

KIM YANTIS, INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL EXCHANGE JOURNAL
Belize, March 30- April 7, 2022



Kim Yantis, ***Stone Nexus (Altun HA)***, Digital Collage, 2022
Created while participating with Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator, ***Under the Shade Without a Shadow II.***



Kim Yantis- International Cultural Exchange Journal

Day 1, March 30, 2022

Belize City Travel- The travel morning was quite relaxed as we had several hours to reflect on the meeting the previous night. We had the opportunity to get to know each other, as several artists were interacting with the group for the first time. Guests at the dinner on March 29th included Miami artists who had previously attended cultural exchanges with DVCAI. They shared their experiences and we discussed the flow and expectations. The importance of working on the artist journal and presenting to other artists was stressed. After arrival in Belize Airport, we worked with a slower pace system of customs and transportation arrangements.

Encounters: Captain Hook seafood restaurant flanked by “After The Storm” and a land stored boat.

I’m immediately struck by the differences in infrastructure - decayed roads, a mix of solid and temporary housing structures, some homes without plumbing and electricity, pockets of wealth mixed with pockets of poverty. It is my second visit to the Caribbean where I’m starting to understand what a non-US complex space looks and feels like.

Visual Notes and Textures: Exiting the airport, I noticed familiar surroundings including coastal sea grape and mangrove environments, connected to Miami visually, these are the same natural elements that I’m studying currently.

At dinner at the local restaurant, Captain Hook, I began a series of surface photos on the I-phone, collecting images that captured intersections of manmade and natural patches, areas of underbrush, looking through manmade barriers that separated (and often were overcome by) plants, animals, fields, and bodies of water.

Background and Histories: blackpast.org- Belize City was originally founded at “Belize Town” in 1638 by English lumber harvesters. Belize Town was ideal for these businessmen as a port and commercial center because it had a good harbor which was the natural outlet for a network of rivers and creeks which could be used to transport lumber from the interior. By the 20th Century Belize Town was inhabited by a number of groups in addition to the former slaves (Great Britain freed all slaves in its overseas colonies in 1833). They included both English and Spanish residents, some Chinese, Lebanese, and people from India. There were also significant numbers of Mayan Indians in the city. The Garifuna were some of the more recent arrivals in Belize City although they had lived in British Honduras for some time. The Garifuna (or Black Carib) were the descendants of Africans and Native Americans. Originally inhabitants of the islands in the eastern Caribbean, they were relocated by the British to the coastal regions of British Honduras in the mid-19th Century.



KIM YANTIS, WORKING COLLAGE #1- follow up with sketchbook ideas to create as series of image grids, with mirror pattern repeats.
 The content contextualizes natural and manmade, man controlled environments, and perceived realities about coexistence.
 (materials could include hand dyed, patterned cloth, drawings and cloth collage)

Day 2, March 31, 2022 (Kim Yantis Artist Presentation)

Day two began with a morning breakfast where we discussed the day's plan- Museum of Belize, Bliss Center, a Mural then Artist presentations on Zoom. Busy day ahead!!! It's an incredible waking up in a new place post-pandemic, feeling peaceful and safe, yet anxious to start the day.

Museum of Belize Floor 1 was a historic exhibition that highlights the country's origins and impacts of slavery in the region. One of the most interesting conversations that I experienced here was the candor of staff who realise that their infrastructure is in jeopardy- in a space where tourism and the history of oppression have a higher value than contemporary conversation of the effects of slavery on the community.

Discussion with Roy Wallace (and Michael Elliott and Vanessa Greene) at the first floor exhibitions was really impactful to me. Roy spoke about the fact that he is only standing here to today because someone in his family survived the middle passage.

Floor 2 was of the contemporary survey of Belizean painter Pen Cayetano, who is living and working in Germany. The paintings were from a wide range of the artist's career. Lots to enjoy- it was a painting show that showed how connected the artist was to his subject matter, a passionate view of the people and landscapes. I dialogued with curator on the challenges of presenting contemporary artwork in historic sites, we spoke for about 20 minutes on the topic. I mentioned that I work in textiles and was invited behind the scenes to see pieces from the deinstalled Mayan artwork collection.

