



Miguel Powery



Image: Miguel Powery, 2008, *Riding High*, from the collection of NGCI

“These are the times and feelings that I would like my paintings to convey and connect to the viewer: my love for the ocean and the people of these Islands.”

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The Artist

Miguel Powery was born and grew up in West Bay, Grand Cayman in a lineage of seafarers. Fittingly much of his work for the past decade has revolved around the sea.

His father's tales of his seafaring career have been a constant source of inspiration for him and he has painted many seascapes and ships over the years.



Photograph: NGCI

"He used to come home and regale us with amazing stories of his adventurous voyages," Powery recalls. "The stories were told with great passion and I could really relate to them and imagine the life they had to endure."

Since leaving high school, Powery has created stunningly intricate and detailed jewelry, his specialty: black coral. However he is also known as a painter since forming the Native Sons with three other artists in 1995.

Powery knew he wanted to be an artist after visiting Mr. Arthur's General Store as a young boy and discovering a set of paints and brushes. He couldn't afford to buy them but would visit often in the following months. One day, weeks later, his sister presented him with the set and Miguel has never looked back.

Powery has exhibited locally — most prominently as a solo artist at the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands (NGCI) in 1999 — and abroad — notably representing the Cayman Islands at Carifesta in Trinidad. He has earned a Lifetime Achievement award from Cayman National Cultural Foundation in 2003.

Recently he was commissioned for artwork by the office of the Premier (Cayman Islands). His work can also be found in the collections of the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands, the Cayman National Museum and many prominent private collections.

The Artwork

The painting, *Riding High*, shows a pair of men sailing in an iconic catboat, one at the rudder steering and the other out on a weatherboard balancing the unpredictable craft.

Parallels to works like this, which constitute a significant portion of Powery's portfolio, are also immediately noticeable in paintings by American maritime artist, Winslow Homer.

Maritime painting is a genre of figurative art that depicts ships and the sea, best known for works between the 17th and 19th centuries. However it remains popular today with ships' portraits and nostalgic works such as Powery's glamorising the industries of this era that depended on the ocean.

Powery, referring to archival images for accuracy, explores lighting and a fluid style for this painting. The saturated hues of blue and green in the painting demonstrates the dramatic effects of light in the tropics and adds to the feeling of the expanse of the sea.

Discussion

- Discuss the setting that this painting depicts. Where might this be taking place?
- Research and discuss the time period - early twentieth century - that Powery romanticises. Discuss the decline of these industries in the latter part of the century. The curator's statement found at <https://www.nationalgallery.org.ky/Exhibition-NGCI/tiDalshift/pastexhibitions> is a good start..
- Discuss the artist's choice of colours in this painting.

Making Comparisons



Image: Winslow Homer (1873-76), *Breezing Up (A Fair Wind)*, private collection



Image: Miguel Powery (2006), *Father and Son*, from the collection of Truman Bodden

- Homer's *Breezing Up (A Fair Wind)* depicts the New England counterpart of the catboat. Beyond the similar boats, what similarities do you notice?
- Visit <http://www.winslowhomer.org/> to view paintings and read more about by Winslow Homer. Consider why he would be led to paint seascapes. How does this compare to Powery's influences?

Follow Up Activities

- Find photographs of a regatta featuring schooners, you may find some online but the best resource is the Cayman Islands National Archive. Draw a composition on watercolour paper, feel free to refer to more than one photograph. Complete your artwork using acrylic paints.
- Write an art review of *Riding High*.