

REPRESENTING ARTISTS RA 2

RA is a quarterly publication of Representing Artists
Cliff Plantation House, St. John, Barbados.

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\$2.00 - FREE TO MEMBERS

NUMBER 2

APRIL 1993

Each of us is now being drawn, in one way or another, toward a great vision. It is more than a vision. It is an emerging force. It is the next step in our evolutionary journey...

When you are compassionate with yourself and others, your world becomes compassionate. You draw to yourself other souls of like frequency, and with them you create, through your intentions and your actions and your interactions a compassionate world...What you intend is what you become." Gary Zukav, "The Seat Of The Soul".

I have recently finished reading a wonderful book by Suzi Gablik called "The Reenchantment of Art" from which the above quote is taken. Gablik is making some very important links between art and life and suggests an alternative way of viewing our role as artists as she speaks about the shift from a dominator to a partnership way of life. She uses as an example the work of an unsalaried artist-in-residence at the New York City Department of Sanitation since 1978, Mierle Laderman Ukeles. Ukeles was finding the minimalist and process art at the end of the 60's socially remote and felt that art's function was to articulate a notion of human freedom to everyone, not just the elite. This notion of freedom could only be discussed, she felt, with the inclusion of the air the earth and the water. Ukeles felt that people dealing with this needed to be a part of the dialogue - her work is very much about dialogue and creating the realities of partnership through an empathic bond between herself and her audience. From mid 1979 to 1980, she went around with sanitation workers and foremen talking with them. She then did an 11-month art work, called TOUCH SANITATION. It was an 8-hour a day performance that involved shaking hands with sanitation workers and saying "Thank you for keeping New York City alive."

They would respond and complete the performance. Ukeles pointed out that NY produces 26,000 tons of garbage a year, without the workers, the city would die. She wanted to burn an image into the public's mind that every time they throw away, human hands have to take it away. She felt that the piece was about healing the worker's feelings and sense of isolation.

I sometimes think of the formation of RA or various RA meetings as

performance pieces that are conciliatory and healing, (and not without a good dose of humour). This ongoing process of keeping the arts alive, or should I say, breathing new life into the arts, and therefore ourselves, has been dynamic and invigorating. We have a lot of our own sanitation work to do, but as RA continues to welcome new members and establish dialogue between ourselves and the wider community, the burden becomes the bond and the healing begins.

It's so exciting to have good news along the way. RA would like to congratulate David Gall on being the recipient of a Fulbright Award. We are very proud of him and wish him all the best as he embarks on his PhD. programme in Art Education in the US. We look forward to learning from him on his return.

RA is also pleased to say that we were able to save the drowning Barbados Carib Art Project and we will be represented in the exhibition and the catalogue. Included in this issue of the RA newsletter is the article by Allison Thompson, "The Carib Art Five" that will be published in the Carib Art Catalogue.

We are beginning to present arts safety and hazardous arts materials information, and we also have an amusing article by Ken Corsbie titled, "The Chattel House As A Bajan Aesthetic". Kay Fedel has made available an excerpt from Roger Lipsey's "An Art Of Our Own". Kay is willing to loan this book to interested RA members. Ras Akyem-i and Ras Ishi continue to provoke our minds with the second half of "The Great Controversy". Chris Cozier offers thoughts from Trinidad as he ponders "...the difference between representing culture and creating culture".

Articles for the next newsletter need to be typed and mailed in no later than May 24th - please forward to Ras Ishi, Sealy Hall, St John, 423-1022 or Arthur Atkinson, #2 Elizabeth Drive, Pine Gardens, St Michael, 427-2096 or 431-0411.

It has been an exciting last couple of months. RA is being forced to grow quickly as we continue to find ourselves embroiled in all sorts of challenges. We are working hard to find a common voice that reflects the needs and desires of members as we strive continually towards a better future for artists. As Gablik says, "...the reawakening of our capacity to be compassionate - is crucial to finding our way out of the evolutionary mess we're in. The emerging new myth of empathy - the capacity to share what another is feeling, to live in the consciousness of our interconnectedness. This is the fundamental ecological vision."

Until next time, talk ya talk!

Annalee Davis

AN ART OF OUR OWN - THE SPIRITUAL IN TWENTIETH CENTURY ART

BY ROGER LIPSEY

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SEEKERS AND BRATS: ART IN RECENT YEARS

The spiritual and aesthetic adventure of twentieth-century art has not ended. The roaring success of Pop Art in the 1960s challenged the high seriousness of Abstract Expressionism, and Pop Art has continued to flourish both in the marketplace and intellectually as a devil's advocate. Andy Warhol (1928-1987), who did much to define its character, moved for decades in the art world and the public eye as a memorable, slightly corrosive Oscar Wilde—dispassionately witty, truth-telling in many respects. He was also a portrait of Dorian Gray: his boyishly sardonic face, effeminate ways, and dedicated pursuit of surface values held up a mirror to the art world that it found either irritating beyond measure or seductive. His art was dull, but he was a superb adversary, as necessary as the "contrary" was to Cheyenne warriors, years ago. The "contrary" had a genius for throwing the values and certainties of the tribe into question: he would wear women's clothes, ride into battle backwards, dip his hand with apparent delight into near-boiling water, pretend to swim on the waterless prairie—to the benefit of all concerned. But the "contrary" did not set the agenda, he challenged its rigidity; whereas Warhol and others with less flair have tended to set the agenda of contemporary art, at least in the marketplace. They are brats; he was the best of them.

Despite the rise of brats to fortune and influence, individual artists of merit have extended and deepened twentieth-century art in recent years. The best of their work bears comparison with the best of earlier twentieth-century art and shines quite brightly in the larger context of the history of art. Seekers and brats cohabit the art world—and co-habit, in some instances, one and the same person.

