

# JAMAICA MAKING

The Theresa Roberts Art Collection

edited by  
Emma Roberts

Keith Collins





The background of the cover is an abstract artwork. It features a large, solid yellow area on the left side, which transitions into a teal area on the right. In the teal area, there is a faint, ghostly image of a person's head and shoulders, possibly a portrait, rendered in a light, almost white color. The overall texture appears to be that of a canvas or a similar material.

# Jamaica Making

The Theresa Roberts  
Art Collection

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UNIVERSITY OF  
LIVERPOOL

VG&M

VICTORIA GALLERY & MUSEUM



LIVERPOOL  
JOHN MOORES  
UNIVERSITY

First published 2022 by  
Liverpool University Press  
4 Cambridge Street  
Liverpool  
L69 7ZU

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication data  
A British Library CIP record is available

ISBN 978-1-80085-620-2 (paperback)  
eISBN 978-1-80085-547-2

Typeset by Carnegie Book Production, Lancaster

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# Acknowledgements

**Emma Roberts**

The exhibition *Jamaica Making: The Theresa Roberts Art Collection* is the first exhibition entirely of Jamaican art to be shown in the north-west of the UK. I am proud to be the curator of this important event.

Many thanks are owed to those who have helped make this exhibition possible. Firstly, I am extremely grateful to Theresa Roberts, who has loaned part of her large and comprehensive collection of Jamaican art for our viewing pleasure and edification. Andrew Roberts has also provided endless help over the several years of preparations, for which I am thankful.

Dr Amanda Draper, Curator of Art and Exhibitions, and Nicola Euston, Museums and Galleries Manager of the Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool, have worked with me over many years in order to enable this exhibition to become manifest in the historic, beautiful Victoria Gallery and Museum building. I am thankful for their trust, patience and support throughout this long process.

I thank my fellow contributors to the exhibition catalogue: the collector, Theresa Roberts; esteemed art historian, Edward Lucie-Smith; Dr Davinia Gregory-Kameka, Assistant Professor at Columbia University, USA; Dr Sireita Mullings, Lecturer in Applied Social Studies and Sociology at the University of Bedfordshire and The Most Honourable Andrew Holness, Prime Minister of Jamaica, who have given their time and thoughts, which elevate this publication.

Alison Welsby of Liverpool University Press has been extremely supportive and helpful throughout this process, and I thank staff at Liverpool University Press for their role in publishing the exhibition catalogue. I am also most grateful to the Association for Art History, to the QR Fund of the Arts, Professional and Social

Studies Faculty of Liverpool John Moores University, and to Maria Follett and Val Stevenson from Library Services at Liverpool John Moores University, for their roles in enabling financial contributions to the catalogue.

Finally, I thank the artists whose works comprise this exhibition. I have communicated with many of the artists and thank them for their participation and perspectives. In particular, I would like to mention Desanna Watson, who is Artist-in-Residence for this exhibition, and who has benefitted the Merseyside community with her insights and art workshops. Desanna agreed to locate herself in Merseyside for an entire month to bring her knowledge of Jamaican art, and her own artistic expertise, to enhance the knowledge of children, students and community groups of the north-west.

I hope sincerely that this exhibition will be enjoyable and that it will provide valuable information about the art and culture of Jamaica.

**Dr Emma Roberts is Associate Dean for Global Engagement for the Faculty of Arts, Professional and Social Studies at Liverpool John Moores University.**



# Welcome

## The Most Honourable Andrew Holness, Prime Minister of Jamaica

I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to express my support for this major exhibition of Jamaican art at the Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool.

The impact that our island has had on world culture is a constant source of pride and inspiration to me. Painting and sculpture by Jamaican artists is arguably less well known internationally than some of our musical and sporting achievements, but exhibitions like this bring to international attention the thriving and vibrant artistic community that has always existed in Jamaica, but which has flourished since independence in 1962.

The exhibition reflects many of the facets of Jamaican life and culture that those of us lucky enough to live permanently on the island experience on a daily basis. I hope, in a small way, that it transmits Jamaica to each of the visitors viewing the pieces. The diaspora will immediately empathise with many of the images, but I believe those visitors not of Jamaican heritage will be equally delighted with the sense of place that the exhibition portrays.

Jamaica's greatest asset is its people and one of the major defining characteristics we share is an overwhelming love of country. Theresa Roberts is a tireless promoter of Jamaica in the UK and I thank her for loaning part of her collection for this exhibition.



# Introduction

**Theresa Roberts**

I very much hope you enjoy viewing the Jamaican works of art selected from my collection to form this exhibition. All the pieces have a personal significance to me and have collectively and individually given me enormous pleasure over the years.

I was born on the island of Jamaica and spent my early childhood there looked after by my wonderful grandmother. At the age of eight, I came to the UK to join my parents who had started a new life in London shortly after my birth.

Jamaica never left me although I had left Jamaica. When I started travelling back to the island on a regular basis (I am now lucky enough to have a home there) my interest in Jamaican art was aroused as it gave me a way to reconnect with my childhood and to bring little pieces of Jamaica back to London, providing a permanent link with home.

Although my interest was, as with many collectors, initially triggered by memories and a sense of place, I approached compiling my collection in an organised way. Guided by the late Guy McIntosh, who was one of Jamaica's foremost dealers and collectors, I acquired pieces by the majority of the established 'greats' of the Jamaican art world. Guy was incredibly kind to me and generous with his time and knowledge. I am forever grateful for his input in the early days of my collection.

As my passion for Jamaican art grew, I visited the island more frequently and found that my interest shifted to collecting works by up-and-coming Jamaican artists. One of the greatest pleasures I derive from my collection is the relationship I have with many of the artists. Art is about people and, to understand the art, I believe an understanding of the person who created it is essential.



What you see here today is a small selection of the incredibly diverse Jamaican art scene. I hope it encourages you to learn more about the country and its artists.

It would be remiss of me not to thank the people who have made this exhibition possible. Firstly, my great friend Edward Lucie-Smith, who is Jamaica's greatest international art critic and the person who suggested this show to me. Secondly, Dr Emma Roberts from Liverpool John Moores University, who has worked tirelessly to arrange the exhibition. And thirdly, Dr Amanda Draper and the Victoria Gallery and Museum for hosting.

# The Theresa Roberts Collection

**Emma Roberts**

This exhibition at the historic Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool, comprises almost entirely of art works in the collection of Theresa Roberts, who is founder and owner of the Jamaica Patty Co. restaurant, based in Covent Garden, London.

Theresa Roberts was born in Jamaica to parents who emigrated to the United Kingdom as part of the 'Windrush Generation': those who were invited by British governments between 1948 and 1971 to move from their homes in Commonwealth countries to rectify labour shortages in post-war Britain. Theresa was cared for initially in Jamaica by relatives, but joined her parents in England in the 1960s once they were established, and therefore spent her formative years in London. As a young woman with an entrepreneurial spirit, she developed a property portfolio before realising her passion for art.

Over the last 20 years, whilst nurturing several international businesses, Theresa Roberts has amassed simultaneously a significant and important collection of art by Jamaican artists. Not only does Roberts collect Jamaican art for personal pleasure, but she aims to promote and support Jamaican artists internationally and is instrumental to several art projects. An important example of the latter is her involvement with the instatement of the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool in 2007. Therefore, Roberts has an established relationship with and interest in Liverpool and its extensive art gallery and museum culture.

As a result of Theresa Roberts' careful curation over many years, this collection presents the achievements of key artists who truly represent Jamaican art: that is, art by Jamaican artists and who were or are living on the island, rather than works by artists from other cultures who happen to make the country their home. As such,

the Theresa Roberts Collection offers an important insight into the development of Jamaican art, with a strong emphasis on works created since the country gained independence in 1962. Therefore, the siting of this exhibition in 2022 is highly significant, being 60 years since Jamaican independence, and a most fitting and meaningful occasion for this public revealing of the Theresa Roberts Collection.

It is most appropriate that the exhibition is sited in Liverpool, which has a long and complex relationship with Jamaica. As a port city, the history of Liverpool is entwined with the history of Jamaica. Shamefully, Liverpool operated a slave trade to Jamaica, with 26 slaving vessels alone sailing from Liverpool to Jamaica in 1796 (Haggerty, 2006, p.189), even though “rather than being a dominant trade, however, the slave trade fitted into existing patterns of Liverpool’s Atlantic commerce” (Haggerty, 2009, p.818), which included trading in goods like sugar and tobacco. Partly as a result of slavery, Liverpool also has the oldest black population in the UK (Costello, 2001). Raymond Costello recounts the diverse ways in which black individuals have arrived in Liverpool over the centuries, which included as freed slaves, servants and sailors. In short, “This port has had an uninterrupted black population for some two and a half centuries” (Costello, 2020, p.100).

Yet, despite the long relationship between the island and the city, and the existence of the diasporic Jamaican population in Liverpool, typically in Liverpool, as for the UK as a whole, “opportunities for the British public to see art from Jamaica and elsewhere in the Caribbean are rare ... the nation’s culture continues to be associated primarily with its musical traditions: achievements in the visual arts are less easily broadcast” (Malbert, 1995, p.7). In 1988 a touring exhibition curated by Eddie Chambers, entitled *Black Art: Plotting the Course*, visited Liverpool’s centre for the contemporary arts, Bluecoat (then known as the Bluecoat Gallery), and an exhibition curated by Tanya Barson, *Afro Modern: Journeys Through the Black Atlantic*, showed at Tate Liverpool in 2010 but an exhibition that focuses wholly on a variety of Jamaican art is new for Merseyside. It has been possible to see single works by Jamaican artists, such as during the regular Liverpool Biennial festivals, or occasional exhibitions of individual artists’ *oeuvres*, such as the display of Frank Bowling’s works, which visited Senate House at the University in Liverpool in 1988, or the Laura Facey Cooper solo exhibition at the International Slavery Museum in 2014 but Liverpool, with its sizeable population of people who identify as Jamaican, or of Jamaican descent, deserves to see this rich panoply of art by Jamaican artists.

This exhibition includes works by seminal Jamaican artists, which would enhance any international museum collection, such as Barrington Watson, Albert Huie and Edna Manley, and yet it provides much space to consider younger innovators such as



Phillip Thomas, Michael Elliott and Kai Watson. Indeed, the youngest contributors, Desanna Watson and O'mar McKay, are only recently graduated from art school in Jamaica and provide a good sense of the direction in which Jamaican art is moving. It is important to Theresa Roberts that emerging creators' works are shown as she feels strongly about developing and supporting young artists. In fact, Roberts hosts the Hanover Grange Jamaican Residency at her own home in Jamaica in conjunction with the Royal Drawing School in London (Royal Drawing School, 2021). This residency provides an outstanding opportunity for two artists each year to live and work in Jamaica for two weeks, and to network with the local art community.

Roberts' collecting practices have also ensured that her acquisitions are rich in works by women, for example, Laura Facey Cooper, Ebony Patterson and Kristina Rowe are just some of the important female artists who are working currently in Jamaica, and whose works are part of this exhibition. This corresponds with Roberts' role as a supporter of women. Not only is she an influential businesswoman herself, who leads by example, but she has a long-standing interest in promoting other women. For example, she found several ways to support the Jamaican women's football team, Reggae Girlz, who qualified for the FIFA World Cup in 2019 (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 7 June 2019).

