

International Cultural Exchange: Jamaica 2018

April 30, 2018



Voyaging Towards The Future: Living Sculpture III

18 April - Early morning flight to Kingston and straight away to Edna Manley College. We began organizing the exhibition installation process but had to wait on the local artists to deliver their art. The day was very long and after a trip to our housing and resting we went out for dinner and evening of conversation with Ernestine.

19 April - Student critiques with students of Edna Manley College, textile and fashion design, and beginning time-based media (integrating moving image and sound) with the topic of "Kingston the City." I felt most comfortable in the textile/ fashion critique because of having spent time learning and making clothing. I think my questions to the students were good and thoughtful. Their instructors agreed. The time-based media class was a beginning class so comments had to be more about the general tenor of what they were doing and audience perception. One student used US identified "country music" to which I asked him if he thought it might be misleading since the movie was about Kingston. We had a laugh because I asked my question using a southern drawl. Afterwards, we had lunch. I had to wait for my pieces to find a location and be set in the

“The idea of giving is the idea of reciprocity. With that, a new idea, a method of learning that is through peer group education.”

-Onajide Shabaka



Philip Supersad studio and compound

installation. I spent time in the library until the return

of the group as I ended up remaining at Edna Manley to complete my install. The opening was well attended although I heard it could have been more in attendance. I found the audience pleasant and engaging, and had seriously good questions about the displayed art.

20 April - Philip Supersad compound, a unique open space downtown, formerly the Edna Manley campus, he is a ceramist and drum maker and drummer. He did a short drum session with some of his assistants and showed us his wheel throwing area.

National Gallery of Jamaica, with a guided tour, was instructive in that we learned local history and artists not well known in the US.

Liberty Hall, Marcus Garvey museum, doing some difficult work to correct injustices. Very emotionally touching for me.

Burni Matalon evening reception. She is an artist with a commercial ceramics practice and collector husband now retired. His historical prints were of the most interest to me.

21 April - Katrina Coombs, fiber artist. I kept thinking of the difficulty she must face in Jamaica because the general public doesn't likely see her as having a serious practice, yet her familial support is there to keep her up. She also lives outside Kingston which must allow her to breathe. Living in a less densely populated area, as many of the artists we will visit during our trip, has a good feeling about it.

Samere Tansley, realist painter. Her painting skills are top level and, again, her studio away from the city bustle made it more comforting (for us).

Heather Sutherland, landscape artist, painter.



KAPO sculpture, National Gallery of Jamaica

Grosvenor Gallery, Kingston. Between shows, his gallery was filled with abstract and intuitive works. A few sculptures were about. He was enthusiastic but I suspect he would have engaged us in more conversation if we had more time. I felt he was knowledgeable about the local history.

Reception: Sandra Glasgow. A lovely evening in a beautiful outdoor garden, Kingston. Food, wine and relaxation.

22 April - David, Leonia, Andranique, Munchi, potters,

Spanish Town. A yard full of production: making the clay compounds, moulds, wheel and hand thrown vessels, and small object sculptures. They also had some commercial contract work with various hotels. I felt that there was less emphasis on glazing than on developing clay mixtures and developing a mass market for the commercial work. Some of the pieces I saw seemed a bit “muddy” in color but then, this was a workspace, not a store or gallery. More good conversation!

Laura Facey, sculptor, lives on a large track of land, inherited, with several out buildings that serve as her studio(s). Since she works on large fallen trees hauling them is less efficient than working on them near where they fell or were cut down. Her home is also part of her studio and looks like a gallery showroom. She is familiar with her property’s provenance and that also informs the creation and story of the sculpture. Context helps define her work but does not contain the meaning. This was noted more directly when we visited Harmony Hall where she has sculptures on display. From the perspective of an outsider, the monumental scale of her work and location of her studio certainly puts her in an advantageous position for large scale public works.

In the evening we went to Centre Stage Theater for a play, “Right girl, Wrong address.” It was quite funny and well staged. It made the day long but it was worth the pleasurable evening.