To divide contemporary and near-contemporary artists into seekers and brats is simplistic but to the point. Dualism haunts the galleries where one is so often rolled, so rarely nourished. Brats can be clever, keen-eyed, entertaining, intriguing, but their art is not serious even when solemn. Unlike solemnity, seriousness can include cascading good

humour and sharp-edged Duchampian absurdity, but underneath the surface, however sparkling, there is a hidden tide in serious art—a question, an unrest, a knowledge trying to achieve visibility, an astonished apprehension of beauty, a sober assessment of ugliness that needs to be faced.

Some brats are taken very seriously by critics, collectors, and museums. Their work will be permanently inscribed in the history of art. It has made its mark in time; it is part of the fabric of action and reaction, and generates intriguing social and cultural insights. However, this chapter concerns seeking artists who have acknowledged and extended the spiritual in art. Those discussed here are representative. Our purpose will be served if these pages make clear that concern for the spiritual in art has survived into the 1980's, where it is, I believe, reaching for a still more knowing and vigorous realization than in the past.

The work of contemporary and near-contemporary artists has no patina. It may have the glamour of "brand-name" recognizability, but that is not the same at all as age and distance. Even Paris 1910, Dessau 1926, and New York 1950 have acquired patina of a kind that art of more recent decades cannot have. Knowing the weaknesses of our culture—particularly the spiritual uncertainty—and not expecting artists to be wholly free of them, viewers may mistrust contemporary art that seems to be spiritually informed merely because it is contemporary.

We need provisionally to trust the artist to be a channel. Years ago, Klee wrote that the artist "does nothing other than gather and pass on what comes to him from the depths. He neither serves nor rules—he transmits.... He is merely a channel." Few believe this of artists today, and few believe that it could be so. Most believe that artists are by and large egotists, channeling primarily their own notions and passions. A little more generosity is in order. When an artist seems to know and has found a marvelously winning expression, it will do no harm to acknowledge the achievement and allow that—perhaps, for a fleeting moment—he or she was transparent to what came from the depths. We cannot reasonably expect "much, much later, the pure art," as Kandinsky wrote, without some sign of it today.

Roger Lipsey, Ph.D., is an independent scholar who has taught at Princeton University, the University of California at Berkeley, and the University of Texas.

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CONCERN ABOUT ARTS SAFETY: IS IT REALLY NECESSARY?

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Aside from being discouraged by the prospect of a long and difficult research process, most artists put off looking into arts-related hazards for various reasons. How necessary is it to be concerned about arts safety? Many artists who take the complexities associated with protecting themselves and others against the wide variety of hazards related to arts materials and activities soon understand why legislation and initial instruction are not enough. Most of these artists come to a common conclusion: not only do they owe it to themselves and those around them to become more informed about the hazards inherent in their art - they can't afford not to.

HOW HAZARDOUS ARTS MATERIALS ENTER THE BODY

Inhalation

This is the most common hazard in an arts studio, especially dangerous because substances that are inhaled can chemically and physically attack the lungs. Toxic gases, fumes, vapours, mists, and dusts can also be absorbed from lung airways into the bloodstream, which then carries the substances to the vital organs.

While organ damage is likely to occur over extended periods of time, inhaling toxic substances can also produce both instant reactions requiring immediate medical attention, and delayed reactions such as nausea, dizziness, headaches, and other flu-like symptoms whose cause may go undetected while artists and their doctors ineffectively try rounds of medications meant for entirely different conditions.

Skin Absorption

Artists who handle toxic art materials and products with their bare hands, who immerse their hands in chemical solutions, or who wear clothing that has become contaminated with wet or dry spills of chemicals risk skin irritations, burns and allergic reactions, all of which can at times require medical attention. Some substances such as methyl hydrate, turpentine and a number of the developer solutions used in photography, can penetrate the skin's natural protective coatings to enter the bloodstream. Once in the circulatory system, the chemicals can be transported to any site or organ of the body where they may exert their effects and (over extended exposures) seriously damage the kidneys, lungs, heart and other vital organs. In addition, breaks in the skin's protective barrier - from cuts, irritations, burns and the like - can result in absorption into the body of many chemicals that would not normally penetrate the skin.

Ingestion

Far from being confined only to children who mistake an art substance for something edible, accidental ingestion of toxic materials can also be a hazard for adults. It happens when they point their brushes with their mouths, or pick up what they think is a glass of water or juice. It happens when they regularly but unknowingly supplement their daily diets with bits of clay, pigment or other art materials that sink, unnoticed, into their coffee cups, or cling to their sandwiches or cigarettes. Even a sudden coughing spell can result in the accidental ingestion of something harmful, and can cause an immediate medical emergency or harder-to-detect, long term poisoning.

HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE AT RISK

To Judge Whether A Particular Arts Material Or Process Presents A Serious Risk, Users Must Consider Several Factors:

- how toxic the material is.
- how often, for how long, and to how much of the substance the artists will be exposed.
- how much of a particular toxic substance is likely to be in the artist's body already ("total body burden").
- how susceptible to a substance, or combination of substances, the artist or someone in the surrounding environment is likely to be.
- that exposure to 2 or more substances may be more hazardous than exposure to just one substance, because they may interact and have a compound affect.

TOXICITY

The more toxic a material, the smaller the amount it takes to harm the body. Artists should familiarize themselves with the names of the most toxic materials related to their particular arts, and should substitute the less toxic substances whenever possible.

EXPOSURE

In general, the longer the period of exposure to a potentially toxic substance, the greater the risk. For example, an artist working round the clock to prepare for a show, and therefore handling a toxic chemical or solvent for perhaps as much as 12 hours at a time, is taking a great risk than an artist who works with the same chemical or solvent for only an hour or two a day over ten days. This is because the artist who is working the longer hours is both experiencing more exposure and giving the body little time to detoxify and excrete the chemical substances it has absorbed, inhaled or ingested during working hours.