In common with Roberts' approach as a collector whose mission is to be embracing and encompassing, the exhibition demonstrates her interest in a wide range of media. In addition to the anticipated range of paintings in oil or acrylic, viewers will have the opportunity to see works in film, mixed media installation, photography, as well as sculpture in wood, bronze or aluminium. This by no means represents the entirety of Roberts' collection, as some works are too fragile to be moved for display in Liverpool, for example, textile pieces, such as Monique Lofters' *Everything That Festers II* (2011), and some are on permanent display in her home in Jamaica, such as Christopher Irons' assembled iron *Violinist* (n.d.) sculpture.

The themes apparent in the art works are diverse. This is typical for an exhibition of Jamaican art because, as former Jamaican Prime Minister, Michael Manley, observed, "Jamaican art ... is best described as pluralistic; which is not surprising because the society which it reflects is pluralistic; an aspect of our society which has engaged the attention of our sociologists" (Boxer & Poupeye, 1998, p.9). The works collected by Roberts are no exception to this and represent many issues of great concern to citizens of Jamaica over the twentieth century and at the present time. Too often, Jamaica is misrepresented as a tropical idyll that exists for the consumption of North American or European visitors. Instead, these works in the Roberts collection explore the real issues of relevance to people who are living in

Jamaica. These range from concern about social problems such as drug-taking and prostitution, to consideration of the role of religions in Jamaica, or simply reflection on the fecundity and beauty of Jamaica's natural landscape.

It is unsurprising that the lush Jamaican landscape has been so inspiring for artists. The terrain varies from dramatic mountain ranges, as in the Blue Mountains, to thick rainforest or iconic beaches. Many of the artists collected here display the urge to explore these vistas. For example, the "Father of Jamaican art" (Lucie-Smith, 2001, Book Title), Albert Huie, expressed his love for the natural landscape of his homeland in *Roselle Waterfall, St. Thomas*, (c.1975) and "is chiefly known as a landscapist" (Lucie-Smith, 2001, p.10). The painting is arranged like a frieze in which the figures are placed like notes on a musical score, which gives rhythm to the canvas. Typically for Huie, he takes obvious pleasure in painting the lush vegetation, the sky and the water of the falls and sea with fragmented energetic brushwork. There is a sense, however, that the natural features of the landscape, such as the eponymous waterfall, are more than just beautiful. He "consciously pursued the development of an indigenous iconography based on popular life and the physical environment" (Poupeye, 2011, p.55). Huie realised that features such as waterfalls, community centres or harbours act to bind the community together and, indeed, he is also noted for his abiding interest in the people of Jamaica and the activities in which they have partaken for centuries.

During Huie's career, it is easy to forget how important his achievements were. His landscapes are certainly pleasant viewing, which can mean that their significance is overlooked – especially as they are apolitical. However, prior to Huie's activities, Jamaica and its people had never before been properly represented and this is one reason for Huie's importance in the history of Jamaican art. Indeed, "He had to create his own vision" (Lucie-Smith, 2001, p.18) in an age when Jamaica was finding out what being Jamaican meant at a time newly without colonisation.

Similar interests are also apparent in the work of Barrington Watson, the first in an artistic dynasty that continues to this day with his sons Raymond and Basil, and grandson, Kai Watson. Barrington Watson, to whom critic Veerle Poupeye refers as possibly "the defining Jamaican artist of the post-Independence period" (Poupeye, 2012, p.10), is represented in this exhibition by *After the Storm, Hector River, Portland* (n.d.). Although Watson worked with diverse subject-matter, this local scene in north-east Portland parish is typical of his landscapes and genre paintings. Having been trained academically in London and parts of Europe, Barrington brought established technical qualities to his art, such as a focus on composition and draftsmanship, which contrasted with the popular 'Intuitives', who were self-

taught artists. As curator, David Boxer writes, “It is Watson’s more straightforward depictions of ... traditional subjects such as fishermen gathering their nets, washerwomen on the banks of the river, and water carriers, that seem to be a special contribution to our art” (Boxer & Poupeye, 1998, pp.19–20).

Less overtly, but no less consciously, Laura Hamilton explains how her non-representational works, *Markings* (1991), *Pin Pon She 2* (1993) and *Put It De* (1996) are also inspired by the physical environment of Jamaica:

My points of reference were from Jamaica where I was born and brought up. I was taking photographs, documenting buildings and found structures; billboards, walls painted over and over, cottages with fret work, verandas and louvered windows, made up shacks and bars, wooden or concrete. All found in a landscape of saturated colour and warm light. I absorbed this palette and language of marks to use intuitively in my paintings. (Hamilton, 2021)

Indeed, the strong colours, and expressionistic marks are evocative of the experience of traversing the vibrant streets of locations such as Kingston.

The bright colours of Kingston and, indeed, Jamaica at large, are often inspirational to artists. Certainly, they are captured in the photography of Marlon James, as in the pink and turquoise *Request* (2017). This work, part of his *Lonely Wanderer* series that records his travels as an observant ‘*flaneur*’ around the city, demonstrate his thrill at the juxtaposition of the colours, along with the frisson obtained from discovering the audacious request for ‘offerings & donations’ for prayer requests. This is typical of his “raw, unedited approach to photography” through which “he often captures socially controversial subjects who represent taboo aspects of Jamaican society” (Jamaicans.com, 2021).

Similar absorption in colour, and indeed in Jamaica’s controversial subjects, may be seen in Kristina Rowe’s paintings, *The Assets* (2009) and *Untitled* (2009). These works both employ vibrant hues that are conveyed effectively by the acrylic paint, and simultaneously explore the topic of objectification of women and the consumption of their images. The paintings examine aspects of Jamaica’s nightlife, such as lap-dance clubs and strip bars, the resulting sexualisation of women, and the ambivalence with which women can be viewed by men. Rowe is fascinated by how “Black female bodies are presented through these agencies of popular culture ... Where the Black female body is concerned, the male gaze turns women into passive items to possess and to use as props” (Rowe, 2021). These ideas are exemplified in *The Assets* by conveying the duality of the male viewer’s pleasure in and disparagement of women. The scantily clad woman is being enjoyed for her ‘assets’ whilst being demeaned simultaneously, as



shown by the pejorative words daubed on and around her, such as ‘Bitch’ and ‘Sex Toy’. “This work centres on the idea of women being whittled down to their bodies and their seductive nature” (Rowe, 2021).

In *Untitled*, as in many other of her paintings, Rowe deliberately left the details of the female figure vague in order to represent the sublimation of women’s personalities and identities to their bodies. The artist explains that the translucency of medium, sparsity of paint and use of vague outlines for the face, “are symbolic in re-presenting the ideology of how Black females have been viewed over the years. Black women have been described as lacking depth and having little to no substance to their existence.” The lack of detail to the faces of Rowe’s female subjects “translates the isms of being invisible in a sociocultural way. Though they may go unnoticed they are still objectified for their appetizing body parts” (Rowe, 2021).

Such themes are increasingly being explored by contemporary Jamaican artists, as is explained in the catalogue for the 2016 *Jamaican Pulse* exhibition that took place in Bristol:

While sexual objectification can be very damaging and problematic, it can in art also be mobilised as a powerful strategy for critical engagement. Most contemporary Jamaican Art that deals critically with gender and sexuality actually involves some objectification, sometimes self-objectification, and focuses strongly on the body. (Anderson & Mortimer, 2016, p.32)

These are themes that are certainly prominent in Ebony Patterson’s *oeuvre*, including those exhibited in this exhibition: *Hybrids* (2007) and *Untitled* (2007). The mixed media, employed in both works, involve photomontage, drawing and painting, and enable visceral sensations to be conveyed. At this period in her career in 2007, Patterson explored her growing interest in the topic of the female body as object and has created “fantastic vagina-like flesh-shapes, grotesque but strangely beautiful forms that evoke medical illustrations and specimens of diseased tissue but also resemble over-ripe exotic fruits, flowers and cornucopias”. These produce a “tension between sexual provocation, cultural taboo, revulsion and visual seduction” (Poupeye, 2014, p.10). Like Kristina Rowe, she is interested in the balance between desire for and rejection of women, and attraction and disgust, that she perceives to be common in some parts of society in Jamaica. In particular, she draws attention to the reality of women’s bodies and their processes, which counteracts the popular conception in Jamaica that these are taboo. Having been known in earlier work “for her exploration and abstraction of sensuous femininity through Jamaican cultural identity ... a profound fascination with the flesh, as well a deep interest

in aestheticizing both the little seen and familiar elements of women's bodies" (ArtDaily, 2007), she has more recently moved on to consider the pressures that also exist for men in Jamaican society and, especially, the difficulties associated with belonging to the LGBTQ community.

Similar preoccupations with the body, and pressures to conform faced by individuals in society, are evident in the work of Monique Lofters. In *2 (Fat Cells)* (2009), the viewer is confronted by a rubicund riot of somatic imagery. It seems that fleshy cells are becoming engorged and multiplying, and the scene both fascinates and repulses. The artist comments, "My body of work explores the fat cells that create an ever-changing environment that develops within the human body. These cells reconfigure and often times distorts the human figure in ways that have aesthetic and social implications" (eBay, 2021). Typically for Lofters, *2 (Fat Cells)* encourages one to consider the current focus in popular culture on the ideal body, which might mean that more critical issues are being neglected. She asks us to "reflect on the state of our changing cultures around the world. Her observations concluded that vanity overtook the preservation of culture and roots" (IrieDiva, 2004). The overwhelming pressures to adhere to the contemporary ideal body image mean that attention is not given to history, religion or community, for example.

Lofters often tries to remind her audience of more traditional ways of living, even if through contemporary imagery. For example, she frequently includes craft practices such as felting, weaving or crocheting in her work. This is apparent in the large mixed media installation, *Everything That Festers II* (n.d.), which is sited in Theresa Roberts' home in Jamaica, and which is too delicate to be transported to Liverpool. Despite the topical issues about body image and physicality that are being explored in the work, Lofters' use of textiles recalls the ambiguous connotations surrounding women's adoption of embroidery, weaving or crocheting. These were explored in a landmark publication by Roszika Parker: "Paradoxically, while embroidery was employed to inculcate femininity in women, it also enabled them to negotiate the constraints of femininity" (Parker, 1984, p.11). In common with the long history of women making work in various textiles, Lofters finds new ways in established materials to comment on the roles and restrictions for women in the twenty-first century.

Questioning the roles accepted in Jamaican society for women is also important for Alicia Lisa Brown. The paintings *Priest 1* (2017) and *Priest 2* (2017) were created originally for the London exhibition, *Jamaica Spiritual*, curated by Theresa Roberts in 2017. Brown explains that they were motivated by her consternation about the roles for women in the Roman Catholic religion:

The inspiration for the two portraits was my critiquing and questioning the absence or non-acceptance of women to hold certain positions in the Catholic Church. I created portraits of two women I knew personally who society would look down on as just regular or street women. In the paintings I presented them as Priest not Priestess in a way to give them a voice as well as to elevate their status from what the society including religious society has decided they should be. (Brown, 2021)

Brown reminds the viewer that spirituality and restorative energy can be present within anyone, male or female, in any stratum of society.

The female in *Priest 1*, one of Brown's 'street women', makes strong direct eye contact with the observer and exhibits a halo, the traditional iconographical symbol for a holy person. She also wears a heart-shaped locket necklace, which is reminiscent of the 'sacred heart' symbol that is an established Roman Catholic devotion, which represents Christ's love and empathy for the human race. These motifs pointedly accompany the female who replaces the traditional male religious figure, whom through history offers comfort and succour. Therefore, Brown proposes that the ordinary woman from the street can fulfil the same role in society as the elevated sacerdotal male.

