



CULTURE SHIFT

Over the past half century, the Cayman Islands have undergone unprecedented social and cultural transformations. Since 1970, the islands have experienced a population increase of more than 600%, a demographic rupture that has fundamentally reshaped the composition of society. Migration, tourism, and finance-driven development have accelerated processes of globalisation, producing both opportunities for cultural exchange and new tensions around heritage, identity, and belonging—while fundamentally altering the city/land-scapes, evident in Michael A. Mothen's digital illustrations and Luelan (a.k.a. Lutz) Bodden's painting.

The Culture Shift subtheme examines these dynamics through art that does not merely illustrate demographic or historical change; rather, the selected artists interrogate the mechanisms by which Caymanian cultural identity is constructed, transmitted, and reimagined. Artworks like *Downside* (by Rhian Campbell, Meegan Ebanks, & Sean Ebanks) and *Pilotis* (by John Bird) revisit traditional forms—oral storytelling, music, craft—not as static inheritances but as living archives that gain renewed significance within today's hybrid cultural landscape.

At the same time, some artists foreground questions of race, diaspora, and nationality as central to Caymanian cultural experience—whose voice is “authentic” enough to constitute heritage? Artists of multinational heritage, like Kimberly Ann Agbuya and Yonier Powery, deftly synthesize family influences from the Philippines and Cuba, respectively, with icons from their Caymanian home. Long a crossroads of peoples, the Islands embody the complexities of Caribbean modernity: the entanglement of colonial legacies, African diasporic traditions, and transnational migrations. The artists gathered here attend to these overlapping histories, while also considering the politics of inclusion and exclusion that accompany rapid social change.

By situating personal and collective narratives within broader demographic and historical frameworks, works coded in Culture Shift position art as a critical site for negotiating identity—past and present—in the Cayman Islands. Rather than lamenting cultural loss or celebrating assimilation, the works illuminate strategies of resilience, adaptation, and critique. They invite viewers to consider culture as a dynamic process—shaped by continuity and rupture, by local practices and global flows—through which Caymanian society continues to define itself in the 21st century. The groundwork done by artists like Brandon Saunders and John Reno Jackson demonstrate how these conversations hold stake in larger conversations, with history and with other regions globally.

SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Contemporary life is increasingly defined by the ways we connect with one another. Digital technologies, global mobility, and social media platforms have transformed not only how we communicate but also how we perceive intimacy, community, and belonging. These shifts are particularly resonant in the Cayman Islands, a society shaped by rapid demographic growth and its position within broader cultural, political, and financial networks. Questions of interconnection—both virtual and embodied—carry heightened urgency in a context where everyday life is negotiated across cultures, languages, and geographies.

The Social Dynamic subtheme brings together artists whose practices investigate these transformations in human relation. Some artists address the mediation of relationships through screens and networks (see Jo Austin's *StreetView* that turns Instagram scrolling into a physical act), while others address the simultaneous intimacy and distance enabled by digital communication (see Sisters' Art's melancholic painting of mediated affirmations). Still others consider the entanglements of globalization that bring people into proximity—through planes and ports—as seen in Kay Smith's critique of systemic imbalances when it comes to power and access.

Equally important is the exhibition's attention to modes of artistic practice that privilege interaction and exchange. Some works align with the discourse of relational aesthetics, wherein the artwork exists less as a static object than as a framework for encounters among participants, like Martina Jackson's *Who Wins?* interactive game. Others employ strategies of audience engagement that foreground spectators not as passive viewers but as co-creators in the production of meaning, like Esther Johnson's community-built *Holding* installation.

By situating personal and collective relations within these expanded frameworks, Social Dynamics underscores art's capacity to reveal, critique, and reimagine the structures that shape human connectivity. It interrogates how shifting conditions of communication alter our very sense of self and community. Visitors are invited to consider their own participation in these dynamics and to reflect on how art can model alternative possibilities for relating in an increasingly interconnected world.



ECOLOGICAL LEGACIES

The natural environment of the Cayman Islands has long been central to the shaping of cultural identity, economic development, and collective memory—and its most iconic, even cliché, imagery for foreigners. Yet in recent decades, rapid urbanization, tourism expansion, and global climate change have altered the ecological landscape at an unprecedented pace, affecting flora and fauna on land and sea alike. Questions of land use—whether privately owned or publicly stewarded—now stand at the heart of social and political debate, raising urgent concerns about sustainability, equity, and intergenerational responsibility.

The Ecological Legacies subtheme brings together critical thinkers as they examine the intersections of environment, history, and society. Their works highlight the shifting terrain of local and regional politics surrounding development and land management—like Claire Pettinati's critique of the Georgetown landfill—while also situating these issues within global discourses of climate resiliency and environmental justice. For some, this means revisiting ancestral relationships to land and sea, as in Kristy Capewell's found object sculptures that illuminate practices of stewardship. For others, it involves confronting the ecological disruptions produced by extractive economies, infrastructural expansion, and rising seas—Joanna Humphries' performance piece, *Beach Clean*, enacts local traditions of mitigating such detrimental impacts.

The exhibition insists that ecological narratives are not only about the present but also about contested pasts and speculative futures. By attending to the legacies of land use and ecological change, these works ask how Caymanians—both individually and collectively—might envision more sustainable pathways forward. As they employ the iconic mangroves, parrots, iguanas, corals, etc., the artists remind us that environmental transformation is inseparable from questions of cultural continuity, political agency, and social equity.

In presenting these perspectives, Ecological Legacies positions art as a vital medium for rethinking human–environment relations. Rather than treating the environment as backdrop, the artists foreground it as an active participant in shaping identity and possibility. As we reflect on our own ecological footprints, we should consider how cultural and artistic practices might contribute to more resilient and just futures—locally and globally.