

LUCAYAN ARCHIPELAGO



RESIDENCY 2024 REPORT

POINCIANA  PAPER PRESS



FRESH MILK 

The Fresh Milk Art Platform and Poinciana Paper Press are proud to share this overview to report on the first Lucayan Archipelago Residency, made possible through our partnership with the Panta Rhea Foundation.

As two Caribbean organisations, based in Barbados and The Bahamas respectively, our mission over the years has been to enrich the cultural ecosystem of the region, particularly through exchanges across geographic and disciplinary lines. This 8-week residency represented a concrete step towards bringing emerging talent into collaborative relationships, while taking a particular focus, in this case, on the environment and ecological circumstances of The Bahamas through the craft of book arts.

Poinciana Paper Press, based in Nassau, served as a wonderful host for our two selected residents throughout this period: Ark Ramsay, a non-binary writer based in Barbados whose fiction centers queer Caribbean identities and coping with a warming earth from the fragility of an island ecosystem, and Jocmarys (Joko) Viruet Feliciano, a visual artist from Puerto Rico who uses hand papermaking and book arts to explore ancestry, the concept of healing and identity,



the decolonization of the Latin American mind, and the exploration of energetic bodies that are not visible.

Their experience balanced studio time with weekly workshops, organised excursions, events and meetings with contemporary visual artists and writers, ecologists, and environmentalists, in order to understand the multi-layered reality of the Lucayan Archipelago, and develop proposals for radically different futures. Ark and Joko were joined by a group of local artists-in-residence at Poinciana Paper Press who are also rooting their creative explorations in the environment.



WEEK 1 & 2

The first week kicked off with a welcome orientation for all the residents at Poinciana Paper Press, following which Joko and Ark were able to get familiar with their surroundings through a downtown walking art gallery and monuments tour, as well as a special guided visit to National art Gallery of The Bahamas. In addition to trying out local cuisine, excursions included a straw weaving workshop by Rosemary Brice, as well as a viewing of the production Short Tales as part of the opening night of our theatre festival Shakespeare in Paradise.



Outside of time in the paper mill learning new skills, Joko and Ark were invited to a deep dive into the rich natural environment of the archipelago: visiting Clifton Heritage National Park; the Primeval Forest National Park, as well as snorkeling underwater sculpture gardens. They also visited the Wine & Art festival at the Bahamas National Trust retreat and the Baha Mar Resorts. We're very grateful to John, Octavia and Sean Cox for their generous tours in which they shared their deep knowledge of Bahamian culture and ecology.



WEEK 3 & 4

Our initial plans for week three of the Lucayan Archipelago Residency were altered due to the arrival of Hurricane Milton. The duo's flights to Abaco had to be postponed till the following week, so more time was dedicated to studio experiments and a re-visit to NAGB for a guided tour by Letitia Marie, the curator of the exposition "A Small Remainder of Teeth: Ecohorror and Anti-Paradise". The weekend closed out on a positive note, with Ark joining the Human Rights March & Fun Day with Pride Bahamas, and Joko leading a pigmenting pulp demonstration for the regular Saturday paper making workshops. The outcome was a giant sheet of paper made by all the Poinciana Paper Press residents and friends!



Joko and Ark finally made it to Marsh Harbour, Abaco, for their short stay at The Frank Kenyon Centre for Research, Education and Conservation. After visiting the Hope Town Lighthouse and Treasure Cay, they explored the pine forest and blue holes, or underwater caves, with the expert guidance of the local NGO Friends of the Environment, which shared about measures being taken to protect this ecosystem. A last minute change of flights allowed for an impromptu visit to the Tern Gallery at The Island House, guided by the Founding Director herself, Amanda Coulson.



After this visit and more than a few memorable experiences together, ideas began to take root in the form of a collaborative art book based on the teachings of Joko and Ark's encounter with the Bahamian landscape and cultural ecology.

This packed week ended with a special paper-making party at Poinciana Paper Press for the Bahamian National Heroes Day holiday, and the chance to explore printing on the Vandercook Press during a letterpress image-making workshop.



