



**NATIONAL
GALLERY**

CAYMAN ISLANDS

Island of Women
Artist Bios and Processes

Marlena Anglin



Thatch Rope Frame, c.1990

Born in West Bay, Grand Cayman, Anglin learned thatching from her mother and soon became a highly skilled rope maker and weaver of baskets, hats and other items. She is an active member of the Cayman Islands Traditional Arts Council, creating work for festivals and heritage days as well as teaching crafts to local schoolchildren. She participated in the 21st Century Cayman exhibition (NGCI, 2010), and her work is included in public and private collections.

This early example of a rope making machine is typical of the traditional devices that were used in Cayman to twist silver thatch rope from the 1800s until the decline of the rope making industry in the late 1960s. Such machines were operated manually and were much faster than making rope by hand, with the tops of the Silver Thatch Palm traditionally harvested under a new moon – as seen in Charles Long’s painting *Gathering Thatch* (2001). The process of collecting, twisting and thatching rope afforded participants the opportunity to gather together, share news and strengthen community bonds, while also providing an outlet for the remarkable creativity and ingenuity of Caymanian women. While the objects on display in this exhibition, including baskets by Rose May Ebanks and Lizzie Powell, are illustrative of local craft produced primarily for commercial purposes, they also highlight the simultaneously decorative and functional use of silver thatch in Caymanian culture and, as the National Tree of the Cayman Islands, its wider symbolic significance to our Islands’ national identity.

Isy B



Women's Work, 2020

Isy Obi is the founder of Isy B., the award-winning fashion brand from the Cayman Islands. Her aesthetic is rooted in design that tells a story through a considered exploration of harmony, simplicity and balance of form, through which she strives to visually engage and connect with the wearer. Obi transfers this to her visual art practice. In 2017 she was selected to represent the Cayman Islands at Carifesta in Barbados, and in 2018 her work was shown in the exhibition *Art of Fashion* at the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands. She was awarded a Bronze Star for Creativity by the Cayman Islands Cultural Foundation in 2019, and has similarly received accolades for her design work as Isy B., having been awarded Lifestyle Designer of the Year at Phoenix Fashion Week in 2016.

Artist's Statement:

"Rope making, keeping the home, and provisioning for the family. The five women stand trapped together in the heat of the caboose, stifled in their self-expression and self-determination in Cayman's largely patriarchal society. Their lives are intertwined, despite their racial and socio-economic differences, by the ropemaking that is their main means of economic survival and of acquiring material goods. *Women's Work* speaks of a longing for freedom from the limited roles assigned to them in society and also from the mundane, hard work of providing for their families day-to-day. It speaks also of the dignity, strength, and resilience with which the women made lives for themselves in the best way they could.

The choices and styles of the women's head coverings, worn universally by all women in Cayman society for practical, expressive, and decorative reasons, provides us in the 21st Century with an alternative but very real frame of reference into the reality of the lives of the women in Cayman's history."



Dubadah Boldeau



From the Sweat of Her Brow She Raised A Nation, 2020

Dubadah Boldeau was born on the island of Grenada, moving to Grand Cayman when she was 3 years old. She is a self-taught visual artist, working in primarily with watercolour but also skilled in oils, drawing, and photography. She is an architect by trade, utilizing these skills within the arts by volunteering her services at the National Trust for the reconstruction of Mission House in 2007. She also dabbles in film, with her short film premiering at the Poinciana Film Festival in 2018. Boldeau's work is included in the Cayman Islands National Museum archives. She won third place and an honourable mention at the Cayfest 2011 photography competition, Best Watercolour at the Poinciana art competition, and won the Artists' Choice fine award for the McCoy Prize bestowed by the Cayman Islands Traditional Art Council.

Artist's Statement:

"IRON SHARPENS IRON SO ONE MAN/WOMAN SHARPENS ANOTHER", Proverbs 27:17. This Bible verse sums up the key role women played, in tandem importance with men, within Cayman's maritime history. The men went off Island to provide for their families and created a legacy. The woman stayed home and through hard work, resourcefulness and dedication, they raised a nation. Being the vessel of new life, they gave birth to generations and laid the foundation for society through education, the passing on of time honored traditions and taking on the role of both mother and father to a growing family.

At the center of the painting is a young woman. The circle around her upper body is composed of abstract patterns found from seashells linking her to both land and sea. A series of open books represents her role as educator. From left to right is the image of the early stages in the development of a fertilized egg, which is symbolic of her role as a vessel of new life and future generations.

The circle represents unity, protection, and inclusion. She stands at the center balancing a ship's anchor. The anchor symbolizes the seamen and our traditional ties to the sea, as stated on our national crest, "He Hath Founded It Upon the Seas". She, like Proverbs 27:17, is juxtaposed against the anchor showing a shared image of strength and inclusion in our maritime history. The light emanating from her head shows power, strength, vitality and virtue.

They endured hardships but their resilience filled the void with light, thus emanating from her body are rays of light as vibrant as the sun. The background is composed of abstract image of a fertilized egg and thatch. Her body is adorned with the colors of the ocean and the land from which she raises a young impressionable child."

Josie Solomon



YoYo Quilt, c.2006

The YoYo quilt featured in this exhibition was created by Josie Solomon at the Bodden Town Seniors Centre, a community centre designed to prevent isolation among seniors. The *yoyo* refers to the circular style of the quilt's signature fabric technique, a practice that requires specific knowledge that was once widespread among women in our community, but which is now at risk of falling into memory. Marrying functional utility and creative expression, the quilt combines both elements through the visually pleasing aesthetic of the yoyo pattern while pointing to the ways in which materials have historically been recycled and repurposed in Cayman – a product of necessity as much as the adaptive ingenuity. The repeating circles evoke the multiple hands that would have traditionally stitched them, reinforcing the inherently communal nature of such activities.