23 April - An early start off to Raymond Watson’s studio up in the hills above Kingston. Very pleasant location and very interesting sculpture. Even though his studio looks recently worked in I kind of got the feeling he wasn’t as busy as in the recent past. He was very conversational but no picture taking allowed.

Staying in the roaming hills we ended at Mazola Mwashgadi's studio. I felt most comfortable there and Mazola was more than conversational as well. We joined him in a short drumming session and lunch. Again, having a great, open, inviting studio can make the opportunity of creation so much more rewarding and expansive.



Laura Facey, studio

Returning to Kingston we visited the sculpture park at UTECH. Unfortunately, there was a bit of construction going on so our viewing was limited. However, we were able to make contact with the UTECH gallery director and talk about some of the work on campus.

Late afternoon meal with Lorna Dunkley. Such a generous and lovely person to have met.

24 April - Artist Presentations, Edna Manley College. We each (6 of us) had about fifteen minutes to deliver our presentations. I felt good about my presentation. These things usually bring on some nervousness but we all made it through.



Mazola Mwashgadi's studio outdoors after rain

Petrona Morrison, mixed media, and former Head of Edna Manley College. An older artist, if that needs mentioning, but very contemporary in her approach and subjects. Although her work was mostly digital it had a sense of scale and power. She was earlier solely a sculptor and that sensibility carries over to the newer digital work.

Deborah Anzinger, painter, lives just up the road from Petrona Morrison. Both of them work out of their houses but Petrona does not have small children about. I think

Deborah's paintings have a more playful sense about them, maybe as a result of children but that is without knowing. Her studio is small so it was difficult to hear everything she said and I unable to ask her at the time of our visit because I hadn't thought of it at that moment. By having mirrors attached to her paintings it added depth and gave them more of a sculptural feel.

We ended our day celebrating Carol Campbell's birthday, and it was a celebration!



Katrina Coombs, fiber artist (center)

25 April - Claudette Lopez-Lewis, fabric design and fashion designer. Claudette and her husband live near Mandeville up in mountains. This location was amazing and, again, a location that has the ability to allow an artist is expand, enhance, and produce amazing art. Our entire day was relaxed and invigorating. Claudette's fabric painting and fashion design are really quite dynamic and even have some elements of experimentation and exploration that would keep any artist engaged. Living on a working farm also takes up some time but the reward is home grown garden food.

26 April - Great Huts, Portland, Boston Bay. Resort and art showcase, Great Huts is set at the top of majestic cliffs overlooking Boston Bay. We took in the art, local artists, and artifacts, then took to

the water ourselves. It was cool and refreshing. Before leaving we had lunch from a local roadside joint that was excellent. Our trip to and from was extremely scenic and delightful, even with the bumpy roads during the drive. We took the coast road back to Kingston and there is where I saw what I recall as "typical Caribbean" as I know it. Average folks, typical houses, quiet small towns along the road. That was very comforting to experience where in other places we passed on the roads seemed full of hustle and bustle and communities in flux. I



Fresh garden vegetables from Claudette Lopez-Lewis

would think much of the in-flux was due to traveling back and forth to work or something of that nature. Seeing houses and yards cared for and children playing just said a kind of comforting normalcy.

27 April - Exhibition deinstall. Return to Miami.

Post Exchange Comments: While still processing the trip I have already been in contact with a couple of the Jamaican artists since returning to Miami. Keeping the communication ongoing is good and allows for more meaningful relationships to develop.



Portland, Boston Bay, tide pool

Even though I did not have a greater opportunity to explore the rural environments more closely it was still very fruitful in speaking with those that grow or maintain the plants and understanding the environmental better. I limited my interaction with non artists a bit so that I could listen more closely to the discussions with the artists. Having a large group with limited time for artist interactions and conversations made each visit more important.

Getting to know the cultural landscape was invigorating because I could only perceive it through the lens of a foreigner otherwise.

Again, driving the north coast in our return to Kingston was such an enriching and refreshing drive



Petrona Morrison home studio

just because it was typically not on the route of tourists which I don't personally like.

It is difficult to say what would improve the experience because each trip and planned activity has so many variables. I think being aware of ones surroundings and let the day's activities unfold naturally is the best.