. By traveling to Central America DVCAI purposely problematized the multiplicity of the Diaspora’s restless migratory patterns since their removal from Africa served as a backdrop to the trip. Following remarks, “Belize has 9,000 years of art practice.” It was a reminder that Belize was the center of Maya civilization. The Maya developed astronomy, art e-magazine BAFFU. The institution is interdisciplinary in its approach: it is open to art activations. We networked with members of Belize Soul Project, Wildfire Artmosphere and the Image Factory Art Foundation. Located also in San Ignacio, Belize Soul Project comprises a bar, an art gallery and hotel. The owner, local artist, film maker and conservationist, Daniel Velazquez shows edgy art. During our visit Velazquez was joined by an American anthropologist he had just collaborated with on a Garifuna culture documentary. The founder of the Cayo Film Festival, Velazquez has directed several films. Stephanie Willis and Virginia Hampton, founders of the theatre company Vampire, manage Wildfire Artmosphere, a collaborative space for theatre, performance and visual arts. We caught an Intergenerational aerobic dance class the day we called on.

Central America, young local artists chose to collectively exhibit their work beyond the national borders. Starting locally with exhibitions in Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Cuba, the movement reverberated transnationally and traveled to the USA, Spain, Portugal and Taiwan. Currently, the dissemination of and management of art is left to state-sponsored entities on the one hand and artist-run organizations on the other hand. Armed with two years of training in Taiwan, artist and curator Ilona Smiling provides leadership at the Museum of Belize. Additionally, houses of culture (HOCs), found throughout the country, and the St John’s College offer a substantive art curriculum at the elementary and post-secondary education level. Under the umbrella of the National Institute of Culture and History, the HOCs like the one we visited in San Ignacio, are meeting points where neighbors, residents and students come together and are provided their own inspiration and uplift through cultural activities.

Parallel to the state-sponsored bodies there are several artist-operated organizations. We networked with members of Belize Soul Project, Wildfire Artmosphere and the Image Factory Art Foundation. Located also in San Ignacio, Belize Soul Project comprises a bar, an art gallery and hotel. The owner, local artist, film maker and conservationist, Daniel Velazquez shows edgy art. During our visit Velazquez was joined by an American anthropologist he had just collaborated with on a Garifuna culture documentary. The founder of the Cayo Film Festival, Velazquez has directed several films. Stephanie Willis and Virginia Hampton, founders of the theatre company Vampire, manage Wildfire Artmosphere, a collaborative space for theatre, performance and visual arts. We caught an Intergenerational aerobic dance class the day we called on.

The Image Factory Art Foundation is the nerve center of the art world in Belize under the leadership of its visionary director Yasser Musa a talented poet, visual artist and art instructor. The Foundation’s mission is the promotion, exhibition and documentation of Belizean art. Situated in Belize City, the gallery space hosts exhibitions, performances and other art-related gatherings. To date, it has released Landings: New Art and Ideas from the Caribbean and Central America 2000-2010 (2010), a two-book set Binomium (2015) and Bembe Vision: Leadership Notes for the Belizean Classroom (2018), a book dedicated to prominent Belizean women. Also, the Factory publishes an art e-magazine BAFFU. The institution is interdisciplinary in its approach: it is open to spoken word artists who shared their work with DVCAI along with visual art members during a talk.

In Dangriga, the Garifuna culture heartland, we visited the Gulu Garifuna Museum and met with independent artists (photographer Tony Rath, Alice Bowman a scrap artist and Crystal Lopez) for a talk at the Ignacja Cacho library. We visited Pan Cayetano’s studio gallery too.

Challenging the concept of national identity, in a provocative Ted Talk presentation writer and photographer Taiye Selasi suggests, “Don’t ask where I’m from, ask where I’m local.” DVCAI felt quite at home in Belize among art practitioners. Across borders, thematically speaking some of the concerns are similar. Both groups presented environmentally-themed work as well as social commentary pieces. Tony Rath, Alice Bowman and Adriennes Chadwick advance an ecological discourse that addresses the erosion of the organic ecosystem and traditional ways of life for the benefit of real estate and land developers and consumers obsessed with greed. Michael Barber, Kevin Byzer, Pierre Obando, Iza Lindsay raise the question of the pertinence of a Caribbean identity. How does one create or use existing symbols to construct marking traits recognizable by all? Ilona Smiling and Devarah Perez break boundaries and subvert.