John Broad



RESILIENCE BANNER, 2019

Broad graduated from Edinburgh College of Art with a degree in painting and drawing, and from the University of London with a teaching qualification. He has participated in exhibitions in the UK and the Cayman Islands and held several solo shows. Broad has taught in local schools and at University College of the Cayman Islands and has run workshops for adults on behalf of the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands and the Visual Arts Society, while also raising funds for several events. In addition, he has created two commissioned murals in George Town (*The Walls of History* in 2004 for NGCI and *Fort George* for the National Trust in 2012), and in 2009 was chosen to exhibit in London and Berlin with Art Below. Previously, Broad won the Carib Art poster competition in 1992 and was a recipient of The Cultural Foundation's award for achievement in art education, as well as for his contribution to the arts, culture and heritage of the Cayman Islands in 2003.

Artist's Statement:

"This is based on a story telling rug, or carpet symmetrical design, and is inspired by artists such as Grayson Perry, whilst also looking back in time at documentary history – for example, the Bayeux Tapestry. Research was conducted at the National Archive including an interview with Tricia Bodden (Archivist) and visits to the National Museum.

The design is centered around a Caymanian woman left at home whilst her partner spends long periods at sea. Images are simplified in a geometric style to fit in with the concept: she is surrounded by a life of supportive systems such as hand craft, transport, herbal medicine, spiritual and cooking environments, and to a lesser extent I have added maritime images, and a seaman's poem – the large diamond shape represents the points of a compass.

Although there is not a rug/carpet making craft on Cayman, we have had quilts made by various groups, and I would like to think my design would fit in with Caymanian cultural and historic tradition."



Hello, National Bulk

Lyrics by Clyde G. Banks

Kiss me goodbye and write me while I'm gone, goodbye darling
Hello National Bulk.

Cayman has heard Southwell's call and you know it involves us one
And all.

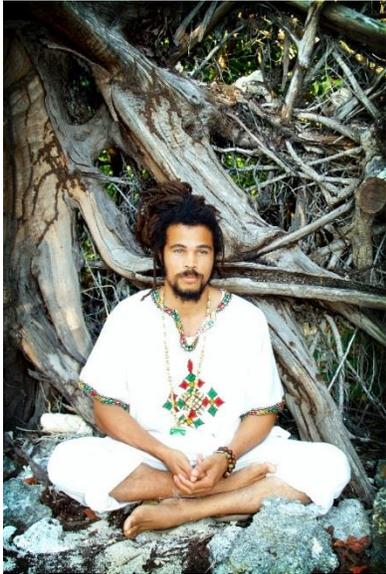
I don't suppose this sea life will ever end, this sailing that will separate us again.
So kiss me goodbye and write me while I'm gone, goodbye darling
Hello National Bulk.

On our way to USA passing Mexico, working on a tanker, feeling mighty low.
Left my good girl in Cayman, the one I love and miss so, I'll be going
Back to see her but I got a year to go.
Kiss me goodbye and write me while I'm gone, goodbye darling
Hello National Bulk.

In the winter we will be up in Norway so cold, that we will shiver when
The old north wind blows.
In the summer time we will be going to Kuwait, when we pass Hell's Gate,
So hot with sandstorms so tall, it sure will be punishment for us all.

Cayman has heard Southwell's call and you know it involves us one
And all.
I don't suppose this sea life will ever end, this sailing that will separate us again.
So kiss me goodbye and write me while I'm gone, goodbye darling
Hello National Bulk.

Randy Chollette



Suspended Narrative, 2020

George Town-born Chollette is an intuitive, self-taught artist who earned recognition early in his career by winning Best in Show at *Blue*, an exhibition at Kensington-Lott Fine Art Gallery in 2002, and The McCoy Prize People's Choice Award in 2003. He is a member of the Native Sons artists collective and has exhibited extensively, both with the group and independently, in the Cayman Islands and abroad, notably in *Arreckly: Towards a Cultural Identity* (National Gallery of the Cayman Islands, 2007) *The Persistence of Memory* (NGCI, 2011), and *Founded Upon the Seas* (NGCI, 2012). His work forms part of many private collections and the public collections of NGCI, the Cayman National Cultural Foundation and the Cayman Islands National Museum.

Artist's Statement:

"When we are lost and cannot find our way forward, when this place has become just like all others and no longer unique, and the people stop coming, perhaps then we will remember the ways of the past and honour the rich cultural heritage that the Caymanian women preserved for us, while they were simply trying to survive; perhaps then we will honour them. Until then we will do the work to preserve what these women have built; raise them up high – we, the keepers of the culture.

Growing up in Cayman, I had the privilege of living in an old wooden house with a zinc roof and the proverbial half/Dutch Door. My Grand Aunt, Grandmother, Uncles, Aunts, Cousins all lived in the same yard. I remember the old time talks I overheard, about kitchen and sand dances, church, going to sea, courting, garden parties, district fights, African heritage, drumming etc. I specifically remember that every celebration they spoke of, every event, every happening, the women were the planners, the support, the ones who made things happen. Even the stories that were told to me were told by women: they were the support system holding the family, the neighbourhood and the community together. I remember overhearing those stories as the women hung clothes out on the line, reminiscing where this piece of clothing had come from, what this other one was made from, what occasion a specific piece was going to be worn to. I would stand at the open window and watch them pin the clothes on the line and push up the crutch sticks when the weight of each piece caused the clothesline to sag."



John Clarke



East End Lady Thatching, 2001

John Clarke is an English artist now based in the Cayman Islands. He has published books on his art and artistic practice, and primarily works in bright colours and scenes that evoke the vibrancy of tropical life.

Portraying the traditional practice of plaiting thatch, artist John Clarke at once deftly captures the reflective calm, dexterous skill and attentive focus of an East End woman at work. In its realism and nostalgic evocation of this centuries-old tradition, *East End Lady Thatching* (1990) links the individual experience of the woman whose likeness appears before us to the wider sphere of female creativity and adaptive ingenuity – as expressed in the multitude of artworks and practices which can be found in this exhibition. Moreover, Clarke's image appears at a moment in Caymanian history when the establishment of prominent cultural institutions,

among them the Cayman National Cultural Foundation and the Cayman Islands National Museum, signaled a new-found societal awareness of the need to preserve our Islands' treasured yet rapidly eroding cultural heritage.