TOTAL BODY BURDEN

For many toxic substances, the risks to users depend not only on how much of the substance the artists are exposed to, but how much their systems may have already retained from other, unrelated sources. Taking an unrelated example, a miner who has retired due to silicosis would be unwise to take up any art that risks inhaling even small amounts of stone or clay dusts.

SUSCEPTIBILITY

Susceptibility to a toxic substance varies with age, health, individual physiology, and total body burden. Children and senior citizens, for example, because of their different metabolic rates, are susceptible to many substances that pose little problem to the general adult population. The presence of known physiological conditions, such as asthma or epilepsy, should rule out the use of certain chemicals or processes. For example, because solvents are known to induce epileptic seizures, they should not be used by epileptics.

COMBINED EXPOSURES

Sometimes, exposure to two or three different chemicals within the same working period and environment can produce both a cumulative and a synergistic effect. For example, drinking alcoholic beverages while working with a chlorinated solvent like carbon tetrachloride could result in death if a person were exposed to large amounts of each. Artists who have damaged their lungs through frequent exposure to etching with the use of carbo arc gases or other lung irritants. Similarly, many medications can interact with solvents.

HEALTH HAZARDS INFORMATION WILL CONTINUE IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF RA

THE CARIB ART FIVE

A L L I S O N T H O M P S O N



'Ghost Ships'
Ras Akyem-i Ramsay



'Hills and Valleys II'
Ras Ishi

The five works selected by Barbadian artists to represent art in Barbados form an interesting and to a certain extent, representative group. And although none of the pieces predates 1980, the artists themselves reflect the span of generations as well as the social diversity within Barbados. The works exhibit a range of approaches but more strongly and more importantly there exists an 'interconnectedness' - the works speak to and relate to one another in a manner which illuminates our infant understanding and identification of a Barbadian art.

These selected works reflect two themes which have always predominated - the land and the people. Karl Broodhagen, one of Barbados' Pioneer Artists, is still active today as both artist and teacher at the age of 84. "Hartley 'a la Egyptienne'" is a recent sculpture (1989) but Broodhagen's exploration of the strong, monumental forms of the female face have been reflected in his work for decades. The head is frontal and symmetrical, regal like Mycerinus' queen. Her features - penetrating eyes, broad forehead, thick lips, prominent ears that hold back her great mane of locks - are strongly modelled but simplified in detail and form. The warm textured surface of the terra cotta gives an intimate feeling to an otherwise stately and commanding presence.

The small group of Pioneers dominated the few local exhibiting opportunities during the 1940's and 50's. But the next two decades witnessed an influx of expatriates, many of whom adopted integral roles in the developing local art scene. Born and trained in England before coming to Barbados in the early 1970's, Alison Chapman-Andrews has transformed our vision of the Barbadian landscape. "The Kite" is an abstracted orchestration combining numerous views of the rugged north and east coasts. Patterned undulating hills and fields are balanced by majestic palm trees. The view is framed on two sides by the sea - reflecting the islandness of our existence. The artist explores bold design, and playfully rejoices in the endless patterns in nature while maintaining strict control over the choice and application of colour.

A growing concern in the decade following Barbados' 1966 Independence was the desire to bring art to the people. This was achieved through a variety of art programs, formal and informal, sidewalk exhibitions, and DePam (The People's Art Movement). Ras Akyem-i Ramsay emerged from this group to become one of Barbados' most challenging artists.

Ras Akyem-i's paintings frequently revolve around a commanding central figure, tortured and anguished, part-Christ - part self-portrait. "Ghost Ships" refers to the middle passage but Akyem-i does not confine himself to factual representation or narrative. The theme is extended to embody the human condition, it epitomizes the collective horror of the situation. Here the fisherman becomes an archetype, a biomorphic figure cut open like a fish, the bones like a crucifix with projecting nails. But mankind is an enduring creature and will survive - as reflected in the resurrection of Christ.

The surface of the canvas is layered with paper to create the illusion of impasto without having to use lots of paint. It creates the visual sensation of turbulence, making the surrounding space seem nebulous and shifting. The jarring juxtaposition of images and scales is uncomfortable. The viewer is forced out of any sense of intellectual security, unable to escape the horror of this vision.

Ras Ishi, along with Akyem-i is undoubtedly one of Barbados' most exciting and vibrant contemporary artists. Ishi's familiar depic-

tion of a female figure in her garden has become a comfortable idiom through which he can explore formal elements. In "Hills and Valleys II", the female figure - monumental and revered in the tradition of Broodhagen - nurtures the tangle of plants which encircle her. Ishi experiments with advancing and receding colours, moving away from traditional modelling but still creating effects of space and movement. Drawing effects are created by areas of bare canvas and underpainting, which define shapes and areas of colour and allow a quantity of light and freshness to penetrate the surface. By using his own vocabulary, the familiar forms in nature which surround him daily, Ishi is able to put these images down on canvas with urgency and vitality, allowing him more facility to deal with the two-dimensional surface of the painting.

Annalee Davis shares with Ishi a conviction that the land and human experience are intimately linked. In "Betrayal" we see Davis' characteristic use of bold personal symbols rendered in her energetic, often violent manner to convey confrontational messages. The dog, traditionally a symbol of loyalty, hangs limply from an orange noose against a haunting blue sky. In its shadow a large head, nostalgic and powerless, reflects on the changing face of our agricultural landscape and its devastation at the hands of housing developments and golf courses. Layers of meaning and emotion are conveyed through the layers of paint and overlapping images. Davis' approach is intuitive and frenzied. The vitality and raw energy in the application of paint is best seen in the majestic stalks of green cane spewing forth yellow sprays of pigment - like a haunting warning which echoes across the land.

