



Gordon Solomon



Image: Gordon Solomon (2014), *Thatcher*, from the collection of the artist

“I do not remember learning in school about historical Cayman. I knew more about my Caribbean neighbours, America, and Britain than I did of myself, and that needed to change; I'll use my art to change that.”

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The Artist

Born in George Town, Grand Cayman in the late 1970's, Gordon Solomon states "from the time I was a child I knew I was an artist." Indeed, his formative years under instructors such as Lorna Reid, Mark Frazer and John Broad influenced his decision to pursue art. Solomon is now a painter, muralist and musician.



Photograph courtesy of:
Cayman Compass

After high school Solomon found work as a signmaker. He joined several other emerging Caymanian artists - members of the collective Native Sons - for an exhibition in 1999. The Native Sons is now one of the most prominent associations in the arts in Cayman. Later in 1999, Gordon was commissioned by the National Gallery (NGCI) to paint a vehicle during Cayfest.

In 2001, Solomon participated in NGCI's inaugural "Artist Away" programme. He gained knowledge of printmaking techniques alongside several of Cuba's most esteemed artists, receiving his certificate from the Taller Experimental de Gráfica de La Habana in Cuba.

During this period Solomon oversaw the creation of a series of murals of Cayman's history on the walls of the Bonaventure Boys' Home, while employed as an instructor for the Cayman Islands Marine Institute. Later, in 2002, he won the Cayman National Cultural Foundation's (CNCF) Artistic Endeavour Award.

Solomon attended the University of Superior Art for six months in 2003. Upon his return to Cayman, he poured himself into his work and held his successful first solo exhibition, *True Colours* in the Westin Causarina Resort's lobby in 2005.

Solomon has since exhibited successfully both here and abroad including the prestigious Artexpo in 2014. Alternating between three distinct styles, he has also won second place in the 2012 Ogier Art Award and the Silver Star Medal for Creativity in the Arts. His work is a part of the collections of the Cayman Islands National Archive, the Cayman Islands National Museum, NGCI and numerous private collectors.

The Artwork

The painting, *Thatcher*, is from a body of work that Solomon prepared for Artexpo (New York) in 2014. It pays tribute to Cayman's national tree, the silver thatch palm and its multitude of uses. Most of the background and the basket in this work is completed in one of Solomon's distinct styles.

Solomon almost exclusively paints scenes of Cayman's past in a method he calls "spots of light". Similar to chromoluminarism, used by many Post-Impressionist artists, the various colours on the canvas are mixed in the eyes of the viewers. Unique to his style, the dots vary in size and often occur in arcs and swirls adding dynamic energy to his paintings.

Another style Solomon is known for is a type of cubism that creates the illusion of it popping up and off of the canvas in a bright palette. This technique is usually reserved for instances of the here and now.

Discussion

- Discuss why Solomon might have chosen this subject matter to represent in his paintings.
- Most historic photographs that Solomon chooses to work from as a reference are black and white. Discuss how he might select which colours to use in his paintings.
- Consider the giant Jim Hellum mosaic at Camana Bay's observation tower that spans an entire wall height. Discuss how this may be similar to chromoluminarism.

Making Comparisons



Image: Gordon Solomon (2015), *Red Sky At Night*, from the collection of the artist.

- Visit <http://www.wikiart.org/en/georges-seurat/beach-at-gravelines-1890> to view a painting by the artist who devised chromoluminarism, Georges Seurat. Other paintings are listed chronologically at the bottom of the webpage; view paintings after 1885. Consider how the artists' techniques and styles are similar or different.
- Research other artists who practised chromoluminarism.

Follow Up Activities

- Write an art review of *Red Sky At Night*.
- Complete a copy of a Solomon's painting on watercolour paper. Paint blocks of colour on your drawing as washes in acrylic paint. Using oil pastels, make spots in each block of colour with analogous colours.