Similarly, the woman in *Priest 2* is shown with a crozier, the traditional symbol to represent the authority of a Christian bishop and that such a person is the 'shepherd of the flock'. She also wears several necklaces: items of jewellery that replace the traditional precious jewels that adorn the fingers of bishops. In this image, as in the counterpart by Brown, the humble female is substituted for the esteemed male. Brown states, "As an artist my work is inspired by society and the various hierarchies society creates both past and present and the methods and devices we use to adapt or fit into certain sub-cultures" (Brown, 2021). She encourages the audience to note these 'methods and devices' to which we submit so as to adapt in society, and to question their relevance and impact.

Religion and spirituality features strongly in Jamaican art history, and in the works in the Theresa Roberts collection. This can vary from the Zion Revivalist inspirations in the work of Kapo (Mallica Reynolds), who was one of the so-called Jamaican 'Intuitives' (self-taught artists), to the Rastafarianism apparent in the digital print, *Heaven's Chant* (2017) by Sireita Mullings, or the individual visionary faith of Carl Abrahams' *Schoolgirls With Prophet* (1982), and even in the non-representational sculpture of Laura Facey Cooper, as in *Comb* (2011).

Although Kapo's *Coffee Mountain* (1984) appears to represent the typical rural Jamaican landscape in a folk art style, as with all of his art it can be read as having



a religious sub-text. He both “idealizes the way of life of his social cohort and the physical environment of rural Jamaica” and reflects “his role as a Revivalist leader and depicts the spiritual world of Revivalism in brightly colored, pattern-like narrative compositions and bold, dynamic sculptural forms”. In this way, he mirrors the “two trends [that] also occurred in Haitian Primitive art” (Poupeye, 2011, p.419). Kapo claimed that in his early adolescent years he received a vision from an angel who instructed him to take up his art as a religious activity (Archer Straw, 1995). Therefore, he saw art-making as an expression of his religious practice.

This is strikingly similar to the impetus behind most of the works of Carl Abrahams, despite the fact that Kapo was a Zion Revivalist and Abrahams was a devout, ascetic Christian. Like, Kapo, Abrahams perceived the making of art as “a relation of religion ... I see it as bringing man to the creator” (Wardle, 2015, p.807). His *Schoolgirls with Prophet* depicts a long-standing interest in the role of teachers and prophets. This is thought to stem from his continual mulling over the Old Testament prophets, which he combined with his respect for the teachers of his own schooling (Strudwick, 1983). As usual, the painting illustrates a moment of human interaction, which is typical for Abrahams, who was a continual observer of human communication, even though he himself was rather hermetic and did not engage in relationships with others. Theresa Roberts recalls that she was attracted to this painting because it reminds her of going to school and church with her sister as a child in Jamaica, and therefore brings back happy, simple memories (Roberts, 2020). It is interesting, given the Liverpool context for this exhibition, that Abrahams was encouraged to take up painting as a profession by the British artist, Augustus John, who became a lecturer at the University of Liverpool in 1901. John was visiting Jamaica in 1937<sup>\*</sup> in order to attempt to reignite his own artistic inspiration when he met Abrahams.

In contrast to Abrahams, whose religious inspiration came from close study of the Old and New Testaments, and from his own attendance at church services, Sireita Mullings’ *Heaven’s (Zion’s) Chant ...* references the Rastafari notion of Heaven referred to as Zion, an eternity in the current life.” Her digital print features “Rastafarian musicians chanting and drumming at Hootananny in Brixton, South London” (Mullings, 2021). Mullings concurs with Barry Chevannes’ concept that “‘Zion’ is no longer the heaven in the skies but Ethiopia, or Africa, where God is” (Chevannes, 1990, p.135).

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\* Augustus John painted *Two Jamaican Girls* in 1937 as a result of this visit. The work is in the permanent collection of the Walker Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool. This acted to regenerate his art practice (National Museums Liverpool, 2021a).

By depicting the musicians in their location of London, Mullings also reminds us of the Jamaican diaspora. Many Jamaican citizens, including visual artists, moved to countries such as the UK or USA to continue their lives or to practise in different conditions. These movements, and the importance of maintaining links between past and present histories, including the link that is religion, is a subject of recurring interest for Mullings. For both new and established members of communities, Mullings finds that photography in particular is an ideal medium for ensuring that links are retained to heritage – and in the case of *Heaven's Chant* – to the practice of Rastafarianism in Jamaica. Mullings writes, “As a means to log events and moments that are key to enabling an interaction with a community’s cultural heritage, the visual as a space for encounter and exchange facilitates not only a photographic dialogue but also the opening up of a network that allows for the components of heritage to be accessed” (Mullings-Lawrence, 2019, p.337).

Laura Facey Cooper continues the themes of heritage and spirituality in her *Comb* 2011 sculpture. Whilst making no overt reference to a religion, the sculpture is intended to have a restorative emanation and to offer an opportunity to consider a non-specific sense of the divine. The natural material of wood, and the smooth abraded surface, seem timeless and link the observer to centuries of human experience and our interactions with the natural environment. The sculptor writes, “My combs are prayerful, they untangle, smooth and transform in their ‘walking’. It’s my hope that through my work I’m contributing to the untangling of our collective psyche” (Cooper, 2021).

Cooper has created a series of ‘walking combs’. Typically, these are carved directly in wood, which is the medium most favoured by the artist, and they correspond to her abiding interest in using traditional tools as a *leitmotif* in her work. She states:

I like to work with idea of tools as metaphors ... For instance, a comb untangles, a needle stitches together ... Just as I had to untangle my life, stitch it back together and move to another level of consciousness, my artworks are the metaphors that I now present to the world for the healing of the planet – if it was that easy. In fact, the idea of healing turns me on – healing the people and the earth around me. (*Parlour Magazine*, 2013)

Healing is an issue taken seriously by Cooper, and she is active in her desire to contribute repairs to the world. She has written and illustrated a book, *Talisman the Goat* (1976), which is an environmental tale to promote awareness of water shortage and the need for water conservation. Her most famous work is *Redemption Song*

(2003), sited in Emancipation Park in Kingston, which commemorates the end of slavery in Jamaica, and many of her other works explore such themes. For example, her installation, *Their Spirits Gone Before Them* (2006), is a reflection on the horrors of the Middle Passage. This work was awarded the UNESCO Slave Route Project logo in 2013 (National Museums Liverpool, 2021b). The UNESCO project is an international endeavour that highlights exemplary works that promote peace and highlight the catastrophic transformations caused by slavery.

The important subject-matter explored frequently, and with great sensitivity by Cooper throughout her career, has ensured that she has a key role in the art history of Jamaica. Not only is she one of the country's first installation artists, who exhibited in the inaugural 1985 exhibition of installation art in Jamaica, *Six Options: Gallery Spaces Transformed*, at the National Gallery, Kingston, but the Jamaican government and major organisations choose to commission Cooper in order to exemplify prestigious Jamaican art. For example, her monumental *Walking Tree* (2014), originally created for the Jamaica Biennial of 2014, is now sited in the prominent location of the main check-in hall at Norman Manley International Airport, Kingston (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 2015).

Cooper is therefore one of a distinguished series of sculptors in Jamaican art history, and which are well represented in the Theresa Roberts collection. The most famous sculptor is arguably Edna Manley, whose bronze *Orpheus* (1983) provides an excellent example. Manley, who was lauded as “the mother of modern Jamaican art” (Laduke, 1987, p.36), was wife of Jamaica's first Prime Minister, Norman Manley, and mother of Michael Manley, who was also Prime Minister from 1972 to 1980. Her name is now honoured by the eponymous Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts, formed from Jamaica School of Art, and which produced many of the country's leading artists since its inception in 1950.

Manley's *Orpheus* is an excellent conduit into the sculptor's life-long artistic impetus and concerns. The subject of Orpheus, Greek god of music and poetry, is a figure of recurring interest for Manley. She was noted for her “artistic goal explicitly as the fusion of European myth with West Indian social reality” (Springfield, 1992, p.6), and this sculpture achieved that by the Afro-Caribbean features of the figure being combined with the typically mythic Orphic lyre. Manley recounted that she was going through a period of depression, and was fearing the end of her life, around the time that *Orpheus* was created. She turned to this favourite Greek myth in order to lift her mood. Springfield asserts that the myth and character of Orpheus helped Manley to assimilate her husband's death, her own ageing and the turbulent politics of Jamaica. She quotes from Manley's diary: “‘How,’ she asks, ‘does one put

into contemporary and acceptable form an old Greek legend – born in the land of reggae – born in the land of a place where life and death are perhaps not accepted as tragedy?” (Springfield, 1992, p.6). However, Manley reconciles these problems by deciding that Orpheus’ “heavenly music, defies even death”, and so contemplating the mythic figure renewed her own sense of purpose in life – even in the face of visible death and violence around her in Jamaica.

The influence of Manley on sculptor Alvin Marriott is clear. Manley offered voluntary tuition in sculpture to students at the Institute of Jamaica during the 1940s, and it was there that young carpenter, Marriott, honed his skills in fine art (Archer Straw & Robinson, 1990). Like Manley, he relished the method of direct carving, and also continued her interest in classical themes and representational forms – especially West Indian physiognomy. This is evident in the striking *Head* (1964), in which the artist’s pleasure in representing the model’s strong features is apparent. The hand of the artist is clear, as the small chisel marks are left visible so that the viewer may appreciate how the work developed over time as a result of labour and visual sensitivity. When this work was made in 1964, just after Jamaican independence in 1962, it was part of an exciting drive to reproduce images of the ordinary person “because they were being seen with new eyes. The Jamaican now asserted his discovery of self-worth and each artist distinguished himself not through variety of subject matter but through the confidence of his vision and the level of interpretation he applied to it” (Archer Straw & Robinson, 1990, p.9). Other artists who were part of this initiative were Winston Patrick, Ronald Moody and David Miller Junior.

Marriott’s facility for clear, majestic representations of his models, led to a series of significant commissions. For example, he was commissioned by the Jamaican government in 1984 to produce a commemorative statue of reggae singer, Bob Marley, and was chosen relatively early in his career to produce the *National Monument* in 1964, the same year in which he created *Head* in the Theresa Roberts collection. Although the *National Monument* was never fully realised due to lack of funds, both the works of 1964 demonstrate his commitment to sculpting Afro-Caribbean features. Like the robust *Head*, the design for the *National Monument* also emanates physicality as a result of the various Afro-Caribbean body types. From the base of the monument “emerge numerous intertwined bodies, which are supposed to represent the various racial types of Jamaica” (Dacres, 2004 p.141).

Once more, appreciation of the Jamaican body is apparent in *Torso in Wood* (n.d.), by C. Hall, about whom little is known. The artist exhibits great sensitivity to the sensuous material of *lignum vitae*: a hard, dense wood, native to the Caribbean, and



therefore often used by artists who wish to express nationalistic ideas or to remind viewers about the authentic origin of their materials. The sculptor has observed the beautiful natural striations in the material used in *Torso in Wood* and allows those to dictate the final form of the sculpture, rather than forcing artistic will upon the wood. For example, the pale oval patterns that occur in the wood allow for the rounded form of the thighs to be emphasised naturally. Therefore, the ‘truth to materials’ approach, which was popularised in the 1920s and 1930s by the British sculptor, Henry Moore, is adopted here by Hall. Art historian, F. David Martin, states of Moore, but which could easily be applied to Hall, “For Moore, the woman comes out of the wood. If the image had been imposed on the wood, the thingliness of both the woman and the wood would not have been revealed. Truth to materials is respect for the material as a thing” (Martin, 1979, p.17). Indeed, there is a strong sense of the mass and veridicality of the woman in *Torso in Wood*.