Maya Cochrane



Turn So, Fool, 2020

Cochrane is a qualified British architect and art professional working on the threshold between art, architecture, and textile design. Cochrane challenges the constraints of architecture through developing drawing methodologies that assist in exploring life's everyday rituals. Her practice is interested in spatial exploration of cultural rituals, feminising construction processes and elevating the role of women as makers and preservers of history and culture.

Cochrane has exhibited and published in Europe and North America; been an invited artist for an ephemeral workshop; and involved in teaching and critiquing architecture and interior architecture. After 17 years of living in London, UK, Cochrane has relocated to the Cayman Islands from where she continues her explorations into pattern and colour in order to delight in art, architecture and textile design.

Artist's Statement:

“Pinking’ - the art of creating a border of cut-work on a tablecloth or sheet, which was simply folded and cut with scissors in much the same way paper dolls are made. This was always done on to create burial sheets, which were used to line the coffin and wrap the body of the deceased.”

(Glossary of Cayman Islands Archive)

“This art installation visualises the unseen stories of female pattern makers in the tradition ‘Pinking of the Sheets.’ By allowing the ‘seen by few’(private) to become visible to many (public), we celebrate cultural memory and the ingenuity of women. The art work consists of choreographed pieces: ‘So Pretty’ (Hand cut sheet 1), ‘Turn so,...Fool’ (Laser cut sheet 2), Pattern Handbook, ‘Picking up the pieces’ (Pillow substitute), and ‘The conveniences the world offers Cayman’ (a modern interpretation of the wooden coffin). The patterns are transformed spatially through an installation using ephemeral qualities of light and shadow often used when evoking passing, transition or change. ‘So Pretty’ is created through a series of conversations and cutting practices between [myself] and women who live in the Cayman Islands. ‘Turn so,...Fool’ is a laser cut work using basic cutting principles, architectural precision and explores shapes in relation to the scale of the scissors while going beyond that which could be created by hand. What is achieved by machine lacks the soul of the creator(s) that the hand-cut piece evokes. It draws attention to the importance of participating as a group in creating and ensuring that history is passed on through the generations in order to make it relevant to the current generation. This corresponding Pattern Handbook sets the parameters for a contemporary, cross generational, memorable, relevant artwork.

‘Picking up the pieces’ is a transparent cushion with the remains of the cut-out pieces representing a pillow placed under the head. ‘The conveniences the world offers Cayman’ is a wine crate holding the folded works created in a pattern generating workshop to be run during the exhibition. This references the impact of global imports on the discontinuation of the pinking tradition. In tribute to the districts where the oral histories were taken, a lantern installation which combines modern methods of laser-cutting with traditional folding techniques is photographed at night. The site-specific installations of intricate contemporary patterns in intended to create an experience that responds to the environment, engages Caymanians and acts as a keeper of the Caymanian tradition of ‘Pinking of the Sheets’.

Pinking Workshops



Photography Project



George Town



Bodden Town



Spots

Carmen Connolly



Basket of Flowers, 2012

Born in East End, Grand Cayman, Connolly began basket making as a child, learning thatching techniques from her aunt. By the early 1970s, her skills became more advanced, and she has subsequently become one of the most respected of all of Cayman's craftpersons. Her unique thatch designs are a regular feature at national festivals, and she has been recognised with a Heritage Award (CNCF, 2000), a Heritage Cross Gold (CNCF, 2011), and a National Heroes Day Award. Her work can be found in many private and public collections, including the permanent collections of NGCI and CINM.

While we know thatching was used to create utility objects, Connolly's piece moves beyond the purely functional. It is a vase, but for crafted flowers; it appears to resemble a hat, thereby engaging with garments of femininity while simultaneously drawing a connection between outwardly decorative expressions of femininity and resourcefulness; yet having rendered the object unwearable, we are asked to consider this piece primarily for its aesthetic value, shifting the conventional boundary between the realms of craft and fine art.

Patrice Donalds-Morgan



Waves of Struggle, 2020

Patrice Donalds-Morgan has been an active member of Cayman's theatre and dance community for almost four decades, and got her start with the National Children's Festival of the Arts (NCFA) at George Town Primary. Six years after her first NCFA debut, Donalds-Morgan became a founding member of the Cayman Islands National Dance Company (formerly Dance Unlimited). Donalds-Morgan has danced almost continuously since she began her career and has taken her performance and choreographic skills locally to Grand Cayman & Cayman Brac, regionally to Trinidad & Tobago and Suriname, and internationally to the Netherlands, Canada, and the United States.

Artist's Statement:

"As a teenager, I have been fascinated with the story behind the published, polished, and edited stories of people who have experienced hardships and come out the other end of that experience with wisdom, love, and joy in their hearts. Having experienced several traumatic events myself, I have intermittently written prose, poetry, and short essays as part of my own healing journey. Recently I have begun to use my writing as a platform to project ideas for and thoughts about women in domestic abuse situations, women whose voices have been silenced through fear or loss of life, women who are still struggling under the unbearable weight of an abusive and controlling partner. From what I have read, women in the Cayman Islands had a unique role and position in society. When the men were off fighting in wars, or working to provide for families, they, the women, were the head of the household, making all the decisions to feed, clothe, and nurture their nuclear and extended families. When the men returned, that role and the household dynamic would have changed dramatically. How did they yield that household control? Was it an easy shift for them? If not, what would have been the fallout as both husband and wife navigated the same space for control? What about the women that had no male partners to juggle that head of household role with? What was that dynamic like? During these periods, the concept of "mental health" would not have been as easily understood, recognized or acknowledged as much as we do today. I hope to take some creative license & provide a glimpse of what these power struggles, and personal dynamics must have looked or felt like for those women and for the young girls and boys witnessing it."

Al Ebanks



Stand, 2019

Born in George Town, sculptor and painter Al Ebanks was awarded a scholarship from the Cayman National Cultural Foundation in 1995 to study sculpture with renowned Barbadian artist Karl Broodhagen and later learned bronze casting in Tuscany through the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands' *Artists Away* grant programme (2004). Ebanks co-founded the Native Sons artists collective in 1996 and was awarded the CNCF's Artistic Achievement Award in 2001. He has exhibited locally and abroad, including a solo show at the Jackie Gleason Theatre, Miami. His paintings were used on-screen for the feature film *Haven* (written and directed by Frank E. Flowers; 2004). Ebanks' work featured in the first Cayman Islands Biennial *Cross Currents* and is included in the permanent collections of the Cayman Islands National Museum, NGCI and the Griffin Gallery, Chicago.

