

BRIDGET MCPARTLAND



Bridget McPartland, *Ethel*, 2019 Archival print, charcoal and graphite. Collection of the artist.

"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 going back 60 years ago"

The Artist

Born in George Town, Grand Cayman, McPartland 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 after by collectors. Her work has featured on the cover of local magazines, been accepted in juried art shows and has also been donated to charity organisations. McPartland began practicing art in 2002 as she recovered from cancer treatment.

The Artwork

McPartland's work explores the history of the women's movement in Cayman, highlighting Ethel Cook-Bodden's impact on women's right to vote and the creation of the Cayman Islands Red Cross.

Appropriating an archival image which originally depicted two women engaging in craftwork, McPartland's various interventions, through the insertion of a text slogan and the reworking of the two central figures, transforms the casual act of crafting into an overt political gesture. In

the lead up to the advent of universal suffrage in the Cayman Islands in 1959, women would gather under the guise of church meetings or craft and embroidery circles, using the cover of these innocent pastimes to mobilise political action.

By conflating these two activities in a single image, the artist asks us to reconsider forms of labour that are traditionally coded as passive and feminine and to reimagine them as opportunities for female empowerment.

Comparisons



Image: Bridget McPartland, Artist Collection

- Compare *Ethel* with the Artist's piece above. What are the differences and similarities?

Discussion

- Consider the artist's choice of colours. What might they represent or be symbolic of?
- Think about what Caymanian women did and had to do to be able to vote in elections in the mid-twentieth century. Refer to

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage_in_the_Cayman_Islands.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage_in_the_Cayman_Islands)

- Would you have been as persistent and determined to speak out for your rights and if so, why?

Follow up Activities

The artist's work *Ethel* was done in a monochromatic colour scheme, which is derived from a single base hue and extended by using various shades, tones and tints. Tints are achieved by adding white, while shades and tones are achieved by adding a darker colour, such as grey or black.

- Compose your own version of *Ethel* in a warm and cool colour scheme.

Warm colours bring to mind warm things – such as the sun or fire— so use reds, yellows, oranges. Cool colors bring to mind cool things – a mountain stream, or cool grass— so you'll want to use blues, greens, and purples.

- Compose an artwork representing a subject matter that you strongly believe in or that reflects your personal values.