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The importance of street art as a mean

Street art has been defined as the voice of the streets. It began as a medium for the disenfranchised, a way for those on the fringes of society to have their voices heard, and has grown to become a powerful art form capable of regenerating communities, challenging and entertaining people for a positive social purpose, and forming common bonds among conflicting facets of a society. It is an age-old cultural phenomenon, found in every city in the world, and brings art into public space, however temporarily. Jessica Wallace, education and outreach coordinator with the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands, reports.

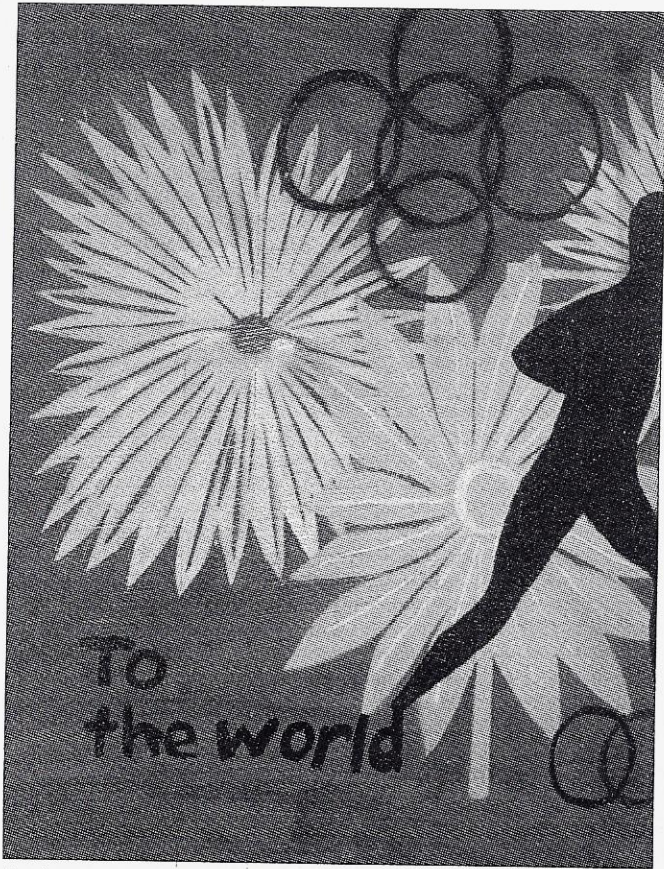
The National Gallery of the Cayman Islands is eager to present for the first time an eclectic variety of contemporary street art by emerging local artists. Although Street Art is fast becoming recognised as the defining art movement of the 21st Century, it was originally born out of graffiti writing which started in the ghettos of New York and San Francisco in the 1960s and 1970s.

It is important to note, however, that street art is very different to graffiti, with which it is commonly confused. Graffiti is scratching, scrawling and painting of lettering on walls, and is often considered unsightly and illegal. Two things differentiate street art from its graffiti predecessor: the self-consciousness in its conversation with a community and its lack of aggression and violence. Many people are beginning to understand that street art is not about vandalism; rather it raises important issues about the need to reclaim our public space, the need for us to affirm and access artistic existence within concrete jungles, the need and importance of spontaneous acts of creativity to make communities more liveable, the need to acknowledge the existence of deprived and unhappy segments of the

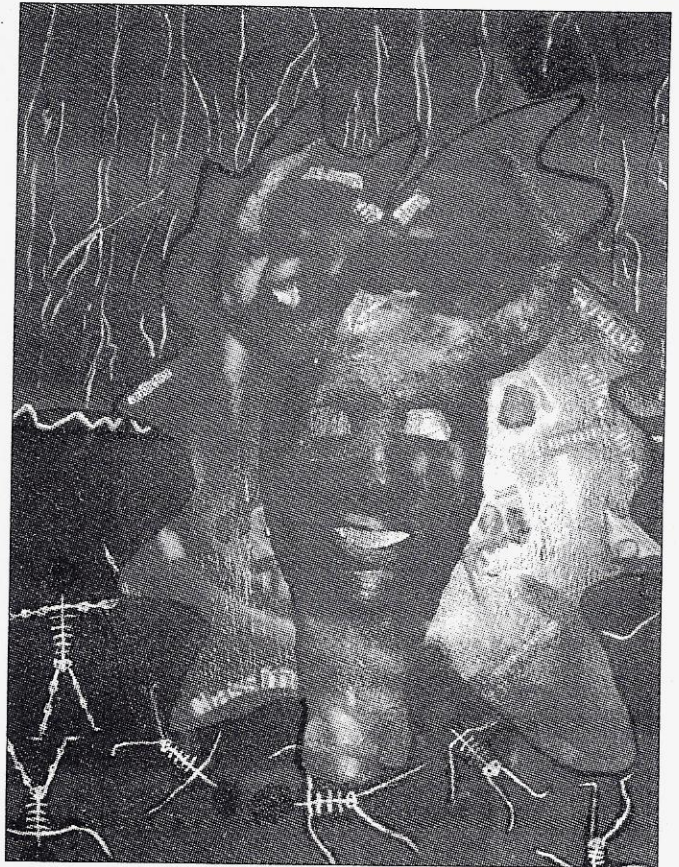
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Northward Prison Warden, Mr McDonald's artwork



Northward Prison art

population, and the need to do something about it! Street Art can stimulate discussion, motivate people to reconsider their role in society, and reshape the lifeless urban horror that humans so often construct for ourselves in the dubious name of progress.

Street Art emphasises the sorrow and beauty within a community which is often

ignored or forgotten if one gets too caught up in the challenges that a busy life presents. Street Art has the power to create change in a community by questioning what people take for granted. It subscribes to an artistic alternative that is more open, non-exclusive, and strives to be honest about the human costs of a modern society.