Sculpture offers so many diverse opportunities to artists and allows for expression of all impulses to be made. In addition to these works in lustrous woods in the Theresa Roberts collection, there are also several sculptures in other media. In the wide Theresa Roberts collection, there are sculptures made of ceramics, steel or bronze mesh, and assemblages and constructions made of welded metal, as well as the more traditional materials of wood and bronze. Here, in the exhibition at the Victoria Gallery and Museum, there is also a good range of sculpture for viewers to appreciate. As well as the work in bronze by Edna Manley, already discussed, two other bronze sculptures are exhibited.

Raymond Watson’s *First Child (Maquette)* (1998) is the preparatory work (*maquette*) for a very important public sculpture commission, *First Child* (1998) in Max Roach Park, Brixton, London, which is also sometimes called the *Soweto Memorial*. This was commissioned by 198 Gallery and was the first public sculpture by a black artist in the UK (198 Gallery, 2021). The maquette is the artist’s sculptural ‘sketch’ for the large outdoor public sculpture in Brixton, and therefore is dynamic and expressive, as one would expect for a preparatory work when the ideas for the final image are being worked out. The sculpture, both *maquette* and final image, commemorates the 1976 Soweto Uprising on 16 June, when 116 children died as a result of protests led by 20,000 black schoolchildren and students (Brown, 2016). The children were protesting about the new law that Afrikaans should be the new language of instruction in local schools, but they were met with aggressive police brutality and many were shot and killed in the uprising. As a result, the Brixton Society, which gathers and promotes historical information about the area, describes the sculpture as actually a “war memorial” and not just a commemoration

(Brixton Society, 2021). Indeed, the final sculpture and the *maquette* displayed here, demonstrate the tragedy of the uprising dramatically. The large male figure carries his dead child – his first born – and throws his own head back, perhaps to howl in anguish. A third figure, possibly the second-born child, flees and tries to encourage the father to focus and hurry onwards. The *maquette* delivers much of its effectiveness from the material of bronze. The highly textured surface seems lacerated and contorted, which conveys vividly the tortured emotions of the father.

Similar powerful statements about race relations and civil rights are also the frequent subject-matter of Basil Watson, who happens also to be Raymond Watson's brother. In 2018, Basil Watson was selected from an international list of more than 100 artists to become the sculptor of a memorial to Dr Martin Luther King Junior in Atlanta, Georgia (*Atlanta Black Star*, 2020). Entitled *Hope Moving Forward*, the sculpture was dedicated in January 2021. This follows on from other works by Watson that celebrate important figures in Afro-Caribbean or African American history, or which reflect on the new opportunities for the Caribbean region. For example, he was commissioned by the Petroleum Corporation of Jamaica to make the symbolic sculpture, *Emerging Nation* (n.d.), and by the Rotary Club of Kingston to create *Nanny of the Maroons* (2020), a representation of the Jamaican national hero who is commemorated for her role as leader of a guerrilla war against the British colonisers of Jamaica in the early eighteenth century. Clearly, as the artist comments, he "is inspired by the heroic in mankind" (Basil Watson – Artist/Sculptor, 2021).

The Theresa Roberts collection includes Basil Watson's bronze *Shadow* (2008). This reflects another of Watson's enduring interests: the human body. Cornell University scholar, Petrine Archer Straw, stated that typically in Watson's sculptures, "a sense of poise mark them as quiet, dignified, classical works. Favoured subjects are the female form, often in erotic or sensuous poses or sport figures" (Petrine Archer[.com], 2000a). Indeed, with *Shadow* one perceives these qualities of 'quiet', 'poise' and classicism. The female form is observed sensitively and accurately by the artist. Enhancing the sculpture are the marks made by the artist in the modelling and finishing processes when making the work. Although the sculpture is made of bronze, the appearance is veined and almost marbled, due to the patina, which has resulted from the artist's modelling and from the casting process. This 'marbling' adds great interest to the surface of the sculpture and reminds us that human skin, with all its veins and imperfections, is being depicted, even though the medium is bronze.

Basil Watson's son, Kai Watson, has followed in the family traditions of becoming an artist, and representing significant human beings and their achievements. He

prefers to work in the medium of paint, unlike his father and uncle, who are primarily sculptors. A significant commission in 2017 was his portrait of Prime Minister Andrew Holness, which depicts the subject caught in a moment of motion: hands gesticulating when speaking with passion (*Jamaica Observer*, 2017). Like Basil Watson, therefore, he maintains an interest in the power, energy and poise of the human body. This leads him to explore the subject-matter of dancers or athletes, and he often depicts figures in motion. This is apparent with his *Vibrations* (2009), which captures a moment of national pride for Jamaica. Watson explains that he named the painting *Vibrations* because it captures “the power and energy of this moment felt around the world”. We see “Two of Jamaica’s most iconic male sprinters in what was certainly a dream team moment: the Beijing Olympics 100m relay with Usain Bolt handing over the baton to Asafa Powell for him to secure Jamaica’s and their place in athletics history” (Watson, 2021).

There is a great tradition in Jamaica of artists representing sport as an activity, or sporting figures, and this is only increasing in tendency in recent years. Key examples include Alvin Marriott’s *The Runner* (1961) at the Jamaica National Stadium in Kingston, which was inspired by Arthur Wint, winner of Jamaica’s first Olympic Gold Medal in 1948, Kay Sullivan’s sculpture of cricketer O’Neil Gordon ‘Collie’ Smith (2018) at the Boys’ Town Club, Trench Town, Kingston, or Basil Watson’s sculpture of Usain Bolt (2017), which is also sited at the Jamaica National Stadium. These sporting figures, and their representation, are deeply important to Jamaica and help with nation building and developing national identity. As sports researcher Colin Martindale writes, “sports are of importance to the Jamaican people because they help to bring recognition to a small nation which might otherwise go unnoticed ... Developing out of such situations are identification with national heroes and feelings of national pride ... sport in Jamaica is seen as an integrative force by way of stimulating a collective consciousness” (Martindale, 1980, pp.179–180).

It is certainly true that Kai Watson’s painting of Usain Bolt and Asafa Powell continues this practice in Jamaica for artists to honour their sporting heroes, and for such sports figures to aid with developing a sense of identity among citizens.

Enhancing a sense of national identity has been apparent in the work of many Jamaican artists – especially since Jamaica gained independence in 1962. This can be seen in the work of Alexander Cooper, whose painting *The Coffee Pulper* (1989) is on display as part of the Theresa Roberts collection. Cooper was attracted instinctively to making art and his prowess meant that he received government funding to enable his studies. In 1963 he moved to the prestigious Art Students League in New York,

USA, but returned to Jamaica in 1967 to “contribute to the national development of his nation through visual arts” (National Gallery of Jamaica Blog, 2020). It is for this reason that he painted frequent genre studies, such as *The Coffee Pulper*, which illustrates real life for Jamaican people. As Petrine Archer Straw writes: “He came from a generation of painters that were the children of a newly formed Jamaican nationalism. He grew up admiring the works of other Jamaican painters such as Albert Huie and Ralph Campbell and took to painting in a similar manner creating genre scenes that documented everyday scenes of Jamaica’s city and rural life” (Petrine Archer[.com], 2012b).

In this painting, Cooper depicts the rural scene of a female coffee pulper at work, using the machine that separates the pulp and skin from the coffee cherry as part of the ‘wet process’ method of producing coffee. Such machines are still used around the world by small coffee growers and this wet process produces the highest quality coffee, for which Jamaica is famed in its ‘Blue Mountain’ coffee plantation region. Once the pulping has been completed, the coffee beans are dried by being laid out in the sun. The drying process can be seen in the piles of pulped beans laid out in the sun on cloths behind the female worker. As in many of his works, this painting “demonstrates his interest in traditional values and using painting as a medium for social reform. These themes have also made his work attractive to collectors abroad such as Sidney Poitier ... who recognize the same strains of race pride in his work” (Petrine Archer[.com], 2012b). Cooper is one of many Jamaican artists since 1962 who aim to offer a sense of identity more rooted in Caribbean experience.

A key figure who rooted his work in the Caribbean experience was David Boxer, artist, scholar and Director and Chief Curator of the National Gallery, Kingston. He represented consciously his experiences of living in Jamaica during its turbulent times in the second half of the twentieth century. Like Laura Facey Cooper, he was a pioneer of assemblage and installation work, and he directed the National Gallery to exhibit and collect in these areas. In fact, he has been labelled as having “self-consciously steered Jamaican art in new directions” (Archer Straw, 1995, p.25). It is largely Boxer who began the process of ensuring that the art history of Jamaica was recorded and assessed, as he curated landmark exhibitions about pioneers of Jamaican art, such as Barrington Watson or Edna Manley.

Boxer is also famed for his probing, pained self-portraits: “assaulted self-portraits” (Poupeye, 1998, p.168). An excellent example of the latter is *Self-Portrait* (2005) in the Theresa Roberts collection. Typically for his works in this genre, this painting includes appropriations and references to the artworks of others, and from diverse periods. For example, it is possible to see allusions to African masks within

the scumbled surface of the self-portrait. This is because “Boxer’s use of African masks is symbolic, if not ritualistic. He incorporates them within these new settings as a way of maintaining the black presence.” He states, “Very often in my work, I’m trying to deal with the bringing together of two cultures. I have African ancestry, I have English ancestry and the two cultures clash” (Archer Straw, 1995, p.26).

This culture clash can also be witnessed in the physical aspects of his paintings, and not just what is represented. His habit of appropriating imagery, but dismantling it, and overlaying it with his own marks and dribbles of paint, can appear as an act of savagery, which offers a postcolonial comment on his experience of being an agonised Jamaican in the twentieth century. From viewing the physical elements of these paintings, it is possible to see that he has been influenced by Pablo Picasso, Francis Bacon or Joseph Cornell, amongst others. Like those artists who commented perceptively on their own cultures, his works document effectively “the thoughts, and memories, the fears and drives, of one twentieth-century man who lives through a life on one small, complex, disturbing Caribbean island” (Poupeye, 1998, p.168).

Emanating from Michael Hayden Elliott’s work is a clear sense of engagement with the ambiguous urban environment of Jamaica and its multifarious associations. Little documented, Elliott is one of the Jamaican ‘Intuitives’, and came to art instinctively. He is represented in the Theresa Roberts collection by *Hole in the Wall* (2009), which is made from the interesting medium of aluminium. The piece of aluminium is painted and inscribed on both sides, so the work is best viewed in the round as a sculpture. The artist has tooled the metal, so that a textured surface is formed, and this is then painted. Most suitably, this chapped, scabrous exterior concurs with the subject-matter of Elliott’s work: in this case, reflections on the decay of Jamaica’s streets, which is caused by the legacy of colonialism. On one side of *Hole in the Wall*, in the hole at the centre of the wall, which is otherwise being overtaken by parasitical vegetation, a European sailing galleon is visible. In this case, the hole acts like a portal to another age when avaricious colonisers craved Jamaica’s natural assets. Around the central hole, the decrepit wall is a reminder of the contemporary impact of these colonisers on the fabric of Jamaica’s streets: dereliction and ruination. In fact, it is regular practice for impoverished Kingston citizens to extricate bricks from the walls of city buildings to sell to others as building materials. This leaves many walls in the city with large holes that pose a serious safety risk to passers-by (Roberts, 2018).