Davis' work reflects the mounting politicized tension which will characterize much of the art of the nineties. Artists are demanding a voice, and the rightful recognition of the contributions they have made in Barbados for the past fifty years.



'Betrayal'
Annalee Davis



Hartley 'a la Egyptienne'
Karl Broodhagen

'The Kite'
Alison Chapman-Andrews

OUTSIDE THE BOUNDARIES OF "RELEVANCE". BOWEN'S "WIZARDS OF THE FOREST"

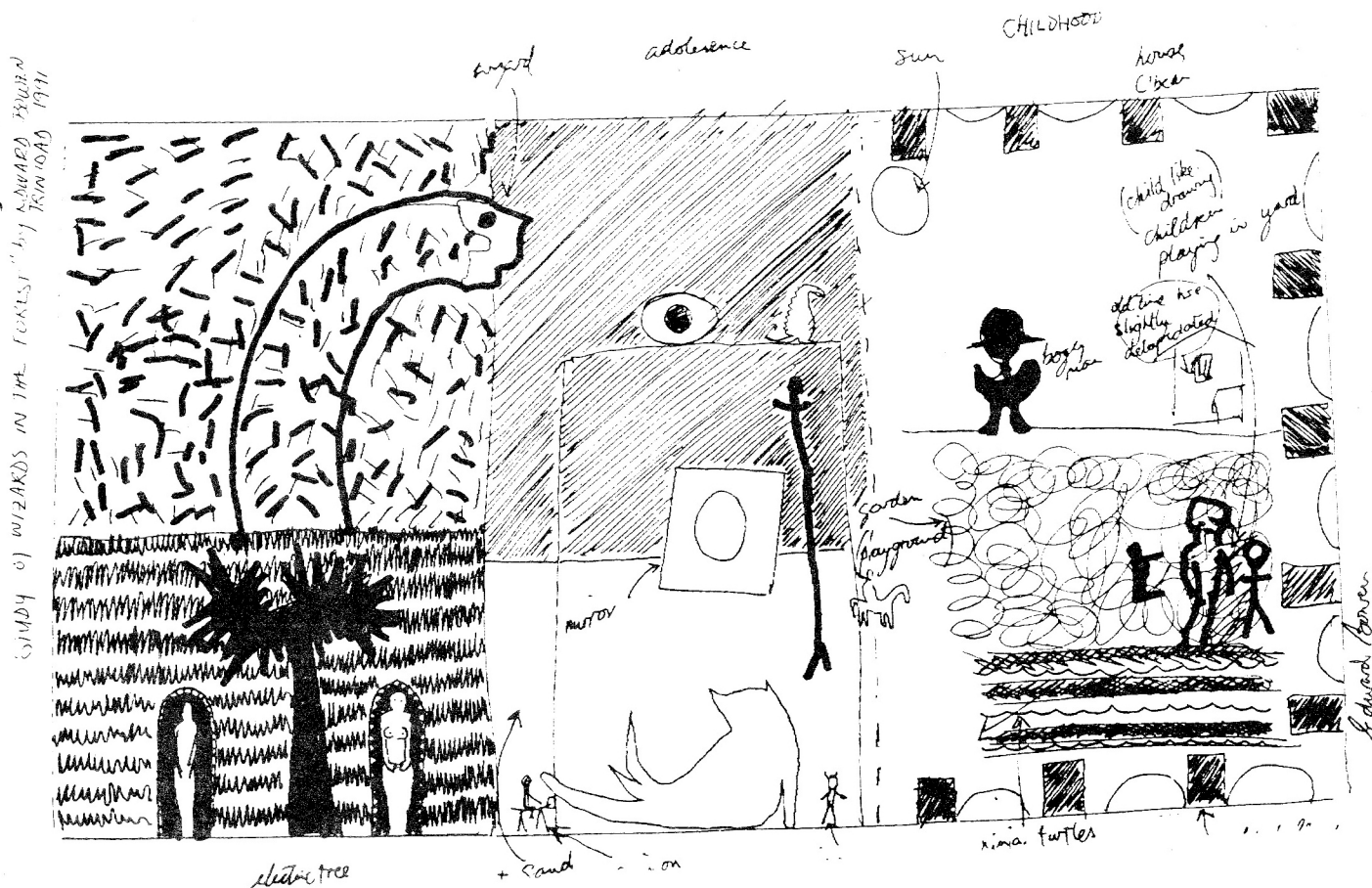
BY CHRISTOPHER COZIER

In Trinidad, abstract painting is associated not only with modernity and development but also with intellectualism and "metropolitan-ness" or "urbanism". Some even consider it an indulgence; something that does not "serve the people". The abstract/realism dichotomy also persists. It can still hold some romance in societies like Trinidad's which are cut off from international art discourse or which, as is particularly the case here, have failed to generate their own. Despite the appeal of the ideas of abstraction, careful scrutiny of painting in Trinidad will show that the definition is often loosely applied.

Most of our painters have been figurative and expressionistic, taking their cue from the landscape or from folk or ethnic scenes. This can be said about LeRoi Clarke or even Ken Crichtlow, because of the titles the latter gives to his paintings. The images remain representative or referential. The works of Denis Seaton, Pat Bishop and Roy Cross in the seventies still have to be assessed to determine whether their work is another form of expressionism.

In Trinidad, the orthodoxy is to view culture only as a manifestation of race or diaspora. It has something to do with "relevance", a word that indicates the most conventional stance in our cultural debate. Painting which is considered "Eurocentric" or "Metropolitan" is deemed to be valid or to "fit in" only if it serves this idea of culture. Realistic painters create postcards of national sites and types; others design logos of our various diasporas and/or icons of anti-imperialism. It's all a fairly neat package.