WEEK 5 & 6

The fifth week of the Lucayan Archipelago Residency brought together the residents with Fresh Milk representative Katherine Kennedy at the Fuze Art Fair! Hosted by Baha Mar as part of The Bahamas Culinary Arts Festival, Ark and Joko got to engage with over 40 exhibitors from 14 countries, as well as provocative artist talks hosted by The Current: Baha Mar Gallery & Art Center and moderated by Natalie Willis-Whyly.



Some major work in the studio advanced during these weeks, with Ark completing their text, and Joko finalizing her illustrations cut out of her handmade avocado-dyed papers. The week finished off with a relaxing visit to the local farmers market, and a cyanotype workshop which resulted in Joko initiating an additional artist book project!





Week six brought about a saddening and unforeseen change in circumstances, as Ark had to leave early to receive a surgical procedure in Barbados due to a medical emergency. Fortunately Ark was able to complete their writing which was included in the handmade book whose craft was continued by Joko, who stayed on for the remaining two weeks of the residency.



WEEK 7 & 8

Approaching the conclusion of this residency, Joko worked to complete six limited edition copies of the resident's collaborative art book, using letterpress printing on handmade paper for the beautiful covers. These were put on view as part of the “Post-Resilient” exhibition, on November 16th and 17th, as part of Transforming Spaces Art Tour 2024, which celebrated its 20th anniversary of annual island-wide bus tours to showcase contemporary visual arts in Nassau.



On another excursion, Terence Lord - the Landfill Operations Manager of the New Providence Ecology Park - gave an insightful tour for Joko. She later was able to use the paper mill to pull decorative sheets with leftover pigmented blue pulp from one of her studio projects, as well as lead a pamphlet making demo with Chappell Whyms Jr, fellow resident from the local cohort.



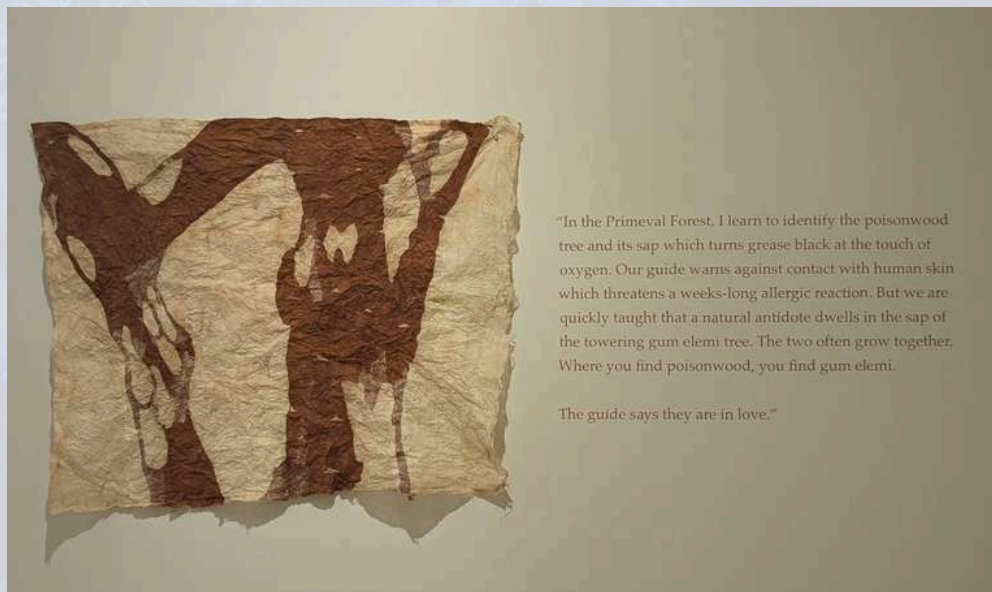
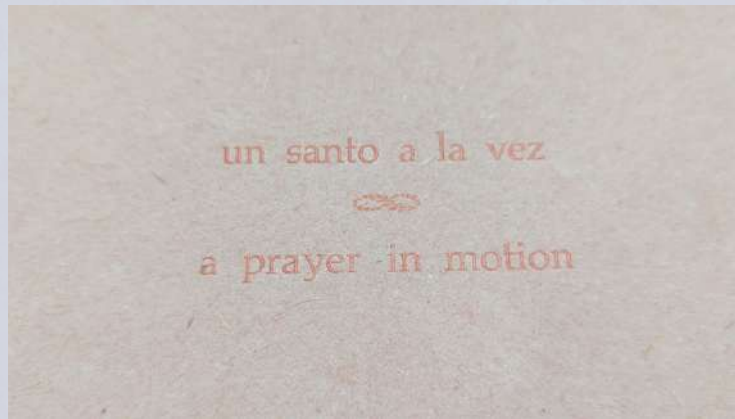
The weekend wrapped up with a fun interview with Maddie Boom, for the National Gallery of the Bahamas Blank Canvas show, which aired on Guardian Radio 96.9, amplifying insights by Joko and fellow resident Cydne Jasmine Colbe, who shared on their experience working in the Poinciana Paper Press studio, along with Annalee Davis of Fresh Milk.