On the other side of the aluminium plate, another hole looks inwards to the mountainous interior of Jamaica. The viewer spies a rural dwelling, trees and a portrait of a male in smart attire, shown as a medallion, inserted into the scene. It



is typical of Elliott to include in his work a house with windows, implying active residents. This same motif was employed in a work that he contributed to the 2006 Jamaica National Biennial, entitled *Independence* (2006). In this case, he also included children in the image: “In centre foreground, almost spot-lit, stands a little girl with a doll under one arm, while behind her is a stone cottage with another girl looking out of a window; to one side of the house stands an adult couple” (*Caribbean Review of Books*, 2007).

The contrast between the two planes of the image in *Hole in the Wall* is one between looking out to the sea, upon which Europeans arrived in order to gain “huge revenues from enslaving and killing Black people” (Andrews, 2018, p.27), and surveying the verdant unspoilt homeland of Jamaican nationals. This acts as a stark reminder of “Jamaica as a landscape of violence” (Nelson, 2016, p.6).

These are themes still of relevance and concern to the youngest artists working currently in Jamaica. For example, Desanna Watson, who is the artist-in-residence for the exhibition of the Theresa Roberts collection, produced the monumental installation, *Retention of a Colonial Past* (2018), which is devoted to the topic of the urban Jamaican landscape. As an “ambassador of Jamaica’s ongoing cultural legacy”, (*Young Voices*, 2017) Theresa Roberts has always felt compelled to promote the young generation of artists from Jamaica, which is the reason for the inclusion of Watson’s work and also of her contemporary, O’mar McKay, who produces media and performance art, and who is represented in this exhibition by a self-reflective film about identity and personal acceptance, *Hidden Identity* (2019).

Watson’s 75-foot-long installation is a textile mural that has been painted, embroidered and appliquéd. The immersive artwork reminds the viewer starkly about the impact of European intervention on to Jamaica’s streetscape. The street names of Kingston are painted or embroidered on to the fabric, and their European origin is unmistakable: ‘Fleet Street’, ‘Lady Musgrave Road’ and ‘High Holborn’ are typical. As Veerle Poupeye comments, Watson’s focus is on the “manner in which the changing social landscape of the city has been codified in its maps and aerial views” with “troubling historical resonances” (*Perspectives*, 2018). This issue being explored in Watson’s work preceded the international outcry about the origins of street names that stemmed from the proceeds of slavery in many cities around the world, either through adoption of the names of slavers, or from links to their business practices. Only recently has it come to widespread attention that the slave “trade has left a physical and psychological mark ... many city landscapes bear the names of those who were involved, or who profited from it” (Sadler, 2018, n.p.). Watson’s work is littered with European names of those who gained their profits from Jamaica’s

population or natural resources. This makes it an extremely poignant work and one that is appropriate for exhibition in Liverpool with its historic links to slavery, and with the city being home to the International Slavery Museum.

In contrast to the work of Watson and her contemporaries who focus on political issues such as race relations or colonialism, other contemporary artists in Jamaica, and who are also represented in the Theresa Roberts collection, choose not to adopt this approach in their work. An example is Judy Ann Macmillan, who is practising currently and is included in many important international collections as a significant artist working since Jamaican independence. Macmillan paints landscapes, still life and portraits and reveals to the author her artistic motivations:

The intention behind most of my paintings was common at an earlier time. It is not fashionable now to look at nature and paint what is seen from life without photographic help. Artists who choose to do so run the risk of appearing eccentric or naively stuck in the style of a past time. I am aware of this, but I was fascinated by the work of the great figurative painters before me and I wanted to be one of them. I wanted to do truthful work like they did but using the subjects of my own tropical world and this desire overcame the fear of appearing unsophisticated. When the viewer who shares this aesthetic responds to my work and I hear that little intake of breath, the little gasp of recognition, I am always glad that I remained true to the intentions of my youth. (Macmillan, 2021)

Macmillan's figurative approach in all of her *oeuvre* reveals her thorough classical training as an artist. This was first gained under the tutorship of Albert Huie, and later at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee, Scotland. Her portraits are noted for their accuracy, and even though she retained the verisimilitude rather than adopting expressionistic, surreal or non-representational approaches, she often made "portraiture with a social conscience. Choosing subjects such as Jamaica's youth as in *New Breed* 1975, she raised questions and awareness about modern Jamaican society" (Petrine Archer[.com], 2012a). Since childhood she has retained her fascination with the Jamaican landscape and the lush vegetation that it supports, as may be observed in the clear representation of the fruit in *Breadfruit and Ackees* (2005) in the Theresa Roberts collection. The distinctive textures of the fruit are rewarded by the clarity of her painterly execution, which delineates the surfaces. This tendency to examine the products of the Jamaican vegetation with realism is one constant in the art history of Jamaica, despite the multiplicity of approaches and other subject-matter employed by artists. From Albert Huie and Barrington Watson,

to Macmillan and to this present moment, artists have been captivated by the fruits and verdure of the island.

An excellent example of a contemporaneous artist, extremely well-respected, who makes representational paintings of natural objects, is Michael Elliott. Two works by Elliott may be viewed in the Victoria Gallery and Museum: *Dog Skull 2* (2010) and *The Core* (2011). Both works could be described as being 'super-realistic' and are mesmerising in their crystalline expression of detail, which is achieved with technical prowess in oil on canvas. Elliott is a regular contributor to the *avant-garde* Jamaica Biennial exhibitions, and to other international exhibitions of contemporary art, and his representational works are perceived as prestigious additions to such eminent exhibitions.

The artist describes *Dog Skull 2* as follows:

It is part of a great number of skulls I have painted over the years mainly being human and even a monkey skull. I find skulls interesting because they emit a level of personality although they once held together a living soul. In the case of the dog skull, it started as a detailed study that became a face-to-face look at humanity and the temporary nature of our existence. The photorealism effect I have used in this piece like the others gives an atmosphere of the skull pushing forward towards the viewer which makes you want to reach out and touch it. (Elliott, 2021)

Indeed, traditionally in art history the skull has been used to signify transience and temporality (Clark, 1996), therefore Elliott positions himself within the lineage of artists internationally who have depicted animal or human skulls for the purpose of providing philosophical or religious musing. One is also reminded of the importance of dogs in the history of Jamaica, especially to those individuals who were part of the African diaspora, such as the captives in slave plantations. Mason and Snyder provide an interesting examination of how dogs and their skulls were used in societies in the Caribbean region for social and religious uses, for example in Afro-Caribbean religious practices, or amongst the communities in slave cabins (Mason & Snyder, 2002). Therefore, *Dog Skull 2* is resonant with many complex themes and relates to Elliott's established interest in the topics of slavery, social justice and migration (Studio Michael Elliott, 2021).

*The Core* also offers a visceral visual experience. This time the subject is a ripe avocado. Elliott writes, "This painting is a still life study with its focus on an avocado cut open. My inspiration for this is how much the seed looks like a brain when observed. I'm no stranger to close up still life painting especially with food. *The Core* may also represent fertility like a womb in the centre gradually maturing" (Elliott,

2021). The multiplicity of meanings afforded is typical for Elliott, who happens also to be the son of aforementioned artist Michael Hayden Elliott. Whilst one layer of meaning is simply the fascination that is obtained from viewing a luscious object closely, there are also the frissons gained from the equivocal appearance of the seed with its membranes and from the deeper references to fertility – both human and vegetable. These polysemous meanings, along with the tightening and relaxing of focus over the canvas, contribute to the surreal effect of the image.

In fact, the surreal, or surrealism as a tendency, is witnessed frequently in Jamaican art history and seems to emerge from the habit of focusing on detail. It often then enables the artist to move into hyperrealism or super-realism, as with Elliott. Archer Straw and Robinson comment on this characteristic: “This concern with detail is also evident in the works of other younger painters who attempt to push their concerns beyond the surreal into the realm of the super-real” (Archer Straw & Robinson, 1990, p.96). Other artists who are known for their incorporation of the surreal include John Dunkley, Keith Morrison, Colin Garland or David Boxer.

A much younger, contemporaneous artist who also displays this tendency is Christopher Lawrence. His haunting *Ethan the Faun* (2014) exemplifies this urge. Lawrence explains the work as follows:

My friend Michael had taken a picture of his nephew Ethan while he was drying off after swimming at the pool and had wrapped his towel around his face like a hijab which oddly resembled the shape of a tree trunk. This fascinated me and gave me the idea to paint a portrait of him but not a traditional one. Having a fondness for Greek mythology and Surrealism, I created an image of Ethan’s face in a tree trunk and branches mimicking horns and leaves representing his ears to create the facade of the face of a faun for this whimsical piece. (Lawrence, 2021)

Whilst Lawrence was receiving enjoyment when making this artwork, by fusing a caprice with a realistic portrait and his knowledge and interest in European art and mythology, this results in a postmodern work from the Caribbean region. It reinforces Stuart Hall’s observation: “What I’ve thought of as dispersed and fragmented comes, paradoxically, to be *the* representative modern experience!” (Hall, 1987, p.44). Lawrence’s amalgamation of personal relationships, the figurative, surreal, mythological and Muslim becomes an authentic Caribbean corralling of the fragmented into a new and coherent postmodern relationship.

In the last years of the twentieth century and in the most recent two decades, there has been a noticeable “syncretic” (Poupeye, 1998, p.206) shift in Caribbean

art. Lawrence's peer, Phillip Thomas, is another example of an artist whose work demonstrates this penchant. Thomas works with various subject-matter. For example, he is represented in the Theresa Roberts collection by *The Bull Fighter* (2012), *Exodus: The Golden Calf Has Matured* (2017), *Upper St. Andrew Concubine* (2012) and, in this exhibition, *Self-Portrait* (2019). All these works demonstrate inclusion of references to various cultural practices and traditions. He often employs the use of triptych and diptych formats seen frequently in European art of the Middle Ages and Medieval periods, but juxtaposes this with Afro-Caribbean religious imagery, portraits, European cultural activities, such as bullfighting, references to popular culture, or specific political or social issues in Jamaica. There is no discordance from this weaving together of forms and subjects. Indeed, as Thomas writes when referring to his *Bullfighting* series, "much of my practice centred around issues of violence and power but more specifically I was concerned about the ways in which colonialism and its legacies have created much of the power dynamics of the modern world. Bullfighting, at the time, became an apt metaphor to create the sort of indirect representations" (Thomas, 2021). Therefore, even though bullfighting might seem to be indelibly integrated into European culture, it works effectively to comment on the impact of colonialism in Jamaica.

In *Self-Portrait*, Thomas refers to the classic nineteenth- and twentieth-century European technique of portrait painting and portrait photography in order to represent his own image critically as a Jamaican in the twenty-first century. He wears a formal shirt and tie with buttonhole and makes strong eye contact with the viewer. Where necessary, the painterly detail is precise, for example on the facial features, but other less focal areas, such as the pocket square, are painted much more loosely, so that the figure comes in and out of focus – just as Jamaican citizens have – depending on the era and power systems. Thomas clearly therefore adheres still to his artist's statement of 2014, in which he wrote of his desire to examine issues of "Presence, absence, non-existence" in postcolonial Jamaica ... "The inability to see the person before the citizen (which) ... has caused significant erosion within the fabric of society ... These images then present the problems of the gaze, and both internally and externally deny the expectation of such exotic gazes" (Thomas, 2014, p.861). The viewer is asked to confront the issue of if they employ an exotic gaze.

