



*"Baltic Blossom, Bendel Hydes' Circumnavigating Series"
From the collection of Alan and Karen Turner*



Circumnavigating the Globe

Works by Bendel Hydes | February 1st - May 31st, 2012

Our thanks to
Alan and Karen Turner
for generously loaning their collection
for the inaugural exhibition of the
new National Gallery.



BAUDRILLARD'S DILEMMA

150-120 degrees West
Circumnavigating
Series #11

Oil on Canvas
198 x 198



PARADOX OF DREAMS

120-90 degrees West
Circumnavigating
Series #12

Oil on Canvas
198 x 198

But in typical fashion of being at sea, one has both the consciousness of the philosopher and the mind of the dreamer. If I had become encouraged by the many islands in the last work as indicative of finally reaching home, I am now faced with another vast and open stretch of journey before me. This realization gives rise to a focused and concentrated idea, as I contemplated the thought of having a lot of imaginary time on my hands! I began to consider the work of the French cultural philosopher Jean Baudrillard and one of the central ideas to his thinking, namely that an object (or anything) is only given significance and meaning if it is relational to something else that it is not. In other words, an apple is only an apple, because it is seen as not being an orange. I became obsessed with the notion of being out at sea for days on end without 'seeing' anything but water, and considered how my mind would react if I saw 'something' in the water that I had never seen before, and hence was unable to 'relate it' to anything else! This became Baudrillard's Dilemma, and the symbolism of the spherical shape therefore became the object to which I the subject, was drawn, but which ultimately was possibly or only a 'hyperreality' on my part!

I made the work during the Gulf Oil Spill of 2010, and in many ways it is both a testament to the American Dream of a better tomorrow and an indictment of our technological future. My yearning was to use the warm colours to signify the passion for life in America and Mexico, but the ongoing disaster contributed much to the drawing that emerged from within.



VERITY OF OPPOSITES

150-180 degrees East
Circumnavigating
Series #9
Oil on Canvas
198 x 198

180 East is the same as 180 West, and this work represents the meeting point of the dateline and the unity of oneness in a geographical sense. The rush of emotions characterized by the striations of blue are supposed to be matched by the tubular motif filled with the same, flowing in the opposite direction.



THE CROSSING

180-150 degrees West
Circumnavigating
Series #10
Oil on Canvas
198 x 198

Here the many islands of the Pacific finally emerge above water joined in an unbroken mythical loop. This is the only work in the series in which I consciously think of the land masses as actual representations in ochre/browns. It is as if I am on a giant sailing ship that finally has a new wind in its sails, determined to make its longest and most arduous crossing. The fact that these representations of land became so real in this work was deeply psychological to me, as if I saw some glimmer of hope in reaching home again.

Curator's Statement



It is fitting that the first exhibition to be featured at the new National Gallery should be a recent collection by Cayman's premier artist Bendel Hydes. Bendel, a founding member of the National Gallery and CNCF, has been a central influence in the development of art in Cayman since he began painting in the 1970s. His work represents the pinnacle of Caymanian art to date.

This series, previously unseen in Cayman, forms an imaginary journey around the globe. Each of the twelve paintings represents 30 degrees of longitude beginning at 90-60 degrees West - the meridians that locate both the Cayman Islands and the artist's adopted city New York. It then travels eastward in the direction of the earth's rotation with each work centering on an individual area of interest, meandering north or south, as it crosses each meridian.

These large, luminous works seem perfectly at home in the new temporary gallery, transforming the area into a place of quiet reflection.

Curator

Natalie Urquhart

BIO



Bendel Hydes was born in the Cayman Islands in the Caribbean. He did his Foundation year in Art at Liverpool College of Art and went on to his degree course at Canterbury College of Art in England. In his last year at Canterbury he left England and transferred to Clark University in the United States to pursue 'a more intellectual approach' to art and ideas, and pursued studies in International Relations and philosophy, receiving his BA in 1976. Since 1982 he has lived and worked in New York City.

Mr. Hydes has exhibited at the Commonwealth Institute, London (1986), the 23rd International Biennale de Sao Paulo, Brazil (1996), the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands (2003) and participated in numerous exhibitions internationally, including the 30th International Festival of: Painting, the Museum of Cagnes-sur-Mur, France; "Caribbean Visions: Contemporary Painting and Sculpture," 1994-96, the most acclaimed survey of Caribbean art ever assembled which traveled to eight United States museums from the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. to the Latin American Art Museum in California.

Works by Bendel Hydes are in the collections of the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands, Cayman Island National Archive, UBS (Cayman Islands), HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, as well as numerous private collections internationally.

Bendel Hydes is featured in 'Caribbean Art,' a history of Caribbean painting, published by Thames & Hudson, London and in 'He Hath Founded it Upon the Seas: A History of the Cayman Islands and its People,' 2003. He is a Co-Founder of the Cayman Islands National Gallery and the Cayman National Cultural Foundation.