The crisis that our artists face resides in the difference between representing culture and creating culture; seeing culture as a static model or as a flexible and expanding phenomena. So far the act of painting has remained as no more than a form of production which perpetuates the existing conventions about who and what we are. It is therefore the end-product of a cultural discourse rather than a potential starting point. One suspects that painting is not searching out or



reaching towards any new territory of experience unique to itself. It often falls short of any spirit of adventure. This is the challenge that our contemporary artists face and to some degree are engaging.

The more one looks at the work of Edward Bowen and others of his generation the more these issues come into focus. To label it Abstract is to naively represent what constitutes its newness. In fact, Bowen is a figurative painter whose graffiti-like scrawlings, combined with exaggerated and subjective use of colour, create an image that is far from abstract. It can be seen as a form of "Neo-expressionism".

This makes his work, in its formal approach, similar to those that I have mentioned before, yet many feel that his work reveals nothing more than a technical daring. They see something and feel nothing. This may be because the work demands something else from us; another view, perhaps of ourselves? Is it that what might appear to be nowhere is actually a somewhere? Could the ambiguity be his openness to possibility; to adventure?

Bowen's statement, "I can't deal with grand themes", is very similar to Irene Shaw's, "The chair in my living room is more important to me than Stollmeyer's Castle...it says more about me." Often the Grand Themes are already laid out for us to illustrate; as important as they may be, they can obstruct further search and discovery by our artists.

Bowen's work is often conversational rather than didactic or evangelical in tone. It invites or engages the viewer into a dialogue' a probing journey with no preordained goal. The work is about the self and how it responds through the medium of painting. By calling his last exhibition "Idiosyncrasies" he makes this quite clear.

Idiot, derived from Greek, refers to one who is too heavily given over to private interests. In the classical Greek state this tendency was considered less than ideal. For the generation born after Independence this may be the only realm from within which they may find a new direction as individuals rather than as components of some politically viable commodity. The State appeared to produce only stagnation, division, derision and violence. Heroes are defined as villains and villains become heroes. There is an overall "alienation" and groundlessness.

As if in reaction to this, Bowen's "Wizards in the Forest" is a large new work that is monumental in scale but individualistic and highly personal in its focus. In keeping with its conversational or informal quality, the materials used - paper, children's crayons, acrylic etc - are designed to be looked at for a brief moment rather than for the millenium or even the next few years. The painting is the end result of a happening between the artist and some materials. It is a large mixed media artwork that thins out the distinction between drawing, painting, collage and relief sculpture as it hangs from the wall unstretched as an object rather than as a surface for an illusion.

This painting functions like a flag or an emblem because it is horizontally composed and divided into three panels. It can be interpreted as an attempt on the part of the artist to sum up life's journey at this stage.

Describing a life cycle, it reads from the left to the right; starting from the present and reaching into the past. Small figures representing the artist's imagination, his desire or fancy, skip panels. Some look like children's cartoons and others like the main character in a medieval depiction of the flight into Egypt. These tiny figures journey across this massive painting as if in search of refuge from their respective territories.

In the first panel Bowen portrays his current life as an Artist. It is built up with frenetic pencil scrawls and brushstrokes. These marks flow across the top half of this section like handwriting in an indecipherable code that communicates through the urgency of its forms rather than in recognizable words and sentences. In the lower half, a vicious electric blue coconut tree, jagged-edged like a figure from a LeRoi Clarke painting, separates the genders. The woman is in a vaginal sarcophagus and the man in a phallic. A long-necked creature-like form or painterly gesture which is superimposed over the upper section, lurches over into the next panel.

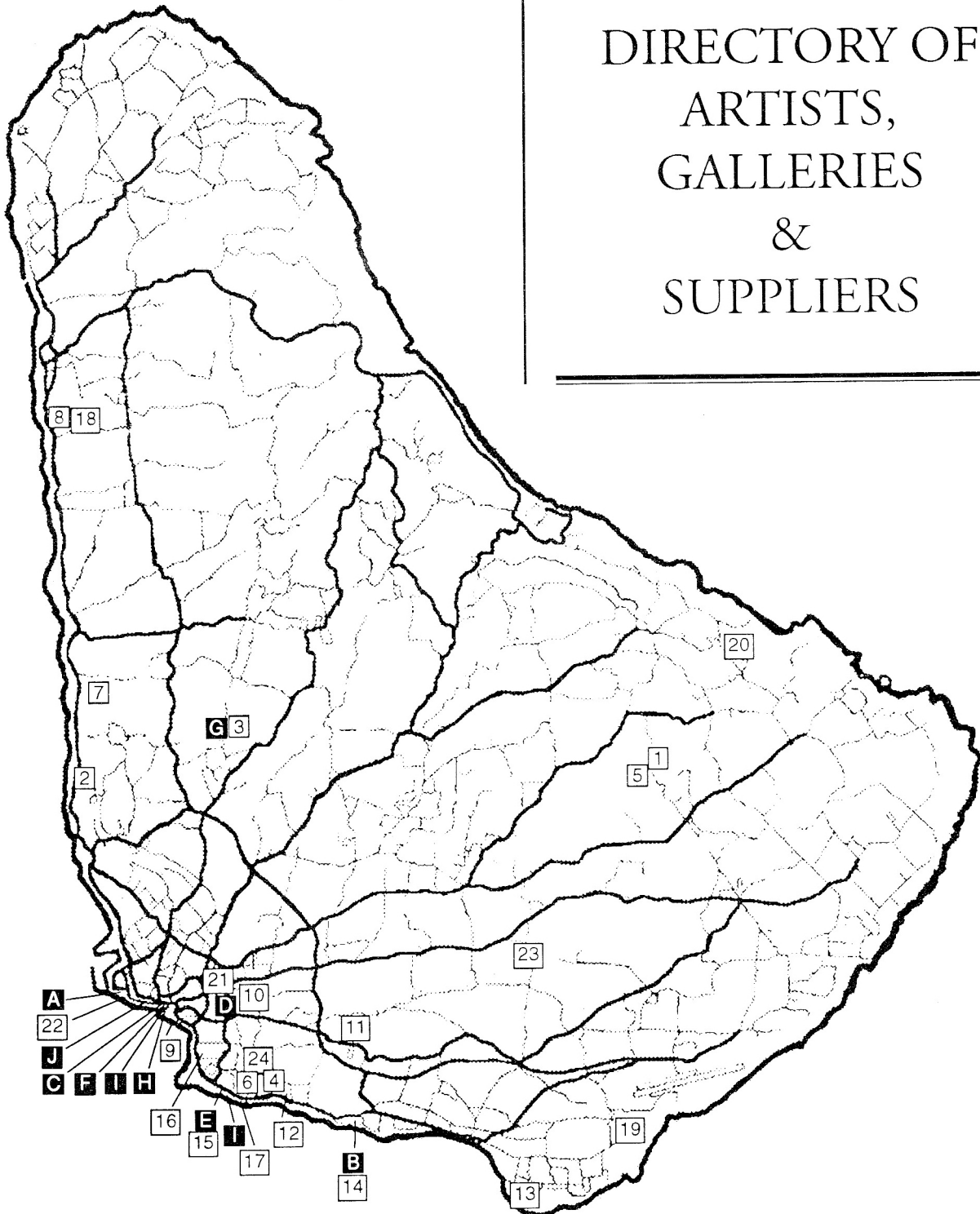
The artist claims that this, the central panel, has "something to do with adolescence". An uncomfortable grouping of forms and the silhouette of a cat are squeezed into a rectangular area. This defines a mirror above which is an all-seeing eye. The forms convey imbalance, the colours are opaque, heavy and saturated.