Briheda Haylock, Gayla Lopez and Carol-Anne McFarlane underscore the emotional, psychological and physical violence visited on women. Additionally, they examine other gender issues such as cat calling, patriarchy, misogyny, homophobia and heterosexism. Rosa Nadya Garmanda, Aloha Tandiwe Bell, Kurt Nahar, Michael Elliot and Katie Numi Usher comment on social political ills disenfranchised constituents are faced with. The artists consider the impact of racism, (neo) colonialism, police brutality, dictatorship and corruption on the black and brown subjects. Most use a feminist, gender or intersectional lens.

These points of connection as well as questions concerning the politics of the visual, of aesthetic, of seeing and visibility in Belize which we started debating predicts richer conversations as we anticipate returning to the country in the future.

Alix Pierre, Ph.D., Spelman College, Scholar-in-residence
Belize City
Belize City is a port city in the Central America of Belize. It is divided into north and south sides the Haulover Creek, which opens into the Caribbean Sea.
Museum of Belize
The Museum of Belize is an art and history Museum in Belize City, Belize. Built between 1854-1857 as a “Her Majesty’s Prison, while the area was still a British Colony, it was a replacement for a wooden prison nearby, until 1993. In 2002 it was restored and renovated into a national museum.
CRUELTY TOWARDS THE SLAVES

At Honduras 1820-1825 Superintendent Colonel C. J. W. O. Jones documented the harsh treatment of slaves by the master. In them, where there were established slave codes, the British's slave laws of Jamaica were enacted in 1821. Slaves in the settlement of 'British' Honduras.

In 1821, a man called 'Man', owner of his 400 slaves called 'Mansfield'. He had his woman called 'Kitty' and her two children. One day, one of the children was killed by a slave. Kitty was found guilty of murder and was sentenced to death. As punishment, Kitty was made to stand in front of a crowd of people and was shot in the head. After the shooting, Kitty was cut open with a knife and her heart was shown to the crowd. Kitty was then beheaded and her head was placed on a pole. 

In 1825, Kitty was sentenced to death. The judge ordered her to be robbed of all her belongings and to be burned alive. As Kitty was dragged to the criminal court, she was met with a large crowd who was angry at the judge for sentencing her to death. Kitty was then tied up and her head was placed on a pole. Kitty was then burned alive and her body was left to rot in the sun. Kitty was then buried in a hole, and a stone was placed on top of it. Kitty's name is now remembered as a symbol of the brutality of the slave trade.
Gulisi Garifuna Museum
Dangriga, Belize.
Dangriga-Belize
Formerly known as Stan Creek Town, is a town in southern Belize on the Caribbean coast.
Aisha Tandiwe-Bell

Chasing the Crown

Flags in blue

"Perception of the shortest distance"

Onajide Shabaka

"Jaguar power self-inflicted assaults"

"map (grey-white) coveted worlds"

"map (tricolour) coveted worlds"
Michael Elliott.

'Deportees'

'May day and the man overboard'

Kurt Nahar

'Bleach 1'

'The Right identity WRONG PASSPORT
The Right FACE WRONG SOAP
The Right LANE WRONG PLACE

The right face wrong soap
Alix Pierre Ph.D teaches at Spelman College in The Department of African Diaspora and the world and World Language and Literature. His research interest is in the artistic response of people of African decent to the state of diglossia in a (neo) colonial context. He is on the editorial board of the Caribbean Vistas Journal: Critiques of Caribbean Arts and Culture and Negritude: Journal of Afro Caribbean Studies. His publications have appeared in several journals and he is the author of L’image der la femme résistance chez quatre romancières noires: vision diasporique de la femme en résistance chez Maryse Conde, Simone Schwarz-Bart, Toni Morrison et Alice Walker (PAF: 2014).
Roy Wallace

Photographer and Logistic Manager, Roy travels with the DVCAI team and provides technical assistance across a broad spectrum of needs ranging from installations to exhibition space reconfigurations. As an integral part of the traveling team his skill set is a reliable resource that everyone has access to. Photographic documentation is an extremely important component of DVCAI’s operational requirement, and his attention to those details provides representative imagery when and where it’s needed.