Visual Notes and Textures:

Noting the hewn wood, darkness, rusted iron, coldness, hardness (EnSlaved Exhibition). Local artists were commissioned to depict slavery, a task that must have been very emotionally loaded. The historic Mayan, cotton textiles were in forms that have endured.

Background and Histories: The Museum Of Belize <https://belizing.com> Museum of Belize is an art and history museum. Located in Belize City, this museum was built between the years of 1854 and 1857. It served as a colonial prison and now functions as a history museum with both historic and contemporary exhibitions.



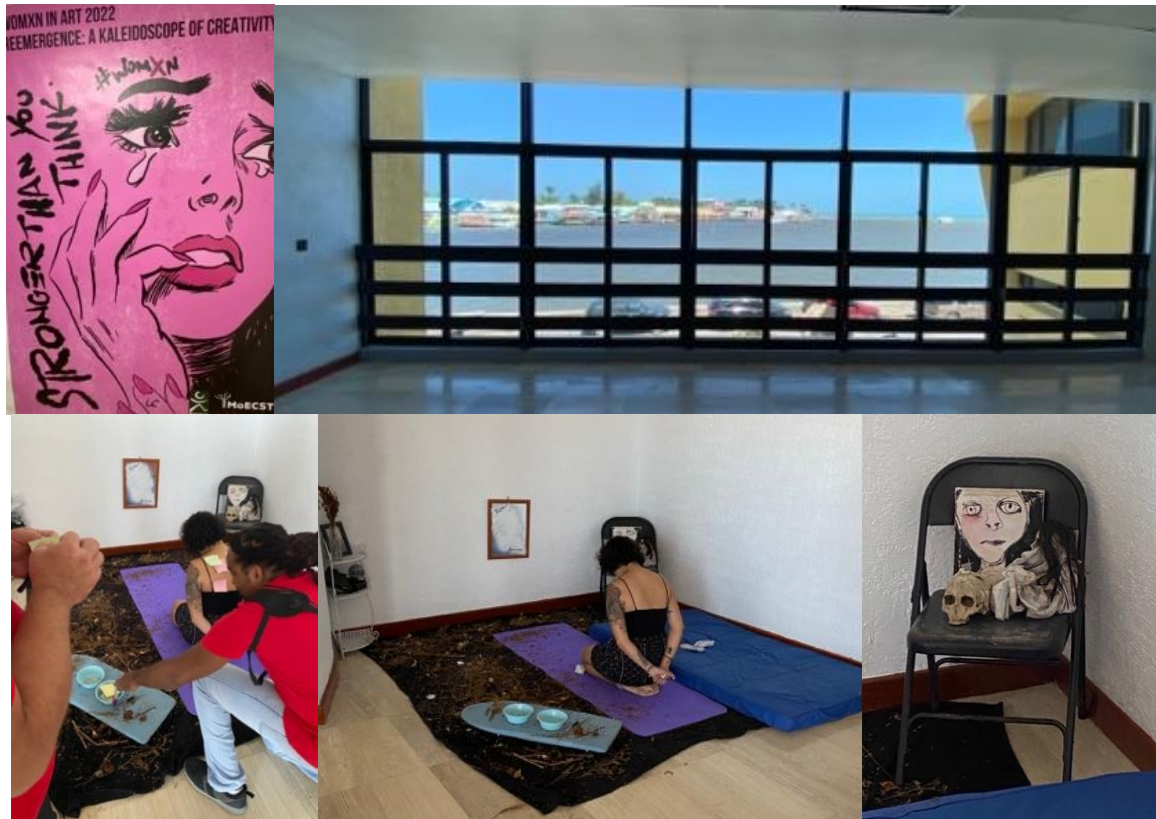
Floor 2- Viewed artworks by Belizean artist Pen Cayetano, over 80 artworks.



Historic Mayan textiles were brought out so I could view. I was amazed at this behind the scenes experience.



AFTERNOON- Visited Bliss Center for the Arts for an exhibit tour and performance by artist Briheda Haylock
Toured a mural in progress for Mr. Program, a murdered performer / rapper from a gang controlled area of Belize city.





