

# Acting director aims to awaken

By Searlina Bodden

Newly-installed National Gallery Acting Director Nancy Barnard is seeking to accomplish one main goal with the organisation's next exhibit, *Rousings*. She wants the world to recognise the Cayman Islands as a centre for visual art. Now.

"Anything that comes

from the Caribbean or any other region that is considered ethnic or exotic is seen as 'the other'... is considered on the periphery. I've always wanted to not be considered 'the other' here in the Caribbean but to be considered *centre* for a change. I want us to show that we could show just as

quality, exciting contemporary artwork of the level coming out of the big cities like New York, Paris, London," she states.

The seeds for *Rousings* were planted in January of 2003 when Barnard initiated the research process by searching the Internet for past shows along the lines of her vision. Among her sources of inspiration was *Soon*

*Come*, which exhibited the contemporary art of Jamaica and featured a number of artists that ap-

pealed to her. "I've always wanted to not be considered 'the other' here in the Caribbean but to be considered centre for a change."

Barnard consulted

with the well-versed Jamaican art scholars Hope Brooks and Dr. David Boxer. Ms. Brooks is Dean of Visual Arts at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts in Kingston, Jamaica. Dr. Boxer is Director Emeritus at the National Gallery of Jamaica. (Both are in the exhibition).

It was through the dialogue provided through these artists and others in Jamaica that the Acting Director found 18 exceptional artists ranging in experience from the emerging to the established and encouraged them to submit works for *Rousings*.

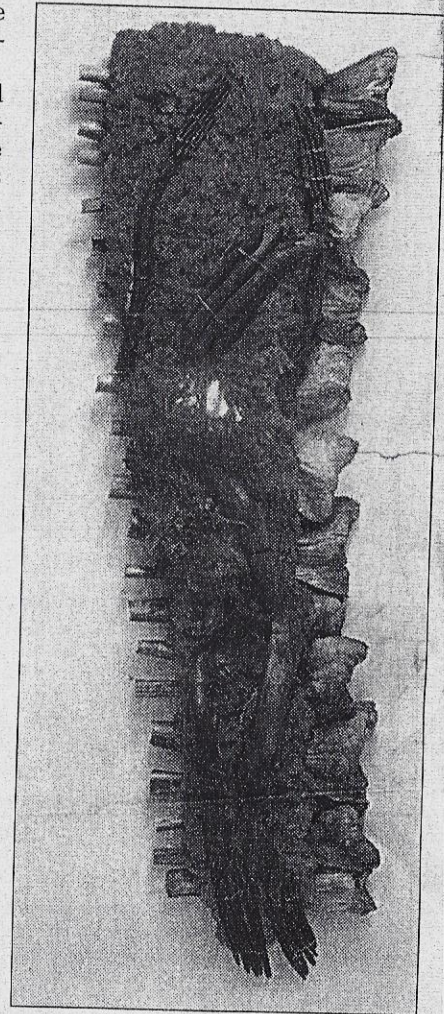
Including the work of the up and coming artists was a deliberate move on the part of Barnard, who believes in the energy and potential of younger artists alongside the more

make intense social and political statements.