The final panel is divided into shy, land and ocean. The colours are light and translucent, the composition is more open and less claustrophobic than the central panel. This section conveys through its forms a childlike atmosphere. A bogeyman with a hat and wings stands next to some pencil scrawls that form a house. Below this some green, curly, swirling brushstrokes say lawn or happy greenness. This area is inhabited by a rosy-cheeked mummy and two children drawn in coloured pencils who are collaged onto the surface. The tone is whimsical and happy; the bogeyman is at a safe distance.

At the base of this panel, four light blue brushstrokes suggest ocean in which a tadpole-like figure swims around. Shapes which remind one of film sprocket holes move along the outer edge of this section. The artist actually referred to this painting as a portrayal of a "bad video" acknowledging the influence of television on his perspective. Each of these little squares carries another narrative in which a green froglike man against a warm grey background, performs a series of gestures with a golden ball. It suggests a youth playing "raising" with a soccer ball, or someone struggling with an idea - perhaps it is the artist himself.

This work represents a living organism standing on the brink of success or failure. There is no assurance here; it is about adventure. Artworks like this come into existence not for a quick sale or to entertain us through its craft but to engage us in an honest and unburdened discussion about looking and about experience. Searching for some distinctive post-independence view, each new image by Bowen can be seen as contributing toward the broadening of our idea about who we are and how we see the world around us as we look into the 90's. The artist wants to initiate a discourse rather than to merely illustrate a pre-existing idea.

DIRECTORY OF ARTISTS, GALLERIES & SUPPLIERS



ARTISTS

1. **Gayle Hermick** Cliff Plantation St. John 433-5880
2. **Martine & Simon Pile** Lot 4, Lashley Rd, Fitts Village, St.James. 424-7740
3. **Goldie Spieler** Shop Hill, St.Thomas. 425-0223
4. **Joycelyn Gardener** 44 Garden Rd, No 1, Worthing, Ch. Ch. 435-6173
5. **Annalee Davis** Cliff Plantation, St John. 433-1642 or 435-1595
6. **Jean Goddard** Quendale, Marine Gardens, Hastings, Ch. Ch. 436-3362
7. **Rachelle Altman** Mallows, Sandy Lane, St James 432-1114
8. **Kay Fedel** Sundown, Mullens Bay, St Peter, 422-2128
9. **Ann Rudder** Jubilance, Bedford Ave., St Michael, 426-4989
10. **Arthur Atkinson** #2 Elizabeth Drive, Pine G'dns, St Michael. 427-2096 or 431-0411
11. **Gloria Chung** 29 Sheraton Park #2, Ch. Ch. 437-1279
12. **Bill Grace** 44 Garden Rd #1, Worthing, Ch. Ch. 435-6204
13. **Jean Blades** Paxamor, Atlantic Shores, Ch.Ch. 428-7150
14. **Darla Trotman** Coffee & Cream Gallery, St Lawrence Gap, Ch.Ch. 428-2708
15. **Sharon Oran** Mango Jam, Hastings, Ch. Ch. 427-0287 or 435-6745
16. **Alison Chapman-Andrews** #2 Chelsea Gardens, St Michael. 429-4897
17. **Hilary Armstrong** Waverly Cot, Rockley, Ch. Ch. 435-9900
18. **Ann Dodson** 93 Mullens Bay Terrace, St Peter. 422-2940
19. **Indrani & David Gall** 223 Park Rd., Chancery Lane, Ch.Ch. 428-4361
20. **Ras Ishi Butcher** Sealy Hall, St John. 423-1022
21. **Ras Akyem-i Ramsay** St Hill Rd., Carrington Village, St Michael. 422-8264
22. **Ras Ilix Heartman** Temple Yard, Bridgetown.
23. **Lisa Smith-Fields** 104 Lowland Pk. Ch.Ch. 424-0468
24. **Diane Butcher** Old Humphrey's Bldg. Dayrells Rd. St.M. 436-0600