Day 3, Friday, April 1, 2022

Woke up completely groggy, took time for stretching and reflection. Went back to Captain Hooks! This business was in the midst of sustainable shrimp farm and fishery, and pool recreation area, where natural flow water mitigation, solar power and ecological awareness introduced us to a true cultural mixture of an expat Canadian family who worked on a generations old family business on the wife's side, where Kekchi chef, creole sous chef and indigenous servers created a lovely atmosphere for the DVCAI evening convenings. Had ZOOM for the DVCAI photographers, Roy, Vanessa, Michael. The evening conversation examined how our interactions had changes as they were primarily presented on ZOOM. We needed to find time and space to dialog with each other and to practice our artist presentations to get feedback from the group.

Visual Notes and Textures:

I took many images that made me reflect on my practice of creating visual patterns. The themes discussed with the owner and sustainable models was really impactful to me. Rope and shells (decorative) protecting a man-made canal with Mangrove, and palm growth, flanked by a vast manmade lake for shrimp farming. (See collage image page 2) This image seems a perfect to represent Creolity Layered tones and natural plant life. Sampling of ecosystems Cut and reconfigurd by man, , Codependant forms. FOLLOW UP WITH PROJECTIONS AND SKETCHES OF THIS IMAGE.



Day 4, Saturday April 2, 2022

Started at Mexican Consulate for an exhibition by Cuban born artist who has been living in Belize for three years.

Encounters and Visual Notes: Artist had the opportunity to present three distinct projects in the space.

This seemed and unusual way of working to me, but each area held its own.



We traveled to Altun Ha, a Mayan ruin several hours away. This was absolutely transformative for me. The climbing of the Temples, learning about the site form a wonderful guide of Indigenous heritage, feeling/ experiencing the sacredness of the space.

Visual Notes and Textures:

Through the explanations and histories given by the guide, I visualized the ancients climbing the temples. Female priestess would take and herbal hot bath, let blood as a sacrifice, and ascend the temple using their blood as a burnt offering. Male priests then do the same ritual.

THE COTTON TREE! Growing within the compound.

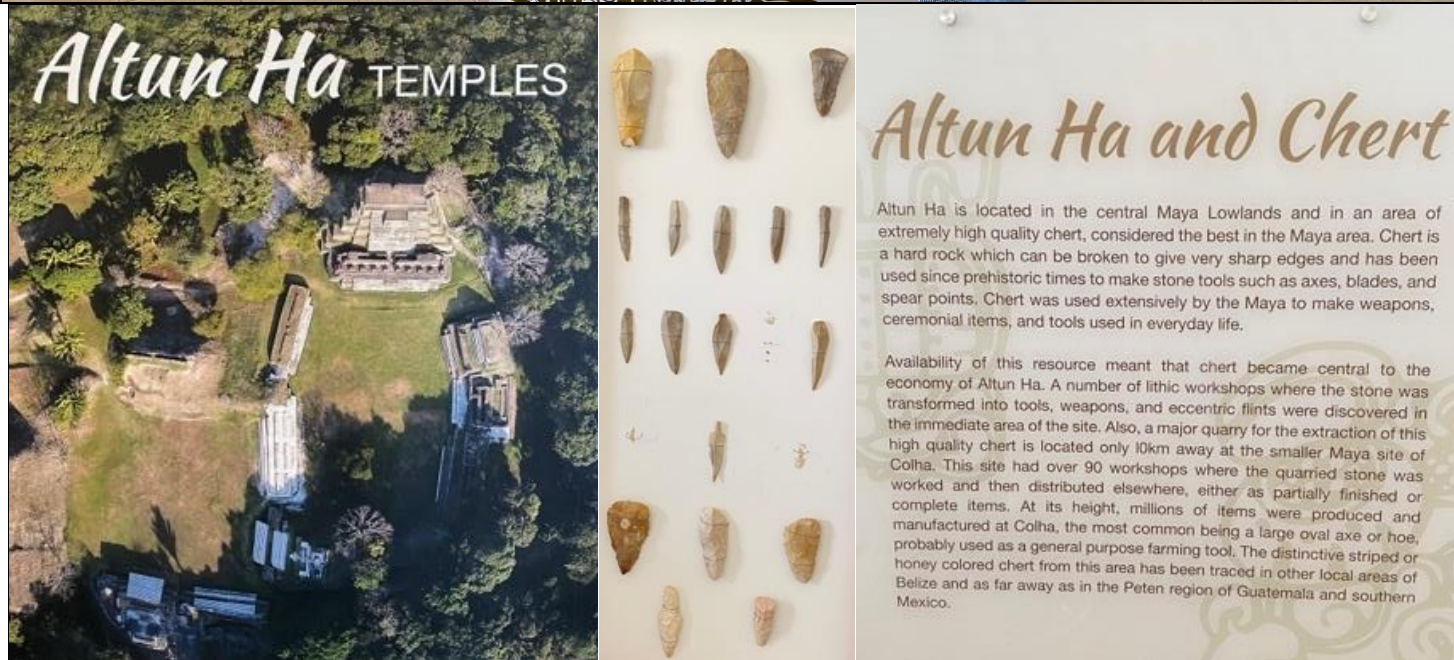
Used by ancient hands for weaving ceremonial garments, and touched by me today.