The suit and tie trope is also employed by Milton George in *PJ Head* (1994), but whilst on this occasion the vibrant garments are one of the first things the viewer notices, the face is relegated to a much greater degree than in Thomas' self-portrait. The use of bright colour and the loose, dynamic brushwork indicate that George's work is inspired clearly by European Fauvism and Expressionism as well as by Jamaican



Expressionists, such as Karl Parboosingh. However, George was self-taught and is often linked peripherally to the group of Jamaican 'Intuitives' who include artists like Kapo. This instinctive untrammelled approach to art mean that critics view his works as highly authentic and with pure vision. Despite the fact that this painting is a portrait of 'PJ', George is noted for stating that all his paintings are self-portraits (Poupeye-Rammelaere, 1991, p.14). This is because George experienced a very difficult personal life, and his relationships with women were often tempestuous. Therefore it is believed that he always sought to express his angst and cynicism despite who was the sitter. This might explain why the head of 'PJ' has been effaced in the painting. Working in the difficult political decades from the 1970s to the 2000s, like many Jamaican artists, he "started producing works that reflected the changed socio-political climate and its impact on the individual" (Boxer & Poupeye, 1998, p.30). He is perceived more than others to be a supreme storyteller, with acute observational ability for spotting human weaknesses. Interestingly, art historian, Petrine Archer Straw observes that George works in a "manner that recalls 'the pantomimicry' of Caribbean Johnkunú [sic] ... Such masquerading is an integral part of the Jamaican psyche" (Petrine Archer[.com], 2012c). This can be seen particularly in his paintings which contain lurid multiple therianthrope characters who seem to have mythological origins. Such a work, for example, is *Opening Night* (1978) in the collection of the National Gallery of Jamaica in Kingston, in which both figures are seen to have animalistic features that recall Jamaican Junkanoo parades.

George Rodney is a contemporary of Milton George and is also highly motivated by colour, which is a strong characteristic of all his works. The fact that he turned to painting as a result of watching the 1956 biopic of colour-preoccupied Van Gogh, *Lust for Life*, is not surprising due to the prevalence of colour in his *oeuvre* (Art Events, 2021). Unlike George, he did go on to receive formal training, both at the Jamaica School of Art and at the Art Students' League of New York. His training can be witnessed in the sophistication and polish of Rodney's paintings. Many of his works are abstract or semi-abstract, often with hard edge elements, but colour is the defining feature. Archer Straw and Robinson consider that his paintings "communicate the light, colour and mood of the Caribbean landscape" (Archer Straw & Robinson, 1990, p.95) even if no recognisable objects may be discerned. The Theresa Roberts collection contains two works by Rodney: *Composition with Still Life* (n.d.) and *On Awakening* (1980). The former is semi-abstract with the typical Rodney use of undefined segments of colour, and the latter is a representational portrait of the artist's model. Both paintings display his characteristic sensuous and unctuous brushwork that demonstrates his technical proficiency.

*On Awakening* is the work selected for display in the Victoria Gallery and Museum in Liverpool. Rodney describes the painting thus: “It is the animated result of the model coming out of a brief slumber of fifteen minutes to start posing again for the work in progress” (Rodney, 2021). Interestingly, Rodney only used this model on the one occasion in 1980, but he was fascinated by the woman’s blinking awakening out of torpor and the contrast between repose and activity (Rodney, 2021). Despite the fact that he so often produced Modernist paintings of lyrical abstraction, he is clearly also comfortable when working in the long academic tradition of painting a life model in the studio.

Painter Whitney Miller was great friends with George Rodney, with the two even sharing studio space, and parallels between them may be perceived easily. His painting *Untitled Nude* (n.d.) is in the Theresa Roberts collection and also represents a studio model as a result of the established practice of working with the nude life model. Miller intended originally to begin his career making sculpture rather than paintings, and his way of depicting the female subject in this work demonstrates his interest in mass and volume, as would befit a sculptor. The woman is shown as a monumental, substantial figure in the landscape and is reminiscent of the sculptures of the British artists Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, or the Jamaican Edna Manley, or the paintings of Pablo Picasso or Henri Matisse. Of course, all of these artists were themselves motivated by examples from global art history, such as pre-Columbian Mesoamerican sculpture. Indeed, Miller’s female subject is also painted with facial figures, which might recall indigenous Taíno figures or Caribbean sculpture that references the African heritage of many inhabitants of the region.

Archer Straw states of Miller, “If there is tension in his work it is between the materiality of his paintings and their surreal stillness” (Petrine Archer[.com], 2000b). This is evident in *Untitled Nude* wherein the stately figure relaxes with a book in an empty, hallucinatory landscape. This disjuncture between the very present female and the insubstantial landscape mirrors the discord between the appearance of the face and body of the woman. Therefore, the seemingly innocuous portrait becomes something much more complex and multivalent and the viewer is encouraged to speculate on these dissonances. Typically for Jamaican art since independence, the apparently simple work has much resonance and is representative of “an emerging national aesthetic” (National Gallery of Jamaica Blog, 2016).

The final artwork in the Theresa Roberts collection for discussion is another representational portrait of a female: this time a portrait of Theresa Roberts herself by Zimbabwean artist Craig Wylie (2007). Although he is the only artist in this exhibition who is not a Jamaican, Wylie performs the important task of capturing for

posterity the image of the woman who has enabled the collection of these important Jamaican artworks. Theresa Roberts recalls, “He was the first artist I ever bought. The main reason we got this flat is because we had nowhere to put the painting and my husband said, ‘don’t worry, we will find somewhere’. He then went and purchased this place and it is absolutely perfect for it” (*The Voice*, 2021). Indeed, this large oil painting is normally sited in the reception room of the Roberts’ home in Chelsea, London. Theresa Roberts communicates with the viewer through a direct, open gaze and the painting does not attempt any metaphor or sub-text: the sitter’s personality is available to the beholder in this clear, photorealistic depiction.

Wylie, whose paintings are held in collections around the world, including in London’s National Portrait Gallery,

is undoubtedly a realist: his outlines are usually hard, his forms clearly defined. He has deep concern for colour and texture, not merely because they are there, but for what they contribute to the overall composition, the patterns of tension and relaxation within the painting. Wylie’s art is meticulously thought out, in its way very intellectual. It is all from reality, but reality carefully selected and rearranged in the light of the painter’s very specific intentions. In other words, Wylie is essentially a classical sort of painter. (Plus One Gallery, 2021)

This defined painting in the classical style is an ideal introduction to Theresa Roberts, the convenor of the most comprehensive collection of Jamaican art outside of Jamaica.

In conclusion, this exhibition aims to provide a rare opportunity for British viewers to engage with the heterogenous productions that are encompassed by the term ‘Jamaican art’. This diversity in art mirrors the pluralism that comprises Jamaican ethnicity and society and which captured the attention of Martin Luther King Junior in his famous ‘American Dream’ speech of 1965. He used Jamaica as an example of equality through multiculturalism: “I was impressed by one thing. Here you have people from many national backgrounds ... Do you know they all live there and they have a motto in Jamaica, ‘Out of many people, one people’? ... One day, here in America, I hope we will see this” (Gibson, 2015, p.269). It is certainly evident in the Theresa Roberts collection that “Jamaican art is extraordinarily varied and rich and laced with an uncommon number of creative geniuses” (Archer Straw & Robinson, 1990, p.vii). At last, here in Liverpool at the Victoria Gallery and Museum, the audience can truly experience the opportunity to experience this richness.

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# Art for Inclusion

Edward Lucie-Smith

Jamaican art, and art from the English-speaking Caribbean in general, has not received the kind of attention from outside that has, for example, been given to modernist and post-modernist art from other places in the region: certainly not as much as has been given to art from Cuba, or from Haiti. Cuba benefited from the increasing worldwide interest in Latin American art, and very specifically from the link between Wifredo Lam, and the Parisian Surrealists. Haitian art was the beneficiary of interest, originally from promoters in the USA, in self-taught artists linked to Voodoo cults, which were an expression of African heritage. Jamaica does have art of this kind, the work of the so-called 'Intuitives', but it is part of a wide spectrum of different styles.

What Jamaica did have, and still has, is a surprising amount of support from local collectors for their own indigenous artists. Jamaica is a famous holiday island, but local art has never been 'just for tourists', as sometimes seems to be the case in smaller Caribbean islands. Jamaicans buy it and enjoy it. A notable feature of this exhibition has been the support offered to the project by Theresa Roberts, Jamaican-born, but with homes both in London and in Jamaica.

The show offers work in a spectrum of different styles. There is work by one of the best-known 'Intuitives', Kapo (Mallica Reynolds), and some sculpture in Africanising styles. There is a work, *Prophet with Schoolgirls*, by Carl Abrahams (1911–2005), one of the major names in Jamaican twentieth-century art, which alludes to religious cults akin to Voodoo in Jamaica. And there are also paintings where the influence of different strains of European and North American Modernism can be detected, ranging from painterly abstraction to Pop Art.



Perhaps the most striking characteristic has nothing to do with stylistic allegiances. It is the presence of work by a high proportion of gifted women artists. It is not for nothing that a famous study of Afro-Caribbean family relationships, focused on Jamaica in particular, is entitled *My Mother Who Fathered Me* (Edith Clarke, 1957). Women are strong in Jamaica – you’d better believe it.

**Edward Lucie-Smith, born in Kingston, Jamaica, is an art critic, writer, curator and poet. He is author of numerous books and other texts.**

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# Home is in the Traces

## The Meaning of the Theresa Roberts Collection for a Second-Generation Black Briton of Jamaican Descent

Davinia Gregory-Kameka

Theresa Roberts' art collection has similar significance for me as those objects that make up the material culture of my parents' house. As I write this, I am visiting England, sitting in the living room of my parents' home, and in the cabinet in front of me is a child-sized commemorative Jamaican Independence mug that my dad received at school in August 1962. My parents were elder children of the Windrush Generation, those born in Jamaica who were entrusted to relatives while their parents answered the Atlee-led UK government's call for help from the colonies in the post-war era. Most of the Windrush Generation were not immigrants, but British subjects who arrived before their countries gained independence. My grandparents were those people, my parents are not. They followed once the adults were able to set up homes fit for them and, in the meantime, Jamaica gained independence; the partial, political kind that came at the cost of a true, deep, cultural, economic, religious and intellectual decolonisation for many Caribbean island nations, the struggle for which, continues.

My parents were immigrants, though my grandparents were not and, as such, they are first generation Black Britons – those Windrush children so often mentioned in the British news nowadays as being plagued by draconian immigration edicts. My father arrived in London at ten, mum seven years later at fifteen. They both went through the incongruence of going from having been praised for their brightness and potential at school back home, to being labelled as educationally

subnormal upon arrival in Britain, without testing or evidence, and having had their opportunities capped as a result of myriad seemingly small but cumulative roadblocks. Nevertheless, a building surveyor and a pharmacy assistant, they met at church, settled and had me. The year before that, 1981, they visited Jamaica for the first time since leaving, at which point my father was told that his patois was old-fashioned and he was no longer Jamaican. After a lifetime of being told to 'go home' by people deemed undeniably English, he suffered on that trip in discovering that there was no longer a home that would accept him. The beginnings of an understanding of the in-betweenness of diaspora had begun.

My generation were born with that in-betweenness as the bedrock of our collective identity. It has become an uncomfortable home for us, particularly when roadblocks even more subtle, but just as cumulative as those our parents experienced, make it clear that we still bear the brunt of Britain's post-imperial melancholia (Gilroy, 2004), whether or not we insist on continuing to put down roots here. Material and visual fragments of life before my parents left Jamaica have been collected and treasured by them, and some are displayed in their house to this day. They are the physical representations of a series of the unusually detailed childhood memories that they cling to; memories of a rural Jamaica yet unaffected by the economic sanctions of the 1970s, that was being romanticised by my father even as it was being preserved in aspic on the plane to London in 1965.