Artist Statement:

"The strength and power of the women of the Cayman Islands will always be admired by me, having been raised by a strong Caymanian woman, my mama. Coming from a big family growing up, most times I was surrounded by women. The development of modern Cayman society was the driving force of the women, with absence of the men - then out to sea. The tasks of the women [were] everything. Building homes and raising their families, to this day it continues – I always try to show that in my art. In 2009 I was fortunate to be commissioned by the government of the Cayman Islands for the design and production of a statue/sculpture celebrating 50 years of women rights to vote, which can be seen in Heroes Square in central George Town.

In these pieces, I continue to show women and their seemingly endless fight, standing up for equal rights. They come together in all forms, marching, standing against bullying and abuse. Through all the struggle, they still manage to smile and stay strong."

Rose May Ebanks



Thatch Baskets, c.2017

Born in West Bay, Grand Cayman, Ebanks was taught thatching techniques by her mother, who in turn had been taught by her own mother. A prolific weaver who creates mainly traditional functional items, she regularly demonstrates the craft at local arts festivals such as Art@Governors and CNCF's Red Sky at Night cultural festival. Her work was featured in NGCI's exhibitions *Merging Cultures* (2003) and *21st Century Cayman* (2010) and is included in the permanent collections of NGCI and CINM.

Rose May Ebanks was taught thatching techniques by her mother and grandmother before her – a familiar multi-generational lineage that is quintessential to the Caymanian experience of passing on cultural traditions. Much like Lizzie Powell's thatch basket 'vases', these works are an excellent representation of the skills, creativity, and expertise of Caymanian women in crafting everyday objects of beauty and utility. The inclusion of such basketry within the National Gallery's collection and temporary displays asks viewers to consider these not only for their craftsmanship but also their intrinsic aesthetic qualities – an apt reminder that creative expression (as in the delicate pattern of the work's thatch weave) was an integral part of Caymanian identity long before the formal emergence of the Islands' fine arts scene in the 1960s.

Meegan Ebanks



Annie of the Assembly, 2020

Meegan Ebanks is a mixed media artist that has always found inspiration in working with an array of mediums and the challenge in cultivating an unexplored technique.

Born in Wisconsin, USA, daughter to a theatre teacher, she was highly influenced by the visual and performing arts from childhood where she spent her time training in multiple instruments, voice, dance, and extensive art classes. As a young adult she honed her passion for painting and ceramics, as well stage, set, and costume design.

As her career developed and took a turn towards hospitality and business, moving her to Chicago and later the Cayman Islands, she maintained opportunities to express her creative interests. Highlights include co-exhibiting a public show of 20+ artworks and a book of poetry; co-curating and showing in collaborative exhibition of the island's female artists; multiple mural installations in private residences and facilities; and a growing collection of personal artworks. Versed in working in acrylic, ceramic, wood, fabric, and wire, Ebanks finds it challenging to categorize her work or style down to one specific genre and is most concerned with creating artworks that develop from a deep personal connection to the subject matter or the tangible effort required to sculpt materials into a narrative.

Artist's Statement:

"Few images from American war era history became as recognisable as 'Rosie The Riveter'. What started out as a WWII poster campaign to encourage women to join the workforce, has transcended to perhaps the most iconic image of working-class women, strengthening women's ability to develop careers in a variety of new roles and changing the workforce forever.

In an all too similar way, the post-WWII era also saw a significant period of development for the Cayman Islands. With women picking up many of the duties that men had previously held, to move the evolving islands forward as the men headed out to sea. Many women in the community, most of which were self-trained, began to step into leadership roles and forge paths previously only walked by men.

In Cayman history, few women were more determined to do this as Annie Huldah Bodden.

As a Caymanian civil servant, lawyer, and politician, Annie Huldah Bodden was the first female to serve in the Legislative Assembly of the Cayman Islands, be appointed Chief Government Auditor, practice as an Attorney at Law, and receive international recognition by being honored as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE).

Much like 'Rosie the Riveter' became an iconic symbol of the efforts of the female capacity, 'Annie of the Assembly' paved the way for women in Cayman to take the reins of leadership with diligent and tireless determination."

Kathryn Elphinstone



Leaf of Life, 2020

Elphinstone studied art at the University of Toronto, Canada. She received a BA majoring in fine arts and a B.Ed. from the same institution. She taught art at the high school and community college levels in the Toronto area before relocating to the Cayman Islands 25 years ago. Elphinstone has taught art at several schools in Grand Cayman and founded the art program at Faulkner Academy, now Cayman International School. Her art always considers colour first, followed by form. She draws inspiration from the seas and shores surrounding the Cayman Islands, where her work was recently on

display for the first Cayman Islands Biennial, *Cross Currents*, in 2019. Currently, Elphinstone teaches for the Walkers Art Program at the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands and works on her art pieces at her studio in South Sound.

Artist's Statement:

“When discussing prudence and creative resourcefulness of the Caymanian women in the past and their untold stories of resilience, adaptive ingenuity and determination to remain, grow and flourish on the land during the heyday of maritime industry when the men went out to sea for extended periods of time, their ability to cope for extended periods of time draws me to the analogy of a little plant that grows in my yard.

Like the women of these Islands, the Leaf of Life too is strong and resilient. The medicinal remedies of this plant were used then and now to treat conditions too numerous to elaborate here, but were and are used for such ailments as respiratory, coughs, chest colds, bronchitis, and even menstrual problems. It is also used as a poultice for skin ulcers, sprains and insect stings. (Honychurch, P.N., *Caribbean Wild Plants and Their Uses*, 1986, Macmillan Caribbean; Robertson, D., *Jamaican Herbs: Nutritional and Medicinal Values*, 1982; Taylor, L., *The Healing Power of Rainforest Herbs: A Guide to Understanding and Using Herbal Medicinals*, 2005, Swuare One Publishers.

I first discovered this plant when I was given a few leaves from an older Caymanian woman many years ago when I arrived on these Isles. The giver told me to plant it in a pot and take a leaf and drop it on the soil. To my amazement, in a few days it sprouted roots from its lace-like edge, then started to form into a plant just a few days later. I marvelled at its ability to survive and flourish with little or no cultivation techniques or assistance. I was told to take several leaves (from the same gift bearer) and steam them and then crush and extract the juice on a spoon and add honey, sugar or salt to help wash down the bitter liquid taste it released. This would help, I was told, with a sore throat or laryngitis. It was not long before I had these very symptoms; I remembered my plant and again, to my amazement my symptoms disappeared. Now I pass on cuttings frequently to friends, neighbours and even my doctor. Like the plant, those early pioneer ladies shared whatever they had and passed on useful knowledge to each other, used, adapted to their environment with the resources that were available to them.”

Horacio Esteban



Mother and Child II, 2017

Born in Cuba, Esteban was raised in Cayman Brac and is primarily a sculptor and jeweller known for his use of the local semi-precious stone Caymanite. Esteban is a member of the Native Sons art collective. Notable exhibitions include NGCI's *Emergence* (2005) and *Fahive* (2005). In 2015, Esteban was selected for residency in the Inter-Island Artist Lock-In project in Jersey, United Kingdom, produced by the Jersey Arts Trust in partnership with Jersey Heritage and Wild Works Theatre Company.

The Mother Mary and child Christ is an iconic image reproduced throughout art history in all manners of mediums, including paintings, carvings, stained glass, and sculpture. Here, Esteban's piece utilizes Caymanite, a stone unique to the Cayman Islands. The use of Caymanite provides a more personal interpretation of this universal iconography: the experience of motherhood in a Caymanian context, undeniably shaped by the Christian heritage of the nation. In much the same way as Dubadah Boldeau's highly symbolic representation of a mother and her child, Esteban's depiction of the same subject can be seen as an emblematic image of Caymanian women's role as nurturers of both the next generation and the spiritual values and identity of the nation.

Stewart Holmes



Old Time, 2001

Stewart Holmes is an artist based in the Cayman Islands, primarily painting realistic scenes that evoke an idyllic, even nostalgic perspective of island life.

In much the same vein as John Clarke's sentimental image of a woman thatching, Stewart Holmes' painting *Old Time* (2001) depicts a solitary woman at work- in this case portrayed in the act of cleaning conch shells. The conch occupies an important place within Caymanian culture – at once a source of sustenance, a decoration in traditional Cayman sand yards, and latterly a tourist souvenir and reminder of the beauty of nature and its bountiful provisions. While Holmes' image appears timeless in its evocation of the 'Islands Time Forgot', it also serves to show the adaptation and ingenuity of local women through the waning of traditional industries and the evolution of the

Caymanian economy over the course of the second half of the twentieth century.

John Reno Jackson



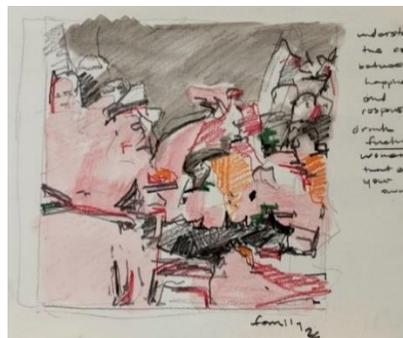
astray, ashtray, man overboard, 2020

the soul who raised us, 2020

John Reno Jackson is an emerging contemporary American painter. He attended foundation courses in painting and drawing at the London Art Academy in 2015. Since then he has continued his exploration with painting media through small series of works made in Grand Cayman. Jackson has exhibited work in the Winter Showcase at the London Art Academy in 2015, the group showcase *Homecoming* at The Space in Grand Cayman in 2019, and a pop-up exhibition at Premier Cru in 2019. He currently works and lives in Grand Cayman and will be attending a residency in Portugal in 2020. His work features in numerous private collections and is included in the permanent collection of the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands.

Artist's Statement:

"Jackson's exploration with painting has led him to subjects like landscapes and portraits. He is currently developing compositions that deal with abstracting and combining photo imagery through digital software and then using these digital references as maps for acrylic paintings. His works in this exhibition show the viewer his current task to create paintings that can act as both figures and landscapes and also reflect on a developing narrative around fables, social interaction, adolescence, race, and discovering sexuality. Some paintings have realistic, earthly colours which make them feel familiar to the images they reference. Others have become more surreal due to Jackson's choice to use colours that are more unnatural – such as bright orange and yellow – to create paintings that seem to reflect more on his personal psyche and invented spaces."



Pam Kelly-Laurenson



In Their Hands, 2020

Based in Grand Cayman, Kelly-Laurenson is a self-taught painter. In 2015, she co-founded Stoakd Illustration and Design. Kelly-Laurenson was the 2016 Poinciana award winner and exhibited at Kaboo Cayman Festival in 2019. She currently works in mixed media recycled art.

Kelly-Laurenson co-founded the Cayman Pickers in 2014 with her husband, an annual silent art auction with 100% of the proceeds going to the Breast Cancer Foundation in the Cayman Islands. In 2019, she founded "Healing through Art", an art therapy wellness program for breast cancer survivors and patients supported by the Breast Cancer Foundation in Cayman Islands.

Artist's Statement:

"My work presents one of the important roles of Caymanian women during the period of the 1800's to mid-20th century through the creative task of local resources; as small thriving communities many women became seamstress and kept the tradition for many generations.

It was a custom to sew your own clothes, not only because it was considered a highly skilled profession; it was a way to survive and maintain some income in the event it [became a profession].

For this project I used textiles and buttons to represent the resourcefulness at the time, rhythm of variation and pattern, color contrasts and the feel of the materials through movement. To add to the theme, I enjoy using fabrics obtained from the local thrift shop.

With *In Their Hands* I am exploring the limitations of materials but the ingenuity of the women to ensure their communities were able to sustain and thrive with a collective sense of commitment and sustainability."



Peggy Leshikar-Denton



Aunt Julia's Hands, 2008

From intuitive watercolours to bolder oils and acrylics, Leshikar-Denton spontaneously paints in order to capture the spirit of her subjects. While pursuing archaeological studies, she also took courses in studio art and art history at the University of Texas at Austin, later obtaining a PhD in Nautical Archaeology at Texas A&M University. Her early artistic works hang in private collections.