Background and Histories:

National Tree Mahogany , National Flower Black Orchid, and National Animal Tapir.







Believe it or not we went to a full two hour performance that the Bliss Center for the Arts, Multigenerational performance in dance music, Pure joy seeing children perform and families celebrating! Met

Background and Histories (continued):

- Altun Ha, which means “Rockstone Pond”, is located 31 miles north of Belize City on the Old Northern Highway. This site is rich with wildlife: hundreds of species of birds, crocodiles in the ancient reservoir, armadillos, bats, squirrels, tapirs, and more have all been spotted at this site. Altun Ha was a ceremonial site that has two main temples and 13 additional structures. Located near the Caribbean Sea, it was part of a network of other sites near the coast. The discovery of tombs at the site indicates that Altun Ha was inhabited by the elite ruling class. Another interesting feature of this site is the reservoir which was made by the ancient people. The bottom of the reservoir contains yellow clay, which hardened to form a base that retains water.
- Q’eqchi’ (/q’eqʃiʔ/) (K’ekchi’ in the former orthography, or simply Kekchi in many English-language contexts, such as in Belize) are a Maya people of Guatemala and Belize. Their indigenous language is the Q’eqchi’ language. Before the beginning of the Spanish conquest of Guatemala in the 1520s, Q’eqchi’ settlements were concentrated in what are now the departments of Alta Verapaz and Baja Verapaz. Over the course of the succeeding centuries a series of land displacements, resettlements, persecutions and migrations resulted in a wider dispersal of Q’eqchi’ communities into other regions of Guatemala (Izabal, Petén, El Quiché), southern Belize (Toledo District), contemporary Q’eqchi’ language-speakers are the most widely spread geographically of all Maya peoples in Guatemala.

Day 5, Sunday April 3, 2022

One of the most important exchanges for my practice came from the individual moments of speaking one on one with younger/ emerging artist who joined in the program. Very often, as a mature artist, I work in more of a solitary production which is against my nature. The pandemic has further deepened this sense of isolation. I feel hesitation is starting new projects, and have frozen in the artmaking process. These dialogs have brought up many emotions, including the insidious habit of devaluing my artistic practice, pushing it into the background. This resets such as this are really vital to my wellbeing, work and imagination. Had barbeque prepared by our driver guide Tony. It was an incredible generous gesture he spent hours cooking for 12 people., preparing traditional Belizean foods

Visual Notes and Textures:

HAD TO STICHT FOR MY STRESS
IDEAS: ADD PLASTIC TO
FABRIC EMBELLISHMENTS

Make more intentional
Shapes that are patterned
After branches,
More layered stitch imagery
COLLAGE IMAGES



Day 6, Monday April 4, 2022

Studio visits with Maoling Lee and Image Factory. Conversations were particularly important for me today as we began to dig deep while we were presenting to each other; Kurt Nahar, Jenny Perez, Rosa Naday Garmendia, Autumn T. Thomas.

Presentation notes included incorporating thoughts in your native language into a presentation. How to clearly describe your work, process, ideas into digestible bites; discussing topics that are highly personal- How much do you reveal/ separate from the viewer, when does too much information negate questions by the audience. Lessons learned- How do I better facilitate inquiry at the end of my presentation?

Need better documentation of my artistic process. Its and investment in my future endeavors. Close up materials, modified seams and detail images are missing.