I have taken pilgrimages to that independence moment in my work, possibly because post-independence Jamaica is a place I do not recognize from the stories I grew up with (Gregory, 2018 & 2021). Viscerally it remains a mystery to me, despite barrels sent 'home', sporadic visits, food I learned to cook growing up and reggae music I will always listen to. While many of us who were born in England know Jamaica mostly in the abstract, it remains part of us. It is the place we have been told to go back to by white nationalists, and the place we have been told we come from by those who have the privilege of seeing the world as a precolonial patchwork of neat colours and want a simple explanation for what seems to them an incongruence between our location and our appearance. For many of us who were able to visit regularly growing up, it is the place whose national anthem we know as well as *God Save the Queen*, and the place where we have friends and family whom we love. Yet despite having come to an understanding that I will never be English, I am not accepted as Jamaican and possibly rightly so – I have never lived there. The objects that recall the independence moment in my parents' house, are traces of a rich tapestry of culture that makes up who I am as a second-generation Black Briton of Jamaican descent. They are traces of a complexity that is not understood within

a framework of identity limited by the concept 'nation', from which I have always been somewhat detached. As I look at them now, in their oddness on shelves that could otherwise be in any other English house, they are also representations of my otherness in England and the way it determined my life course here. That otherness, in-betweenness, formed my identity in beautiful ways that roots are only part of, and those objects formed the makings of my roots, being the material explanations for me of why I grew up widely recognised as a foreigner in the place where I was born.

So, as I said, Theresa Roberts' art collection has the same type of significance for me as those objects that make up the material culture of my parents' house, and which to an even greater extent made up that of my grandparents' homes. It shows what has resonated with a Black British person of the generation before me, who had built the means and connections to keep a portal open to post-independence Jamaica by collecting art produced there. The collection takes me back a generation, beyond the transnational blandness of Instagram-worthy, 'curated' homes of my generation, and even our personal art collections, which tend to focus on a Pan-African blackness that transcends nation. For me, Theresa Roberts' collection honours the work of a generation to set down roots in Britain while acknowledging and retaining roots in the Caribbean, insistently asserting that the history and results of empire did not disappear when Britain, once imbued with half the world's riches, decided it was an island nation again; but that Britain remained forever changed by its exploitative entanglements with other parts of the world and that we, our food, our cultures and our art are the enduring result. It is that optimistic hope that diversity can lead to racial justice, of which both my research and my personal experiences have left me more cynical.

The collection is a portal to my less cynical past, in which Theresa Roberts' Jamaica Patty Co. played a part. I once worked at the National Portrait Gallery in London. On one trip back to see my former co-workers, we visited the Jamaica Patty Co., which had just opened nearby. I entered the shop, observed the sleek, black and yellow interior, and felt proud. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that, unlike London's many culturally appropriated offerings, it was owned by a black woman, a Jamaican. During my tenure there, the NPG's curatorial staff were overwhelmingly old, white and posh. My colleagues, with whom I went to taste the patties, were arts graduates and we worked as gallery assistants, hoping to intern our way into curatorial or museum education positions. I was at that strange point that often came for those neither old, white nor posh in museum careers in London, of realisation that an unofficial colour / class bar, while invisible to many and certainly unacknowledged by those above it, was nevertheless starkly visible by those held

beneath it. I wondered whether our little group would ever make our mark; where our place might be in this art world and this nation. The Patty Co. in Covent Garden, which appeared a descendent of Caribbean takeaways in the communities I was raised around, seemed a reflection of our generation in terms of roots and present location. It was unmistakably a 'home' for me; a tiny toehold at the centre of things, which I felt reflected my nascent career there. I was encouraged by its presence there during that moment of professional and personal disillusionment.

Such tastes of home, coming from transient routes, portals and connections to belonging, also appeared when living in Liverpool and interning at the Tate. Through the docks I could feel my history all around me. While there were white supremacist rallies there during my stay, the place felt world-facing and empire-acknowledging in the way that docks and many ports do in Britain – Bristol, or West India Quay in London. That architectural heritage was another portal through which I could see a full and true reflection of history in the fabric of this country. It makes sense to me then that such a place becomes the location for display of this collection.

The story of a second-generation person like me is one of seeking a trace of myself in the fabric of the place where I was born and raised, the place that shaped my family history as much as it shaped the family histories of its white-skinned citizens. Because of empire, a person like me has been erased from the histories and present of both the place where I was born, and the place I am supposed to come from. Because of this, I am free to go wherever I choose and call it "home for now", because the word 'home' is tied to people, not to place, *per se*. I am a citizen of the UK, a resident of Barbados, an employee of the USA, and my homes are in the people I love. I am not called cosmopolitan, because I am too brown for that. Black people of my generation have carved out the label 'Afropolitan', but this does not seem right for me. My international existence is not a lifestyle choice born of economic freedom, but a repetition of the separation from family that my parents and grandparents endured. It is born from determination to carve out a fulfilling and meaningful life despite the limitations enforced on me by the machinations of racial capitalism in the nation of my birth.

The upshot of empire for me then is that there is no neat national home. I find home in the flashes of recognition that I experience in certain moments and encounters: first impressions of some places and familiar mannerisms in some people. Those flashes come from 'traces', which I often write about. There is an interesting disconnect between a place, object or painting that indelibly bears traces either of empire or recovery from empire, and the sanitised contemporary context in which it is inevitably found. For me, *that very disconnect is home*. Put simply, for



the generation raised with a supranational black sensibility tied to various forms of consumption (visual, economic, aural) and linked to other geographic places by historical and emotional ties that are nevertheless abstract, home is often found in the diasporic traces within neoliberal capitalism. In Mignolo's imagery, I find home in the moments where modernity reveals its flipside, the coloniality it mostly denies (Mignolo, 2011). This collection bears those traces and speaks of that flipside. Not only in its content, but in the very fact of its existence.

The West Indian Front Room of which Michael McMillan wrote (McMillan, 2009), is something that most often exists in childhood photographs for many Black Brits of Caribbean descent in my generation. Only traces of it exist in my parents' house, and my own house bears fewer traces still. For me, home is to be found in docks, in the ocean and waterways, in sleekly packaged London patty shops, in plates with Marcus Garvey's face sketched on them that are displaced from grandma's living room, because grandma is in the ground. And it is in the art collections of those who blazed the trail I am extending, of Jamaican-British people's marks on the world. That is the significance of this exhibition to a person like me.

**Dr Davinia Gregory-Kameka is an interdisciplinary writer, researcher, educator and artist, and works currently as Assistant Professor in Arts Administration at Teachers College, Columbia University, USA.**

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# Beyond Exotification

Sireita Mullings

Having studied and lived at Jamaica's Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts, where I had the opportunity to learn and teach photography with Donnette Zacca, it is a great honour to witness and be a part of an exhibition that references the work of some of the pioneers that we studied at the National Gallery of Jamaica, along with works by my students and student peers.

As an arts practitioner, visual sociologist and member of the Jamaican diaspora, drawing upon the work of the Caribbean and Jamaican Arts Movement whilst here in the UK has become a key aspect of my practice. The social role of the arts has become integral to engaging relevant audiences in making sense of Jamaica's social histories and lived experiences, therefore, demonstrating that there is more to Jamaica than the magnificence of our geographic terrain, popular culture and athletic excellence. Conveying this to Europe was said to be a key motive for a newly independent country to participate in the first Jamaican exhibition to tour Europe during 1963–1964. *The Face of Jamaica* exhibition toured six German and three British cities to promote Jamaica as an 'exotic' tourist destination that would showcase "a powerful awakening of work and play" (Archer & Hucke, 2012).

The 'exotifying' of Jamaican art resurfaced whilst garnering insight into the recent NFT (non-fungible token) 'art revolution' said to be transforming the art world and which has become a hot topic on SoMe (social media) platforms within the past year (Dukedom, 2021; Rae, 2021). I wanted to know if Jamaican artists were participating in conversations about the development of a digital economy and what process enables artwork to be encrypted on the cryptocurrency blockchain with an artist's ID, ownership history, sale history and value. One of the artists on a SoMe

platform introduced himself as a Jamaican living in the USA and expressed that he did not create Jamaican artwork. This line of reasoning raised old questions about belonging, identity and, whether intentionally or unintentionally, national identity can escape the work of the artist? Hall (1995, p. 5) reminds us that identities are not fixed and that, “Silencing as well as remembering, identity is always a question of producing in the future an account of the past, that is to say, it is always about narrative, the stories which cultures tell themselves about who they are and where they came from.”

The Theresa Roberts Collection goes beyond the boundaries of work, play and worship and presents the social fabric of the country, resembling a mesh of visual codes found within postmodernity, nationalism, respectability, modernity, and resilience. It offers rich cultural expressions rendered from aversions towards the displacement of people and an eclectic mix of narratives that offer an opportunity to interrogate and explore a fresh take on how traditions of nationalism, identity and belonging are currently being explored. As seen within the works of this exhibition and the socio-cultural projects like InPulse,\* Kingston Creative,† and Paint Jamaica street art,‡ life in Jamaica, and for those of the diaspora, presents a set of nuances that typify lived experiences and signify what it means to be Jamaican. These projects are also discussed as intelligent economies (Spence, 2021, p.164). They do not tell a single story of Jamaica – they serve as a lens to view the cultural current that encompasses a range of artistic expressions. Regardless of the ever-changing socio-political landscape, Jamaican artists have for a long time been committed to archiving the soul and spirit of a country that has had a profound impact on the “lived experience” (Chandler & Munday, 2011) of its people home and abroad. Jamaican art has gone on to challenge modernist hegemonic values and the misconception that the country’s visual culture is intrinsic to utopian ideas of sun, sea, sand and rum. These works render a narrative that references people in time and place. There is a hypertext of encounters and events that have come to shape the historical and contemporary context of Jamaican life and thought. Yet irrespective of the epoch to which the pieces belong, they speak to an expansion of awareness and global interconnectedness.

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\* InPulse Art Project Instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/inpulseartproject/?hl=en> (accessed 19 July 2021).

† Kingston Creative, <https://kingstoncreative.org/> (accessed 19 July 2021).

‡ Paint Jamaica Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/paintjamaica/about/> (accessed 19 July 2021).

Emma Roberts' curation of the exhibition demonstrates her commitment to engaging us in a pedagogical enquiry into an eclectic mix of socio-political themes such as nationhood, modernism, injustice, objectification, migration, enslavement, violence and futurism, offering a new episteme that permeates the boundaries of class and privilege.