In 1980, Leshikar-Denton arrived on Cayman's shores to assist in a survey for historical shipwrecks, permanently relocating with her husband in 1986. Ever since, she has been contributing to the development of cultural heritage awareness and appreciation through involvement with Cayman's cultural organizations, especially the National Museum where she served for many years as Maritime Archaeologist and currently serves as Museum Director. Peggy is a member of the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands, the Visual Arts Society, and the National Trust.

Artist's Statement:

The subject of Leshikar-Denton's painting is Aunt Julia Hydes; says the artist, "she was my friend for many years. I took photos of her at her home in West Bay, and then created oil paintings using the images and creative elements such as the sea and a schooner in the background. I met Aunt Julia in the 1990s when she performed on Boxing Days at the Museum – then she would often phone me in the evenings throughout the year when she still lived in her own home. She did not have an easy life and raised her children on her own, but she did not complain – instead she had courage and will and did what needed to be done. In addition to earning a living cleaning and working for others, she also found time to use her creative drive to make music with her family and friends and to perform for dances and the community. I miss our National Treasure Aunt Julia Hydes!"



Charles Long



Gathering Thatch, 2001

Country Graveyard, 2001

Born in West Africa, Long grew up in Swaziland and England, where he attended Farnham School of Art. He settled in the Cayman Islands in the late 1960s and became a founding member and first secretary of VAS. Long has been dubbed a chronicler of our times, a phrase that became the title of a 2002 retrospective of his work at NGCI. Other key exhibitions include the Santo Domingo Biennale (2003) and Carifesta X, Guyana (2008). Long's highly collectible work forms part of the permanent collections of NGCI and CINM.

Country Graveyard, 2001

Inspired by traditional Caymanian cemeteries such as those at Bodden Town and the Watler Cemetery in Prospect, Grand Cayman, Charles Long's *Country Graveyard* (2001) depicts the ambiguous silhouette of a lone figure foregrounded against a starkly muted depiction of an old burial site. The intensity of the colours and the lack of any significant shade all bestow an overwhelming sense of oppressive stillness. The figures' lack of discernible features suggest they stand as embodiments of the roles of men and women in grief and remembrance. While the male figure in the background moves actively through the cemetery, the woman stands apart at the entrance. Here, Long portrays women as the gatekeepers of memory for those who have passed - and indeed for historical traditions that have likewise faded away.

Gathering Thatch, 2001

This painting takes as its subject the traditional Caymanian practise of harvesting the tops of silver thatch trees under a full moon, bringing to light a process that was often unseen. The fronds of the palm would be harvested under moonlight so that the silver undersides of the leaves would be illuminated. Historically thatch products were not only used domestically- where the Silver Thatch Palm possesses additional symbolic significance as the National Tree of the Cayman Islands- but were also sought after for use in the international shipping, fishing and sugar industries. Typically the harvesting process was a community endeavor undertaken by women, and Long's depiction highlights the oft uncommunicated and unappreciated physical labour carried out to ensure the upkeep of the household and the local economy.

Sarah McDougall



Treasured Traditions, 2020

Born in the UK, Sarah McDougall graduated in Costume Design from Liverpool School of Art, after which she enjoyed 20 years working on costumes for stage and screen. She later re-trained and is now a teacher and subject leader at the Cayman Islands Further Education Centre, where she has worked since her move to Grand Cayman in 2010. As a textile artist, McDougall uses vintage fabrics to re-visit some of the historical techniques she learnt for costume design, creating unique pieces in the process. Most recently, her work was included in the group exhibition *Traces: Activating the Art Curriculum* (2019) at the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands. As a strong supporter of community arts and art education within the Cayman Islands, McDougall was awarded the 'Silver Star for Creativity in the Arts' by the Cayman National Cultural Foundation in 2017.

Artist's Statement:

"I produce 'needlework' anchored in heritage arts and crafts, something I developed further for *Treasured Traditions*. There is a connection between women through the ages and textile art, being both strong and fragile as well as tactile and soft. My interest and passion for textiles has led me to use the tools and materials of domesticity to assert the validity of 'women's work' through a feminine viewpoint.

The development process of *Treasured Traditions* is an important aspect of the final piece. I started by using local plants and herbs to dye threads and fibers, setting these natural hues using local sea water as a mordant. I used hand stitching to reflect how our foremothers used 'hands on' techniques by interweaving threads to build a textiles art form, realized physically stitch by stitch. Technology will not be abandoned altogether but to assist the process.

Over the past few years my cultural fascination has taken me to the Cayman Islands National Archives, Botanic Gardens and National Trust where I have learned how Caymanian women made their living from the land. They made use of the sources on hand, which included the local herbs. These plant traditions were passed down as families planted, grew and gathered valued plants which they then dried and preserved for future use.

People had to rely on 'bush medicine,' the origins of which came from generations of respected elders passing down herbal and medicinal solutions, many of which are still used to this day. Traditional Caymanian gardens reflected the importance of the earth's bounty to survival in Cayman's challenging conditions. Herbs provided medicine for health, flavor for the pot and fragrance for the skin and hair. Mother Nature working for and with the women of the Cayman Islands."

Bridget McPartland



Ethel, 2020

Born in George Town, Grand Cayman, Bridget is a 7th generation Caymanian and a self-taught artist who works primarily in oil, and occasionally with acrylic, graphite and other mediums.

Active in environmental protection and historical preservation, she paints a variety of subjects including popular beachscapes highly sought by collectors. Her work has featured on the cover of local magazines, accepted in juried art shows and has also been donated to charity organizations. McPartland began practicing art in 2002 as she recovered from cancer treatment.

Artist's Statement:

"I was very inspired to create this work by the tenacious efforts of my Grand-Mother, Ethel Cook-Bodden, towards the historical fight for women's equity and equality in the 1940s and her important founding of the branch of British Red Cross on our island.

Since I find irony among similarities within current issues of our upcoming referendum, I chose to create my work 'Ethel' in monochrome to portray the strong, important and diversified roll of women in our past who managed with very limited resources.