Visual Notes and Textures:

Really a wonderful studio visit with the artist. As she described her dedication to plein air painting, it was evident that she puts in the hours and practice in a very specific way. Oil, watercolor, sculpture.



Background: <http://www.imagefactorybelize.com/> A contemporary art institution dedicated to the promotion, exhibition and documentation of Belizean art. Est. 1995, the Image Factory is a not-for-profit organization that collaborates with local and international artists and organizations.

Day 7, Tuesday April 5, 2022

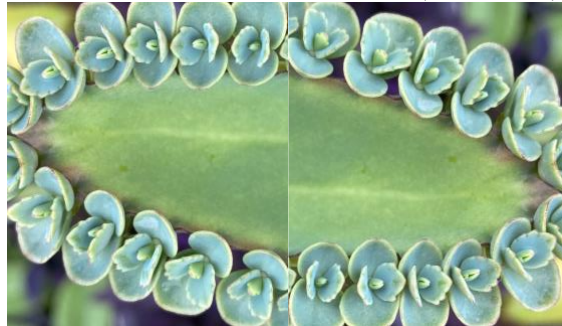
Enjoyed talking about painting, particularly with such a motivated and sincere artist. Kelvin maintains his practice by making smaller commercial works that sell through the cruise/ tourism industry, and makes larger painting that sell less frequently. Purchased some art supplies at this location to work through some visual ideas. Local lunch meal.

Visual Notes and Textures:

Encountered more plant forms that were inspirational for the construction of wearable artworks.



DAY 7 Kim Yantis, untitled , mirror experiments, 2022



Day 8, Wednesday April 6, 2022

Spent the day writing and working with images. Began collecting and collage-sketching with other natural patterns

Had final dinner meal with artists and staff from The Bliss Arts Center, Indigenous and Indian Dance Performer, a photographer, A spoken word artist, Curator and visual artists. Fantastic evening on the edge of the water.

Visual Notes and Textures: Kim Yantis, *Seaside Barrier*, digital collage, 2022



Visual Notes and Textures: Kim Yantis, *Stone Nexus (Altun HA)*, digital collage, 2022 (COVER IMAGE)



Day 9, Thursday April 7, 2022

Travel day to Miami. The experience was invaluable, and, on this last morning, seems to have flown by at the end. I'll need time to process all of the thoughts and interactions that occurred: During the trip we had pop-in visits from Katie Numi Usher, and artist who DVCAI had met and works with in 2019, a gentleman from UNESCO World Heritage, and two archeologist who visited our residence.

How can one track or even quantify these experiences? Many thanks to DVCAI for this incredible growth opportunity.



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 MEETING ID: 240 501 7214

**INTERNATIONAL
 CULTURAL
 EXCHANGE
 PROJECT
 2022**

**UNDER
 THE SHADE
 WITHOUT A
 SHADOW**
 #DVCAI #DVCAIBELIZE

THURSDAY, MARCH 31
6:30PM - 8:30PM
 ELIZA MOTT | ARTISTS COACHING SESSION
 YACINE T. FALL | DVCAI RESIDENCY 2022
 KIM YANTIS | ARTISTIC PRACTICE

FRIDAY, APRIL 1
6:30PM - 8:30PM
 DVCAI PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTIVE
 ROY WALLACE
 VANESSA GREENE
 MICHAEL ELLIOTT
 IZIA LINDSAY

MONDAY, APRIL 4TH
6:30PM - 8:30PM
 THOM WHEELER CASTILLO
 ROSA NADAY GARMENDIA: HAVANA BIENNALE
 KATIE NUMI USHER | GASWORKS LONDON

TUESDAY, APRIL 5TH
6:30PM - 8:30PM
 KURT NAHAR
 JENNY PEREZ
 AUTUMN T THOMAS

DVCAI
 DIVERSITY VIBE CULTURAL ARTS INCUBATOR

**MIAMI-DADE
 COUNTY**

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 MIAMI-DADE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

ICP Presentation Schedule, Kim Yantis presenting on Thursday March 31, 2022

Under the Shade Without a Shadow II, conducted from March 30- April 7, 2022, is an International Cultural Exchange program by Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator in Miami, Florida that support genuine exchanges that benefit the citizens and artists of Miami-Dade County. DVCAI programs are made possible with the support of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners.