

PRAYER CANVASES | PRESS RELEASE

Cayman National Cultural Foundation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Cayman National Cultural Foundation (CNCF) in collaboration with the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands (NGCI) present 'Prayer Canvases' an exhibition on twenty-five visionary intuitive paintings by Gladwyn K. Bush (Miss Lassie) from the CNCF collection.

EVENT: Prayer Canvases Exhibition

DATES: December 18th, 2012 until March 15th, 2013

HOURS: Monday-Friday 10am-5pm, Saturdays 10am-3pm

LOCATION: National Gallery of the Cayman Islands

COST: Free Admission

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- **How were the 25 paintings to be exhibited chosen out of the hundreds she did?**

The exhibition curator and CNCF Artistic Director, Henry Muttoo chose the twenty-five paintings to give a sense of the entire CNCF collection and to follow the theme of 'Prayer Canvases'

- **Do these 25 follow any particular theme or style?**

The exhibition will tell the story of the bible through the work of Miss Lassie. Each painting represents a prayer or vision Miss Lassie had and felt the need to preserve and express in paint. Henry, the curator of the exhibition, has carefully matched each painting to its respective bible verse; these verses will be on display next to each painting at the exhibition.

- **Are they from a certain period of her life?**

It was only when Miss Lassie began to have religious visions that she picked up a paintbrush at the age of 62. Prayer Canvases exhibits Miss Lassie's work over a period of 27 years from the age of 62 up until her death at the age of 89. It really is remarkable that she was able to complete so many works in only 27 years.

- **What kind of paints did she use and was she painting on canvas, wood or something else?**

She painted prolifically with any kind of paint she could lay her hands on. Miss Lassie painted not only on canvas, but also on the walls, windows and ceilings of her house. Even some of her pillows and furniture were decorated with her images.

- **How would you describe her style?**

Intuitive or visionary

- **She is described on the CNCF as a genius – why is she considered a genius?**

Miss Lassie was able to paint without any inhibitions or reservations about what others thought. She was able to achieve a sort of childlike creativity, which, to the

majority of the population, is lost as soon as we start growing up and become self-conscious. "Miss Lassie is a genius because of the measure of her creative mind was in greater abundance than that given to 'ordinary' people." – Henry Muttou, CNCF Artistic Director

• **Can you tell us a little more about Miss Lassie?**

- Miss Lassie was a 4th generation Caymanian
- Miss Lassie was awarded a national honour, Member of the British Empire (MBE) in 1997 and received the award during the Queen's Birthday celebrations in Grand Cayman on June 15, 1998.
- Miss Lassie was also a recipient of the Cayman National Cultural Foundation's Heritage Award.
- Her work is documented in the 156-page art book, *My Markings - the Art of Gladwyn K. Bush*, published by the Cultural Foundation.
- Her work is in private collections in England, the United States, Jamaica, South Africa, Germany and the Cayman Islands, and in the collection of the American Visionary Arts Museum in Baltimore, Maryland.

QUOTES

"I first met Miss Lassie in 1992. I had seen and marveled at her tiny decorated house several times as I traversed South Sound. The urge to meet the person, who had been awarded this gift of child-like innocence and freedom the structures of naturalistic visual response to be able to essentialise her visions with such freedom, was getting stronger. As soon as I met her I knew this was a rare human being - the kind of individual fortunate to have been blessed. Time and her passing have only strengthened that conviction. I know that her visions had to become known, first to the people of the Cayman Islands and after that to the world." - Henry Muttou, CNCF Artistic Director

"We are delighted to be partnering with CNCF on the Miss Lassie exhibition 'Prayer Canvases' and to help celebrate the end of what has been remarkable year in the preservation of her home and work. CNCF and their supporters are to be commended for their efforts in securing her legacy for future generations." - Natalie Urquhart, NGCI Director

"I really would have loved to have seen her paint. Looking at some of her strokes, I wondered if she was left handed, I don't know, perhaps she painted with both! I imagine she was a lady of great determination, with very definite views in life." - Sue Howe, Local Artist

"There are certain traits common to all intuitive - they are untrained; they are compelled to do what they do, they are usually either religious, or claim religious-type experiences, they have managed to reach individuation later in life; they are generally unafraid and continue to work despite the systems working against them, and they have managed to retain the innocence and playful instincts of children - where they lose themselves in their work. I haven't met another artist in Cayman who answers to all these general traits - they may be out there but just not known. I

would say, though, that Luelan Bodden (Lutz) is an Intuitive Artist and based on the work I have seen from her, Nasaria Suckoo-Chollette comes close.” - Henry Muttoo, CNCF Artistic Director

“The exhibition ‘Prayer Canvases’ is relatable on a very human level. Miss Lassie’s ability to achieve childlike freedom in her paintings will take us back to our own childhood and the biblical stories represented will remind us of bible teachings we learnt growing up in the Cayman Islands and Christian communities elsewhere.” - Kaitlyn Elphinstone, CNCF Programmes and Marketing Officer

CURATOR’S EXHIBITION OVERVIEW – ‘PRAYER CANVASES’

“... as soon as a man tries to escape every risk and prefers to experience life only in his head, in the form of ideas and fantasies, as soon as he surrenders to opinions of ‘how it ought to be’ and, in order not to make a false step, imitates others whenever possible, he forfeits the chance of his own independent development.” - Yolande Jacobi – “The Way Of Individuation

Miss Lassie’s deceptively simple paintings contradict her genius - her blessing lies, perhaps, in the fact that she was never taught to paint. Her work, therefore, is not artifice but creative truth distilled to its embryonic form with the innocence and freedom of a child.

The great body of her work, from which the 25 paintings in this exhibition have been selected, tells the story of her particular Caymanian life experiences mirrored in the life of Jesus Christ; experiences of immense joy, pain and suffering, misunderstanding, humiliation, faith and prayer, epiphany, forgiveness and generosity. It represents a remarkable cultural and artistic gift of identity to the people of the Cayman Islands.

CNCF thanks the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands for their partnership in presenting this exhibition. The timing could not have been better; a second issue of postage stamps bearing images from Miss Lassie’s Christmas paintings are now in circulation and her South Sound home, “Mind’s Eye” has been conserved and restored, and is now open to the public. Enjoy.

Henry Muttoo - Artistic Director, Cayman National Cultural Foundation