GALLERIES

- A. **PELICAN GALLERY** / Barbados Arts Council Pelican Village. 425-4305
- B. **COFFEE & CREAM GALLERY** Paradise Village, St. Lawrence Gap, 428-2708....Darla or David Trotman.
- C. **FINE ART FRAMING LTD.** Dougleston, St.Michael's Row. 426-5325 ... lola Ganteume.
- D. **THE FLOWER SHOPPE & GALERIE** 17 Pine Rd, Belleville 426-7559 Hetty Atkinson

E. MANGO JAM GALLERY #1 Pavillion Court, Hastings, Sharon Oran. 427-0287

F. QUEEN'S PARK GALLERY Queen's Park, St. Michael, Bridgetown... The National Cultural Foundation. 427-2345

G. THE POTTER'S HOUSE GALLERY Edghill Heights, St.Thomas. 425-5463 ...David Spieler

H. THE STUDIO ART GALLERY Speedbird House, Fairchild Street, B'town. 427-5463. ...Rachelle Altman

I. ORIGINS Bridgehouse, Waterfront, B'town.436-8522...Pat Bondhus

ARTIST'S SUPPLIES

I. ART EXPRESS Skyway Plaza, Hastings, Ch.Ch. 429-4251...Mrs Wright

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*Ed and Dawn
Pionkowski*

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

CONTINUED FROM RA #1

RAS AKYEMI AND RAS ISHI

...Can most Barbadian artists do work of a serious standard to compete in the monstrous art world?

Since hypocrisy is not our style, and no one else seems to feel it necessary or wants to do the "dirty work", we feel obliged to say that most of these Artists and Craftsmen have not reached the requirements of the Art world. The recent attempts to promote Art and Craft as exportable products have not been undertaken with aesthetic criteria in mind, they have been treated as mass produced items, like sugar and rum. This is a mere political ploy to usurp exchange and help solve unemployment.

The Art world is like a battlefield and it is a struggle until death. The powers that be have no pity or empathy for the players whether good or bad. Art like Religion and Love has fallen prey to the economic dragon and is said to be the last of all "vices" to be exploited.

In the 80's rampant commercialisation (advertising promotion and speculation etc.) has escalated unknown Artists to the world of fame and money. This commercial meteoric rise to superstardom of Artists by the 'players': Promoters, Art Dealers, Agents etc., has cast serious shadows over the contemporary Art scene, for suspicion and uncertainty prevails over the acquiring of works by today's Artist. Those honest and gutsy critics that still exist remain vigilant and continue to thresh the grain from the husks. These critical eyes and minds have kept hope alive and allow that spark of light, QUALITY, to keep on shining. As long as the sun rises quality will eventually triumph over mediocrity. The finance required for an artist to reach international stature seems to be insurmountable and doubt still exists about collecting Art works, therefore the Artists in Barbados (and the Caribbean) must continue to produce work of an excellent standard.

Where you see vultures, you can most certainly say that blood

and carcasses are in their vicinity. Recently formed organisations such as the National Foundation of the Arts (NAFA), Cari-Contact 500 (with which we are not affiliated) and other political voices shouting for the funding and protection of the creative arts have been viewed cynically and with skepticism by artists unsure of their intentions. For in recent years the (visual) artists have been as lonely voices crying in the wilderness. Suddenly all kinds of "Deliverers" and "Saviours" appear to be our "Salvation". Yet our greatest need has not yet been considered - the establishment of a NATIONAL GALLERY.

The recent International acclaim of Derek Walcott, Shabba Ranks and the promotion of Jamaican Reggae artists by prestigious recording companies has triggered shock waves throughout the Caribbean. The Creative Arts now appear to be viable money earners and have the potential in the future to surpass all other industries (sugar, banana, tourism etc.). Businessmen and women and those in authority must understand that ours is a unique, quality product. They should provide the fertile soil that artists and craftsmen need to survive, such as investment and the creation of policies that would give incentives and encourage Artist and Craftspeople to grow.

The Caribbean Creative Potency - Calypso, Reggae and Literature are signs of the cultural potential that could stun the world in the 90's. For the New World people (Third World) are sources of untouched energies and powers, and the Barbadian psyche must be revolutionized from being "more British than the British" to one of self-awareness and self-confidence.

The Barbadian Society is an academic society and no one can ever question its intellectual ability. The high literacy rate, the vast number of schools, and the scholarships offered over the years to students of Science, Mathematics, English etc, are proof of this. Very little attention has been paid to the Arts - Why not

a School for the Arts? This off balancing of academics over the Creative Arts must be remedied. In our main industries, Tourism, Agriculture and Manufacturing, one can see that the lack of creative initiative has brought our economy to its knees, with mass lay-offs, unemployment, violence, crime, and the International Monetary fund. In short - social chaos.

We have always argued that Art is not an intellectual activity but is very intuitive and instinctual and is of the symbolic, emotional and magical realm. The Barbadian artists and craftsmen have responded to Art in academic terms. The University Students memorise and regurgitate information on their subjects to pass examinations. The artists and craftsmen learn techniques very well, but instead of using them as a means to an end they become the end themselves. He/she becomes so preoccupied with technique that it hinders intuition. These artists become so obsessed with the practical and material aspects of the visual that access to the surreal is precluded.

This public education has proven to be a catastrophic hazard that is based on the inculcation of intellectual knowledge. It develops the faculties of memory, enumeration and classification. It has either depressed or deadened the aesthetic sensibility, which needs for its development, emotional spontaneity, awareness of sensation, contemplation and wholeness of vision.