For the bittersweet final week, Joko was taken on one final field trip - a day-long boat trip to the Exuma Cays! There she was able to experience the adventure of snorkeling, feeding the iguanas, petting the sharks and visiting the world famous swimming pigs. This was made possible with the services of Born Free Charters.



Following, the whole team got to work on setting up the exhibition, where the final version of Ark and Joko's project was shown to the public, entitled: "Un Santo a la Vez: A Prayer in Motion", as well as Joko's solo piece "Sister Island". The event featured the depth and breadth of each resident's development over these months together, and was enjoyed by a large and enthusiastic audience.





"This book was conceived in motion. On those days when climate grief forced me out of my life and onto my feet. It wanted my time and attention.

A walking partner. So, I followed where it led, backtracking through self-pity and apathy, dovetailing down newly cut paths toward an emptying sorrow, and finally, ascending with fired legs toward a generative rage.

The way beyond grief, with grief"

-Ark Ramsay



Ark's words greeted the visitors to the group show, making their absence felt but their resounding vision in the midst of our ever-intensifying climate crisis very much present. Together with the texture and care of Joko's creation, the outcome of the Lucayan Archipelago collaboration speaks to the stubborn and generative insistence of artists to respond to their times, in verbal and material languages establishing an ethos to move through the difficulty at hand.

The craftsmanship of these young and talented Caribbean citizens was nourished by the passionate and committed community of Poinciana Paper Press, who so caringly brought Joko and Ark into a felt intimacy with the ecology and cultural heritage of The Bahamas.

Their visions of the future speak of holding the tensions and nuances of the lived reality of ecological destabilisation, and the effects it has on the increasingly vulnerable places we live. Their dialogue, manifested in their respective crafts, is tender in its tone and assertive in its love for the environment and its caretakers - the fruits of coming to know a foreign-yet-familiar land; an essentially energising experience for Caribbeans getting to know the Caribbean.





I was fully immersed in an art community that was thinking about similar issues to those that I was grappling with in my everyday art practice. It was brilliant to be able to enter into conversation and draw inspiration from how they puzzle through the head and heart quandaries of climate crisis.



It was also such a joy to be able to collaborate with someone from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, since a history of enforced disruption keeps communication and collaboration between our islands purposefully absent. Finally, praise has to be given to Sonia Farmer and the Poinciana Paper Press itself. I feel like my own art practice has been exploded/expanded from coming into contact with how they do things there, and the very craft and techniques of book making at that level.

-Ark

Being able to create art at the studio while sharing spaces with other artists in residency was so lovely. It was good to see what other residents were doing; working on different projects whilst in the same place was really motivating.

When we started to fully put together our collaboration it was great to have someone like Sonia give us feedback when needed. She helped with editing Ark's writing like we were in a graduate level workshop, and also helped me to design the book digitally. I think the part I liked the most about the residency was having Sonia there for whatever I needed. Community was key for this residency.

-Joko



THANK YOU!

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