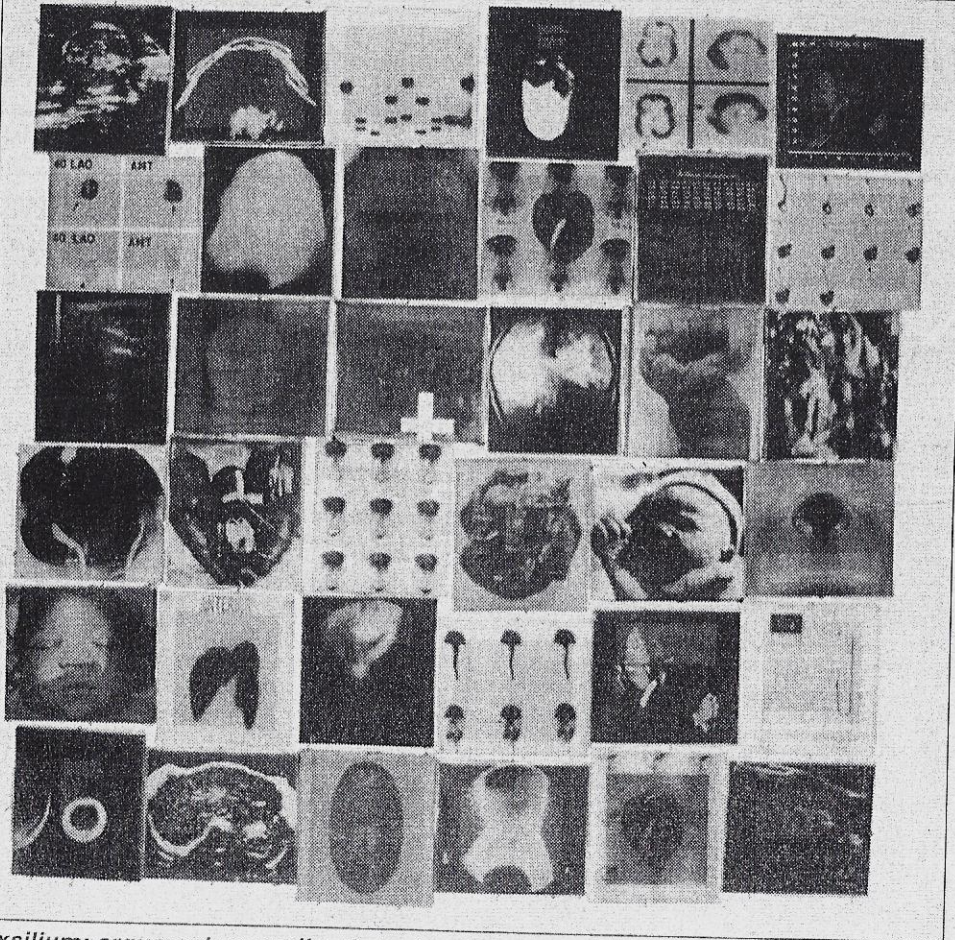
Barnard warns that, although the works express individual truths for the artists, the material must not be viewed as cultural models for the Cayman Islands. The material is interpretative and must be appreciated as such.

According to Barnard the exhibit will explore topics relevant to Cayman, including self-determination - a topic that has heated up the newspaper and airwaves for the last year. The exhibit, she continued, could spurn on dialogue on the subject and encourage people to form a voice and an opinion on the matter.

The tone of the different works is varied. Some, such as one on slave labour, evokes powerfully frightening emotions. The artwork deals with serious subjects in an aesthetically engaging way.



Laura Facey's installation piece, *Indigo Prayer*, is an abstract depiction of the crucifixion of Christ in natural indigo yarn on wood.



*Exsilium: argumentum exsilientio* by Prudence Lovell

experienced. Here in Cayman, she states, artists are fortunate because "there is still so much room for everyone to be heard and seen".

The title *Rousings*, Barnard states, refers directly to the dialogue and "intelligent discussion" that will arise from the provocative topics of the pieces, which include colonialism, slavery and racism. Some of the pieces

All of them share one thing, she states, and that is they are of an excellent quality.

*Rousings* will run until 20 March at the National Gallery. After that, Barnard is working toward the exhibition visiting London, Berlin, Washington, and Chicago, and finally Jamaica. She hopes that *Rousings* will be one of many opportunities to take the Gallery's efforts to an inter-

the Cayman Islands and abroad," she continued.

An added benefit to bringing the Jamaican art to Cayman, she stated, is that Caymanian artists get the chance to meet their regional peers and learn from them. That sort of artistic exchange could be invaluable to their careers, she concluded.

*Rousings* opens 11 a.m. Saturday 10 January at the National Gallery.