At this point we would like to mention that we have nothing against being intellectual, but the noticeable failure of the educational system is of some concern. Practitioners in this field, having decided that there is no place for slow learners or for students who have not reached certain academic standards place these "rejects" in what they call "vocational" courses such as Art and Craft. Of late, unemployment has also given rise to six month "crash-courses" in Arts and Craft in order that people who are laid off would be able to make some money. These processes mean that if you are not a top academic, and you can't fit into a job, you must be able to learn a technical skill and become an Artist or Craftsman.

What arises from these processes reveals the nucleus of our problem. These persons can only produce what they are taught and copy what they see. If their produce makes any money, repetition, parasitism and vampirism occur.

Art does not, like technical skill arise from the necessities of a situation, it is an invention. Art redeems our actions from monotony and our minds from boredom. We make and do things in order to survive, and the routine of the endless repetition of

servile task would blunt the senses and deaden the mind unless there is the possibility of making and doing things with a progressive sense of quality. This is the aesthetic sense, and without it we will die.

Art is grace, It is form, Art is the act of doing and making a thing most memorable, it is memorable because it stimulates the senses, because it brings an invention within measurable distance or organic growth, because for a moment the act of man seems to be identified with the universal forces of life.

Although our problems seem to be contagious and incurable and the future seems bleak, the noble and small remnant of us that endures, must in every possible way learn from our dogmas and extremities. We must develop our aesthetic sensibility to such refinement that our niche in the Caribbean Art history is etched out with no degree of uncertainty.

For our peculiar History, Composition or race (melting pot or miscegenation) and as an unknown people in the Art Arena, we must press on to our high calling and dedicate our selves to be vessels of that extra flamboyancy of the Caribbean man. For we must be strong and courageous and know that our time is come to operate and maneuver on the battlefield being faithful warriors and defenders of our rich and extra ordinary culture. For with no uncertain terms it is our own and it is vital and powerful. For a society without Art will perish, perish materially and fade away from the memory of mankind.

CALL FOR ENTRIES

Annalee and Gayle are up to it again this year for Crop Over. The Visual Arts event that they are planning for Sunday August 1st is

ART OVER POLITICS!

This year they are asking all artists to submit a proposal that will be reviewed by a 3 person selection committee, including Christopher Cozier of Trinidad, Denis Tourbin of Canada and Stanley Greaves of Barbados. They want artists to create proposals that are centered around the theme of politics including notions of boundaries, the state or its affairs, production and distribution of wealth, political processes and our social and physical environment. We want artists to take an indepth look at some aspects of the political process.

Please submit three copies of your proposal to either Annalee or Gayle, Cliff Plantation House, St. John, no later than Friday, May 28 1993.

The Chattel House as a Bajan Aesthetic

BY KEN CORSBIE

In the very recent search for a "Bajan culture" as expressed through its arts and crafts, there have been many icons identified as typical, unique and authentic. Among these representations have been TUK, LANDSHIP, STILT WALKING, BATHSHEBA, OLD SUG-ARMILLS, and the CHATTEL HOUSE. There have also been conscious imitations of "authentic African dances," the Limbo, Rastafarianism, beauty contests, Kadooment, Calypso and most recently, Dub.

However, for the essence of what "Bajan" is, nothing has the ingredients of as many or as precise factors as the good, old, most photographed, most drawn, "CHATTEL HOUSE". Tuk has its subtle, peculiar, Bajanness but is almost exactly duplicated in several of the other islands, and Landship is perhaps the only other single activity which is unique and totally Bajan.

Without attempting or intending to downgrade all the other cultural expressions, I wish to indicate some of the factors which make the CHATTEL HOUSE the ideal article completely representing Bajan culture.

Ed Kamau Brathwaite has described the culture of Barbadians as like its rivers - "all underground". It is a private culture. Out of the hundreds of paintings and photographs exhibited over the last year in dozens of "art exhibitions", there must have been only one or two which have shown the inside of a Bajan home. The Bajan's home is almost always at least half-closed, its



front door never wide open, the half-window curtains always pulled across, and even in small close-knit village communities, there is in-home privacy.

Inside those homes are the paraphernalia of both the "old-time" and the "modern" living - there are the plastic flowers still in their protective coverings, "IN GOD WE TRUST" embroidered wall-plaques, crimson-covered three-piece "Courts" furniture, T.V. and VCR, three plaster-of-parris birds on the wall, bead-curtain, floral rug, lace curtains, crocheted headrests on the chairs, "poof", satin cushions, the Prime Minister's photograph, the Queen, Jesus, mahogany clock, kero stove, a medium-sized ghetto blaster, plastic laminated top dining table, and metal-and-cushion chairs. There are nowadays the electric fan, the big fridge, and photographs of a daughter in 'merica.

Paintings, photographs, and poems have praised and "showed off" the outside of the CHATTEL HOUSE, but there is a private "inside" which is as distinctly Bajan and more revealing than the exquisite exterior. It is the essence of Bajanness. Inside these homes is "order". Neat. and the front yard is also "ordered", predictable, and neat. Outside is the gallery or verandah facing the street - no matter that the view from the back of the home would have three miles of rolling countryside and the sea in the distance.

While you're visiting, you'll probably be served sorrel (at Christmas), or mauby, or lemonade, (made from limes), or Coca-Cola from a pet bottle, placed carefully on a coaster, with a piece of cake to be eaten with a cake-fork. And the T.V. or Redifussion will be playing.

There is probably no single icon which would better illustrate some of the unique aspects of Bajan culture than the CHATTEL HOUSE. Complete with neatly dressed family, serving flying-fish and cou-cou, fried chicken, falernum, and sugar-cane juice, a carefully architected and assembled CHATTEL HOUSE could be the centrepiece, the focal point for Carifesta V. Place a road-tennis strip outside, a yard with TUK and LANDSHIP, and you have the complete and most uniquely authentic Barbados representation possible.

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REPRESENTING ARTISTS

Cliff Plantation House, St. John, Barbados. W.I.

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