



Randy Chollette

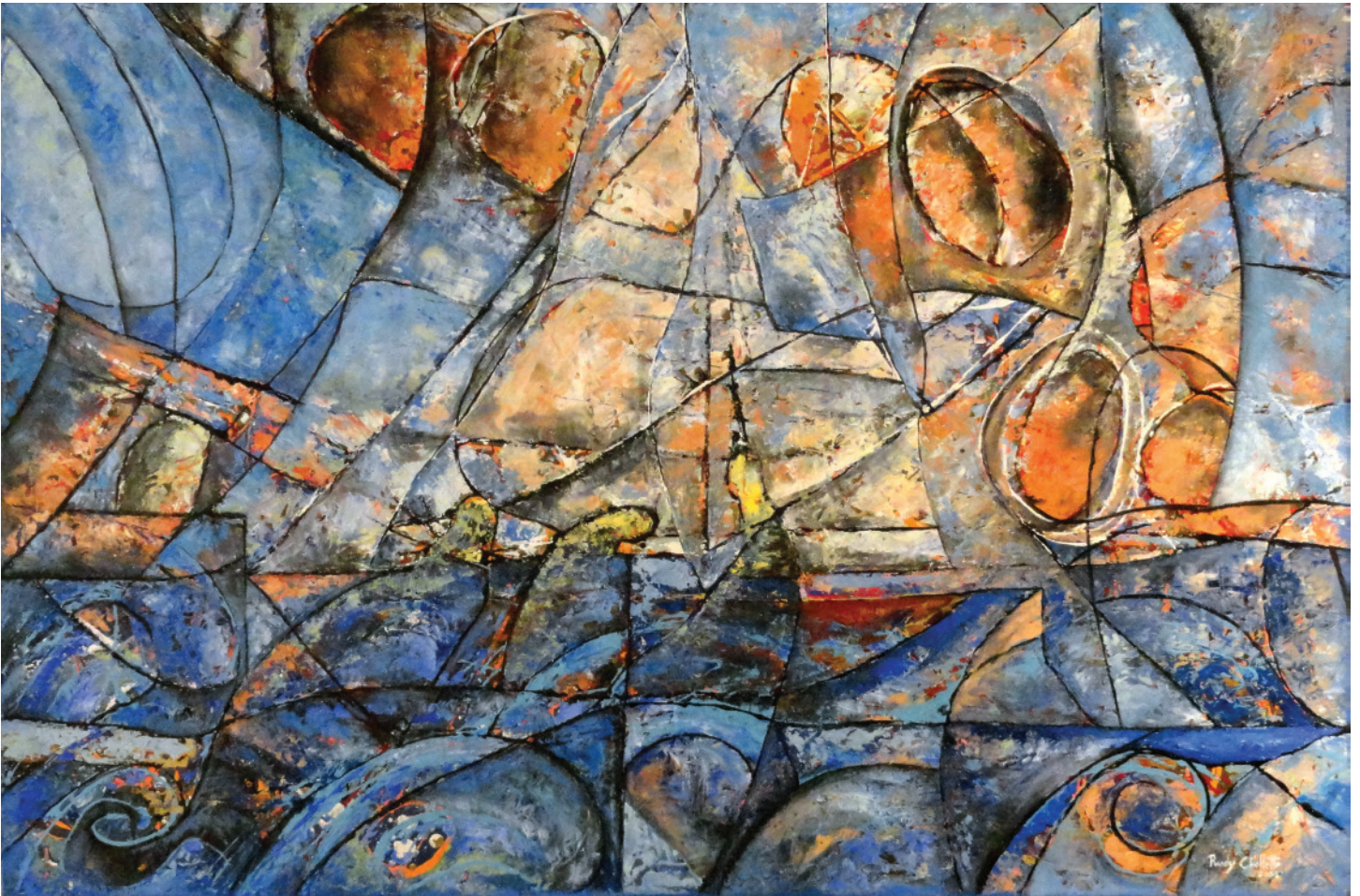


Image: Randy Chollette (2003), *Sea Elos*, from the collection of NGCI

“The one thing that must remain constant in my work is that each piece, no matter how big or small, is of high quality and must represent my philosophies about the world around us, even as my philosophy grows.”

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The Artist

Randy Chollette is an intuitive, self-taught artist and musician. His energetic, vibrant work is often identifiable by its signature black outlined mosaic configurations or distinctly West Indian subject matter.