EMERGENCE

90-120 degrees East
Circumnavigating
Series #7

Oil on Canvas
198 x 198



DESERT KABUKI

120-150 degrees East
Circumnavigating
Series #8

Oil on Canvas
198 x 198

This work represents the newly awakened and transformed societies of South-East Asia. As these economies grow and develop, they are finding new ways to synchronise with the West, sometimes creating new traditions borrowed from each other.

This work represents Japan and Australia, two opposing cultures that seem to have had a strong influence on our consciousness in somewhat mysterious ways. One old and one new, they both pursue democratic openness yet are very different in that one is characterized by strong traditions while the other is replete with a *laissez-faire* abandonment of tradition. I was toying with the idea of Japanese Kabuki in the Australian desert as a way of merging these two cultures.



ENTRENCHMENT

30-60 degrees East
Circumnavigating
Series #5
Oil on Canvas
198 x 198

Entrenchment refers to the Arab-Isareli conflict and the many stops and starts at finding peace between these peoples. The ground is separated into three sections representing the three religions that dominate the conflict and the tubular protrusions are the attempts at finding peace... all lost or disappearing into the environment itself.



TRIBUTARIES OF THE SACRED

60-90 degrees East
Circumnavigating
Series #6
Oil on Canvas
198 x 198

This work represents India and the rich life-giving force of peace through yoga and oneness with all things.

Artist Statement



My work is concerned primarily with the sensory world of sight, sound and touch and in the visual metaphors thereby produced to cerebrally enhance physical and conceptual possibilities. Mostly through painting, I use the language of translucent and biomorphic abstraction to explore ways in which nature and culture interact, reflecting on both the rational and ritualistic concerns of perceiving these opposites.

Through a "geography of spatial color" and a vocabulary of semi-figurative shapes and symbols, I strive to address such issues as topographical changes, isolation, beauty, vulnerability and the character of place to traverse the boundary between physical abstraction and emotional reality, thus forming the narrative that binds the work together. The duration of a passing sound vibration or the feeling of the wind by the ocean may elucidate an experience to be reconciled or the colour and movement of a particular shape may produce a new imaginary paradigm.

The mind and memory of my work is in the process. Whether it is applying continuous washes and drips of colour over another, sculpting and mixing paint with another substance, or in the gesture, my aim is to question the aesthetics of the materials I use. In a recent environmental work, *Starpath*, the abundance of naturally occurring turtle-grass and sea-debris allowed me to create giant stars along a stretch of deserted beach, thereby merging land, sea and sky in one sweeping universal gesture.

Specifically, I am interested in meaning that depends on context and in visual signifiers that resonate the nature of experience through that context.



TORTUGA

90-60 degrees West
Circumnavigating
Series #1
Oil on Canvas
198 x 198

Columbus' first name for the Cayman Islands at the time of discovery, was Las Tortugas-the turtles. This very apt name at the time was due to the large amount of sea-turtles found in the surrounding waters, a phenomenon that would later become a symbol and mainstay of the shipwrecked, wayward, and somewhat complacent sea-travellers who happened to stumble upon their shores, often forlorn or deciding not to venture any further. This was the natural point of departure in the series as it represents a spiritual reference to the survival and existence of the islands' early settlers. I am trying to express the lack of concrete or materialistic emphasis in their lives based on the islands' natural vulnerability, and the deep existential fatalism this must have created due to a separation from any established institutions.



COMPLEXITY

30-0 degrees West
Circumnavigating
Series #3
Oil on Canvas
198 x 198

This work represents the conflicts of slavery and colonization. It also reflects my interests in British and African traditions that subsequently laid the foundations for the culture of the Cayman Islands and the New World. It represents both the effects of the African continent on the experience of the first colonizers and my own early difficulties in dealing with many of these traditions.



SARGASSO

60-30 degrees West
Circumnavigating
Series #2
Oil on Canvas
198 x 198

The name Sargasso refers to the area in the North Atlantic where the Gulf Stream loops around the North Atlantic Current to form a 'dead-zone' of marine life and is effectively known as the 'doldrums.' My desire here was to depict the 'foreboding unknown' that was often associated with this area of the Atlantic during the era of sail, and from which early seafarers must have had a certain dread. The post-colonialist novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys in 1966, regarding English/Caribbean relationships, always had an influence on me, and hence influenced this work.



BALTIC BLOSSOM

0-30 degrees East
Circumnavigating
Series #4
Oil on Canvas
198 x 198

This work is a tribute to a good friend from the Baltic republic of Estonia. The free-spirited nature of that culture and the colours of white, pink and blue, represent for me the positive attitude of hope and redemption.