"My art speaks not only for me but for people who were long ago silenced, as well as for the ongoing effort to recognize the important role of women in the Cayman Islands as it was 60 years ago"

Tiffany Polloni



Her Pages, 2020

Polloni is a self-taught watercolor artist, born and raised in Grand Cayman. She began her artistic journey in traditional craft, with grandparents who were highly skilled craftspeople.

Her moniker, Ethel&Charlie, was born from some interesting compositions and characters coming to life in honor of her grandparents. With her work, she highlights vibrant Caribbean colours and the fluidity of watercolours.

Artist's Statement:

"For as long as I can remember, I have known that being a Caymanian woman is something important.

My granny from West Bay, and grandpa from West End, Cayman Brac, raised nine children in Cayman Brac during very harsh times. The only choice for an income was for my grandpa to go to sea. He worked as an engineer aboard different ships, and even ran sugarcane from Cuba.

I grew up hearing of the hardships and of how Caymanian women of earlier generations were some of the most resilient, hardworking and innovative people imaginable. They created cures from the plants around them, children learned to read using the family Bible, they had to build and repair homes, run businesses, fish, grow crops and feed families.

Caymanian women had to survive and ensure that future generations thrived. From humble beginnings, we have had Caymanian women gain rights and change the business and political landscape long before it was the norm.

My grandpa said that Caymanian men built the Cayman Islands, but it was the women who held it up in the toughest of times.

That has always stuck in my mind, not only as a very strong visual, but also as a meaningful statement."

Elizabeth ('Lizzie') Powell



Born in West Bay, Grand Cayman, Powell learned the skill of thatching from her mother, who made baskets for use on the family farm. In the early 1970s, she learned advanced techniques from a visiting teacher and became a professional basket maker. Powell, a central member of the Cayman Islands Traditional Arts Council, has work in both NGCI's and CINM's permanent collections.

Lizzie Powell's thatch vases are an excellent representation of the skills, creativity, and expertise of Caymanian women in crafting artistic and functional pieces needed for daily life in Cayman. Employing the silver thatch palm that was typically used for rope making, roofing, and basketry, the complexity of these particular objects asks us to consider the craft not only as a vital economic process but as an elevated form of artistic expression. These baskets were a regular feature of Caymanian life, and continue to be produced for the heritage and commercial sectors.

Ren Seffer



The Birth of a Queen, 2020

Ren Seffer has been involved in the local art community for over 20 years. Originally from Melbourne, Australia, she grew up in a household of artists and credits her mother for instilling in her a passion for the arts at a very early age. As an established artist and entirely self-taught, Ren has always used art as a platform for self-expression and a way to communicate to the world through various subject matter, creating narrative with bold color and vivid imagery. Her style is unique to her own and is inspired by what she sees around her, the places she travels and the people she meets. Over the years Ren's work has been collected locally and internationally, and has been featured in group shows in Spain, Canada and the United States. Key exhibitions include:

Arreckly: Towards a Cultural Identity (the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands, 2007), *21st Century Cayman* (NGCI, 2010), *A Day in the Life III* (NGCI, 2010), *Raw Arts Exhibit* (Carrozini Von Buhler Gallery, 2006) *Changes* (Arteccentrix Gallery, 2011), and the first Cayman Islands Biennial *Cross Currents* in 2019. Her work features in the permanent collections of NGCI and the Cayman Islands National Museum.

Artist's Statement:

"Like the stories Ms Nell loved to share, many of us have a beautiful memory of the lady that lived in the pink cottage in Breakers. To honor her memory I have re-created a small installation of Ms Nell's life, personal trinkets left behind from her home and imagery that tell a short story of her life in Breakers.

I had the pleasure of living next door to Ms Nell for 9 years. Breakers was and still is a very tight knit community – everyone knows everything and, as a young couple who had just purchased a run-down old house we often felt all eyes were on us to see what our next moves were. At first I was a little intimidated by my neighbor Ms Nell who, in her late 80's, stood tall and strong. She came across as a feisty lady with a sharp tongue that would tell it like it was but then her beautiful smile and kind eyes would draw you in and make you feel like family. You knew she had stories to tell and I was intrigued.

Every morning I'd watch her walk by and stop at my front entrance to see what was going on. We were renovating at the time and in over our heads. One day she heard country music playing and walked right in. Sensing a little stress she grabbed my husband's hand and made him dance. She said, "whenever you get stressed you need to stop and dance, dancing cures everything" and we laughed so hard. From that time on she referred to my husband as her boyfriend and would tease me when I walked by her cottage, asking "where's me boyfriend, I want to take him fishing".

Not only did she love to dance, back in the day she also loved to fish out back, collecting conch and welk that she would cook into a feast. She would also assist her mother Ms Aluda who was a midwife for the eastern districts. She loved to sew her own clothes and up until her later years was well known for her beautiful thatch crafts and famous conch chowder. In 1963 she took on the position of Postmistress at the pink cottage which she did for 35 years. As she said, 'there was no post office in Breakers, so I just took my house and did the job'. In 2014 she was awarded during the Heroes Day celebrations for her contributions to the promotion and preservation of the Cayman Islands' cultural heritage prior to 1960.

Throughout her life Ms Nell was rarely alone. I remember always seeing family, friends and tourists gather at her home. She was described as the glue that held the Breakers community together and was, as quoted by George Nowak (Barefoot Man), "the embodiment of 'Caymankind'", long before the phraseologists dreamed up the word.

Nell Clara Connor - The Queen of Breakers' (1921-2017)

Gordon Solomon



Colouring Cayman, 2020

Gordon Solomon is a Caymanian artist who is best known for his “Spots of light” creations and has never train to be an Artist but has worked for years to nurture his talent. Beginning in the mid-nineties his first oil paintings were inspired by calligraphy and graphic design. He knew he was an artist from very young but had to develop his skills on his own.

He did train in Building Science, and Architecture Design which he uses in his current works of homes and maritime subjects. As of recent he has been merging his graphic knowledge to his abstract ideas. He enjoys teaching art and he is proud of his heritage and looks to the future by remembering his past.