Photograph courtesy of: travelgalart.wordpress.com

Chollette began painting when he was just five years old, on rocks, wood, and any surface he could find. He continued with art classes at the Cayman Islands High School, during which time his work was featured on the cover of the Horizon Magazine. His work has since matured and his skills increased through perseverance and, by his indication, Yahweh's blessing.

In 2000, Chollette joined the Caymanian artists' collective Native Sons, a group of young Caymanian artists who came together in 1996 in order to establish an aesthetic which they considered to be uniquely Caymanian. They are inspired by their heritage and socio-cultural experiences, and consciously incorporate their African heritage into their subject matter. Chollette also draws on techniques such as 'cubism' made famous by Pablo Picasso, 'cloisonnism' employed by artists such as Paul Gauguin, and 'sgraffito' which is traditionally used on wall facades and ceramics.

Chollette has received many prestigious local awards for his work, including two People's Choice Awards for the McCoy Prize (2003 and 2004). He exhibits widely in Grand Cayman and has collectors locally as well as in London, Canada, New York and Malaysia.

Randy Chollette's journey as an artist mirrors his spiritual journey. Chollette is a devout Rastafarian and his work is wholly inspired by his beliefs, which also embrace the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, Buddhism and Christianity. These beliefs are all included into his spiritually charged paintings.

The Artwork

Chollette's work ranges from realistic to the abstract, his work is spiritual, meditative and mesmerizing. The work explores themes from landscape to cultural artifacts to political statements. Evident is his love for Cayman's natural surroundings, honour for his African heritage, and observance of brotherhood and humanity. His work honours the essence of the Creator that is in everything and everyone.

Sea Elos, winner of the People's Choice Award at the 2003 McCoy Prize, draws heavily on the fragmentation of Cubism. Here the artist depicts the seascape from a multitude of viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context. The multiple viewpoints capture the movement of the sea, sail and boat, which are the central subject of the picture, by breaking them up, analysing, and re-assembling them in an abstracted form. The surfaces intersect at seemingly random angles, presenting no coherent sense of depth.

As mentioned above, Randy Chollette is well-known for his daring employment of 'cloisonnism'. This method of painting with flat areas of colour and bold outlines brings to mind Medieval enamelling or stained glass techniques, and was greatly appreciated by artist Paul Gauguin for expressing the essence of objects.

He has explained that the black lines represent the spirit that runs throughout all life, holding it together and giving it structure; something unseen, yet vital.

Discussion

- Are you able to see the image in *Sea Elos*? What elements of the painting help you see it?
- In Cubist artwork, the artist depicts the subject from various viewpoints instead of a singular viewpoint to portray a more profound appreciation of the subject. What message may Chollette be trying to convey in this painting?

Making Comparisons

- Look at the early paintings of Georges Braque. How is the work of Braque similar to Chollette's work? How is it different? <http://www.wikiart.org/en/georges-braque>
- Visit the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands and view the pieces by Randy Chollette that are on display in the National Collection. What do you notice?
- Look at the work of Georges Braque again, what do you notice about his earlier pieces compared to Braque's later work? Why do think that this is?
- Have you seen any of Chollette's other paintings? Do you think what you notice are for the same reasons as Georges Braque?

Follow Up Activities

- Try cutting a photograph into triangles, squares, diamonds, or parallelograms. Shuffle these pieces around and draw your new image. Carefully select your colours and paint your drawing. Fill in any gaps between your sections with additional details or solid colours. Once you are done, outline your sections with a permanent marker using bold lines.
- Try this method a few more times with different images trying to mimic Chollette's technique.

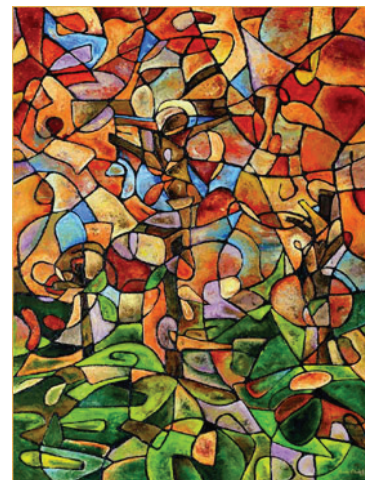


Image: Randy Chollette (2005), *Yeshua*, private collection