“I produce my images in response to the demand to be an image, and yet it is a decentering act: total subject; there is full awareness of self.” Photography is one of Roy’s passion and he’s committed to details and he’s constantly thriving to being better.

Born in Jamaica, moved to Miami Florida in his early teenage years, he’s an avid tennis player and coach. Educated at the University of Florida and Florida International University, he’s a core member of the DVCAI team.

Rosie Gordon-Wallace

Rosie Gordon-Wallace’s professional background belies her current passion. Knowing her just a few years ago, one might never have guessed that this licensed medical microbiologist and former senior consultant for Searle Pharmaceuticals from 1981-1999 is now the founder and senior curator of Diaspora Vibe Gallery and Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator, one of the most talked about art incubator spaces in Miami.

Gordon-Wallace, always a passionate lover of art, made up her mind in 1996 to devote herself full time to the gallery she created and developed. Diaspora Vibe Gallery, which specializes in Caribbean and Latin American Art with an emphasis on exhibiting emerging artists, supports the development of new work by resident artists by offering workshops and other skill building opportunities for young artists. The gallery also provides educational and outreach programs for the community.

In the past, Rosie Gordon-Wallace has been awarded The African Heritage Cultural Arts Center 3rd Annual Calabash Amahlo! Visual Arts Award, International Businesswoman of the Year, One of South Florida’s 50 Most Powerful Black Professionals of 2007, The Images and Voices of Hope: What works: From Inspiration to Action award, The Champion of the Arts Award, The Red Cross Spectrum Award for Culture, The Women in International Trade Businesswoman of the Year award, and the Miami Beach Black Advisory Board Award for Arts and Culture. Diaspora Vibe Gallery also partners with the Florida Center for Literary Arts’ “One Community One Book” initiative, which sponsored a Conversation with Edwidge Danticat at Diaspora Vibe Gallery. The gallery featured artists Adrienne Chadwick Francesca Lalanne, and Hubert Neal, Jr. in “Juxtaposition”; Asser St Val and Rosa Nadya Garmenta and Onajide Shabaka during Art Basel and installation artist Jacquenette Arnette and Suriname artist, Kurt Nahar. http://www.dvcai.org

In addition, Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator, Inc. the not-for-profit arm of DVG was awarded an Andy Warhol Visual Arts Initiative award, Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, The Dade Community Foundation, The Carl & Toni Randolph Charitable Fund at Dade Community Foundation, The Buddy Tad Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, and the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs. Funds support The Caribbean Crossroads Series from May through October, the International Cultural Exchanges, artists in residence programs and the "Off The Wall Experimental Series" and Educational series.

A community activist, she is dedicated to women’s issues and causes, and of course, the artists she mentors, supports and nurtures. She is a frequent public speaker and has served as a grant panelist for The State of Florida, The National Performance and Visual Artists Network, The Knight Foundation and the Department of Cultural Affairs Miami and Los Angeles. She is married to artist’s advocate and photographer Roy Wallace. Rosie served on many non-profit boards, The Adrienne Arsht Center for Performing Arts, Miami Dade College Art and Design Museum, National Performance Network| Visual Arts Network, Bayshore Lutheran Church and Design and Architecture High School.
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Adrienne Chadwick-Artist-Liaison.
Rosie Gordon-Wallace-Curator (Team Leader)

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Ilona Smiling-Curator

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Dwayne Munro-Artist.
Kyo D’Assissin-Artist.
Lucy “The Grandmaster” Young-Artist.
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Panco Lopez-Artist.

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