Artist’s Statement:

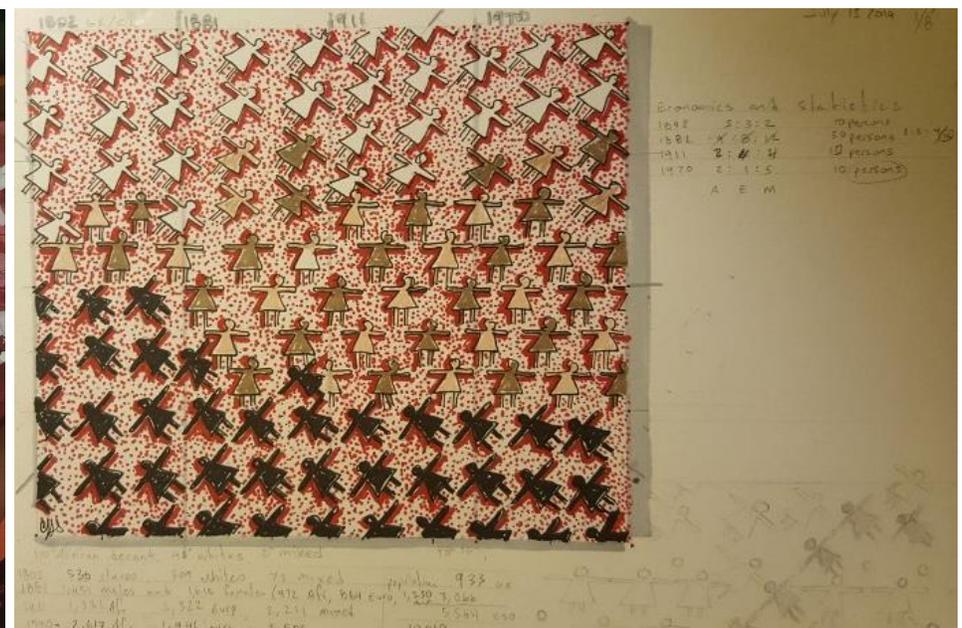
“It is said “it takes a village to raise a child”, but what happens when your motherless child? This is a true story of Cayman’s abandoned population. I may have been probably five years old or younger when my mother moved on in life. I was raised by my father in Rock Hole and the concept of mother was never in place. My mother had five boys and to date none of us live with her.

My first encounter with my mother was when a babysitter was walking me in George Town and we went by the post office. There, in the busy street, I asked a random woman in the post office for a dollar. The babysitter said to me “do you know who that is?” I said, “no!”. She then said to me, “that’s your mother”.

From that point, “mother” was always an elusive figure. Although I had an image of her in my mind for the first time – as I became older she would appear being driven to and fro in a landscaping company truck – she would constantly be on the move – but I never forgot her face. As the siblings got older we all realised that we had a “absent nurturer”.

Even though there wasn’t a connection between us for some twenty years I never tried to be disrespectful. I got along well in life and I got married at twenty-four; during this period, my mother eventually came back into my life. With her return, the scope of my siblings’ abandonment slowly became more apparent.

As of recent times, I had to console one of my four brothers; one of the younger brothers who lived with our mother more than any of us, and was most distressed when we found out she had breast cancer in 2017. He too had been abandoned but was ready to get answers. So I told him he needed to make his peace with her before in no longer with us. So he did. Last year he returned with her to Cayman cancer free.”



Nasaria Suckoo Chollette



Out in the wash..., 2020

Fragments 1945-, 2019

Suckoo Chollette describes her work as ‘a juxtaposition of woman-centred themes and social commentary’. Working in a variety of mediums – including collage and installation – the artist seeks to incite dialogue around social issues affecting women, particularly Afro-Caymanian women.

A member of the Caymanian artists collective Native Sons since 1996, Suckoo Chollette has had showings at the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands, the National Museum, Cayman National Cultural Foundation, The Morgan Gallery and various private exhibition spaces. Several pieces of her works are included in the National Collection, including her installation *Five Hundren’ Years in These Shoes?*, *Maiden Plum* (The McCoy Prize Winner 2006), and acclaimed work, *The Women Have become the Truth (for Madiba)*. In June 2019, Suckoo Chollette became the first winner of the Bendel Hydes Award in the inaugural Cayman Islands Biennial, *Cross Currents*, with an installation entitled *Becoming Again*.

Artist’s Statement:

Out in the wash..., 2020

“If I awaken and all I ever knew is gone, all I ever experience is forgotten, all that used to be is no more, will I still be able to imagine I hear your voice, smell your rosy fragrance, see your women’s worked hands? When I kneel as you did, and dip my hands in the soapy blue water, I feel like you and I are in prayer. Between the 1800s and the early 20th century, with men away “to” sea, Caymanian women were left behind to be the father and the mother of the family: they raised the children, saw to their education, ensured their religious growth, handled the finances, sought ways to make money themselves, and made sure that what little they had stretched as far as they could go/lasted as long as they could make them. This “takin’ little and making-do” was much more genius than we realised. These women wasted nothing, recycled everything and were very creative in the traditional arts skills they used, not just to make full use of resources, but to bring beauty into their home. And so in the absence of their husbands and in the face of almost all of the challenges of raising a family in those meagre days, the only support they would have had were the other women who were in the same boat. I started to wonder how and when they gathered, what their conversations would have been, what would that gathering have looked like?”



Fragments 1945-, 2020

“This work examines how stories can be told through colour, texture, material, and pattern; how small fragments can trigger memories that assault every sense, how in the aging mind, faded memories intersperse with flashes of lucidity, and how these fragments of the past can bring the past forward a hundred years; as if the then is now. I wonder sometimes if remembering always comes with such a heavy sense of loss, would it be best to leave them where they were. But what if we need them to move forward? What if....?”

Between the 1800s and the early 20th century, with men away “to” sea, Caymanian women were left behind to be the father and the mother of the family: they raised the children, saw to their education, ensured their religious growth, handled the finances, sought ways to make money themselves and made sure that what little they had stretched as far as they could go, and lasted as long as they could make them. The span of a woman’s life from childhood to old age was full of trials and struggle. But joy, that is what I hear in our matriarchs’ voices when they speak about the past.”