**Dr Sireita Mullings is an arts practitioner and visual sociologist and works at the University of Bedfordshire.**

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# Catalogue of Images



Alvin Marriott  
*Head*  
1964  
Wood  
H57 × W25 × D27cm



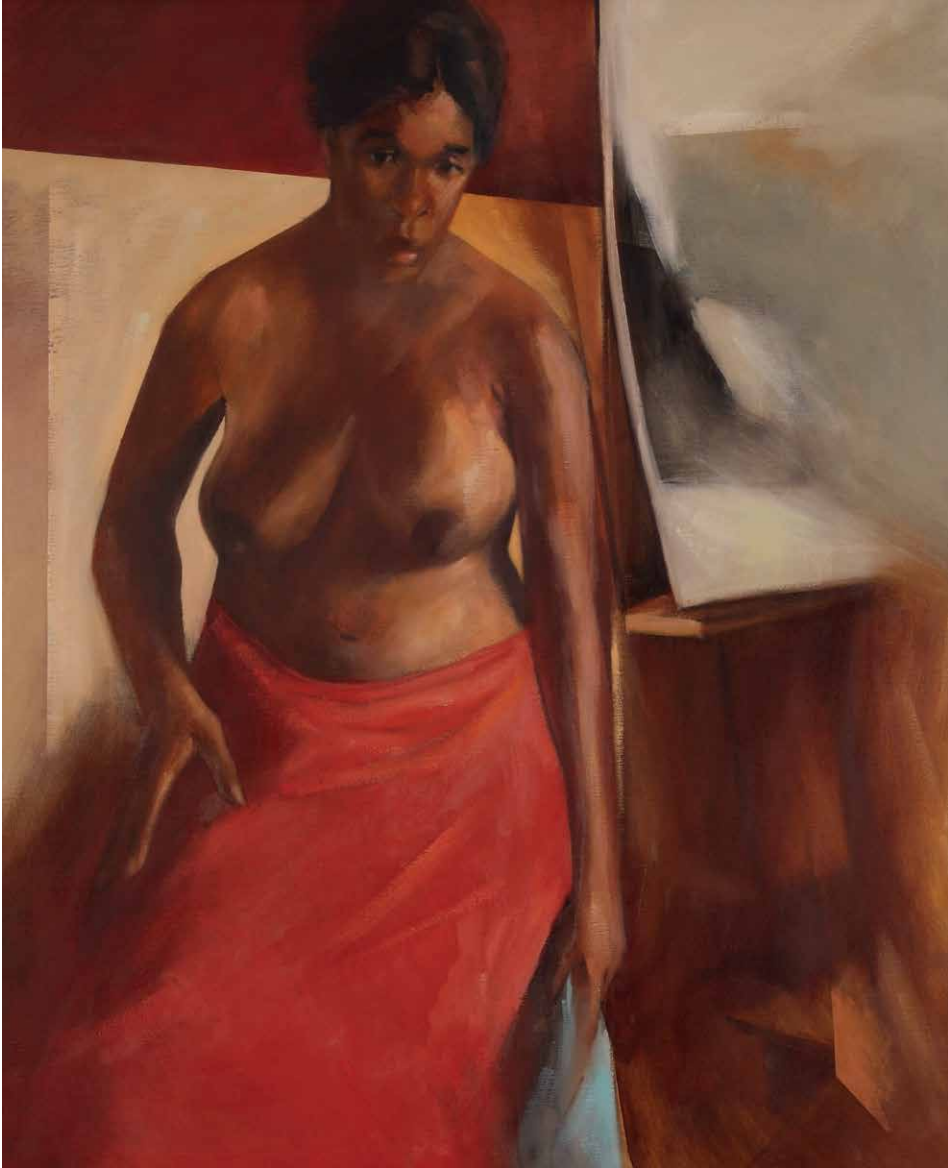


Albert Huie  
*Roselle Waterfall, St. Thomas*  
c.1975  
Oil on Canvas  
H74 × W80cm

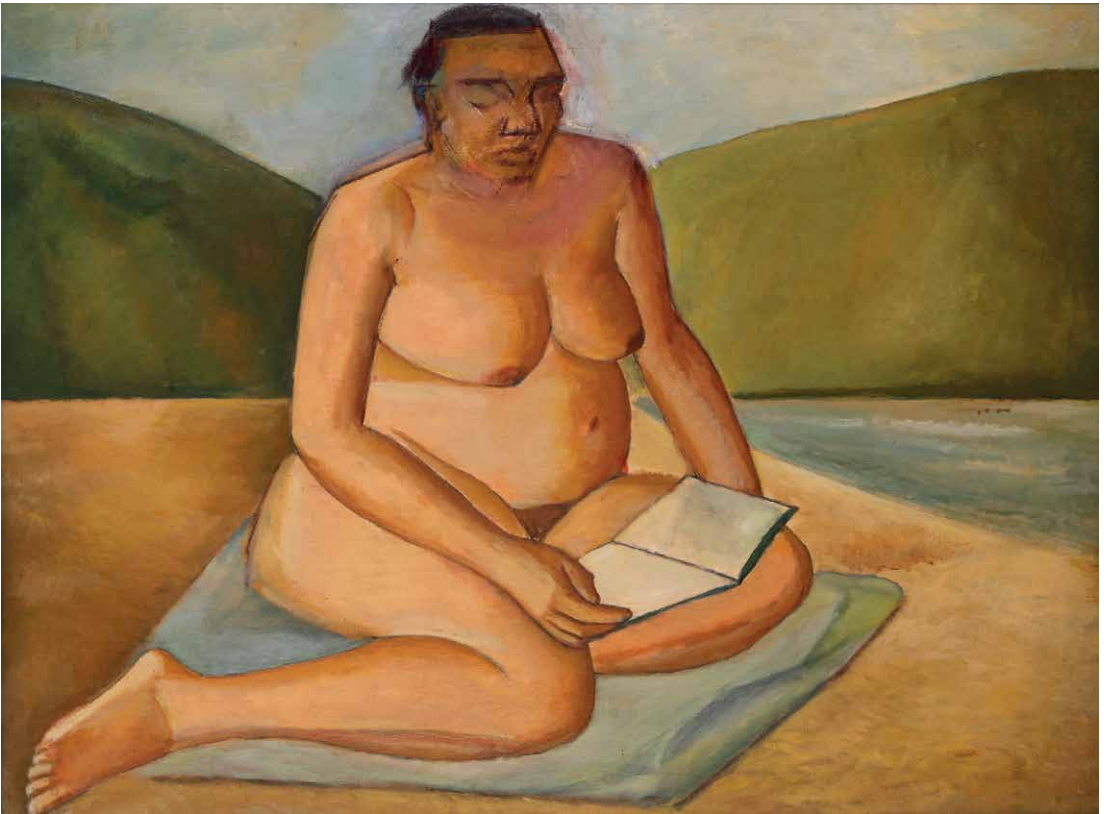




Barrington Watson  
*After the Storm, Hector River, Portland*  
Undated  
Oil on Canvas  
H65 × W118cm



George Rodney  
*On Awakening*  
1980  
Oil on Canvas  
H133 × W114cm



Whitney Miller  
*Untitled Nude*  
Undated  
Oil on Canvas  
H90 × W115cm



Carl Abrahams  
*Schoolgirls with Prophet*  
1982  
Oil on Canvas  
H50 x W40cm





Edna Manley  
*Orpheus*  
1983  
Bronze  
H80 × W55 × D33cm



C. Hall  
*Torso in Wood*  
Undated  
Lignum Vitae  
H40 × W17 × D17cm





Kapo (Mallica Reynolds)  
*Coffee Mountain*  
1984

Oil on Masonite Board  
H58 × W58cm



Alexander Cooper  
*The Coffee Pulper*  
1989  
Oil on Canvas  
H62 x W74cm



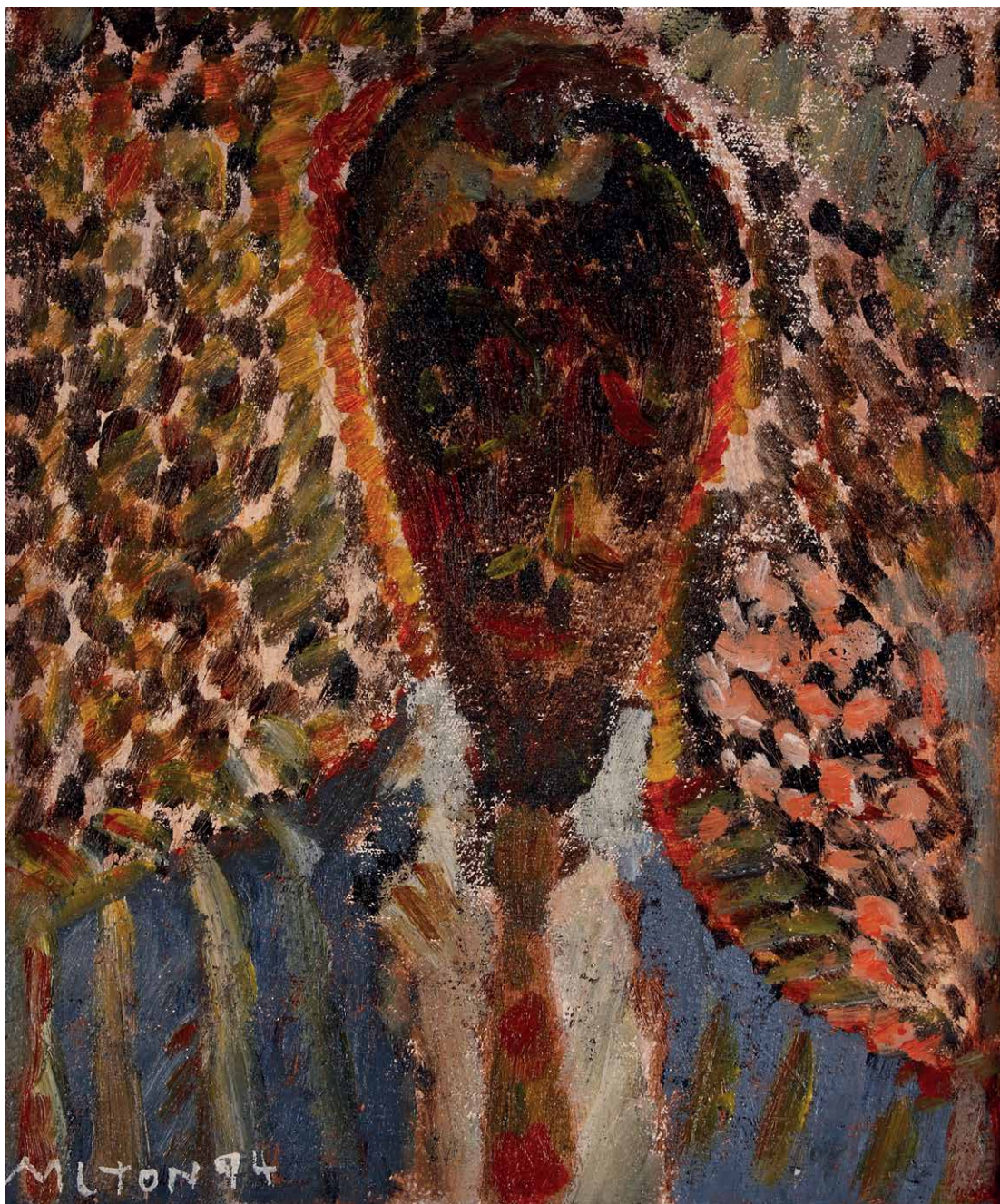
Laura Hamilton  
*Markings*  
1991

Oil on Canvas  
H31 × W34cm





Laura Hamilton  
*Pin Pon She 2*  
1993  
Oil on Board  
H31 × W25cm



Milton George  
*PJ Head*  
1994  
Acrylic on Canvas  
H50 × W42cm





Laura Hamilton  
*Put It De*  
1996  
Oil on Canvas  
H59 × W47cm





Raymond Watson  
*First Child (Maquette)*  
1998  
Bronze  
H55 × W60 × D32cm



David Boxer  
*Self-Portrait*  
2005  
Oil on Canvas  
H60 × W50cm



Judy Ann Macmillan  
*Breadfruit and Ackees*  
2005  
Oil on Canvas  
H63 × W85cm



Ebony Patterson  
*Hybrids*  
2007  
Mixed Media  
H146 × W141cm





Ebony Patterson  
*Untitled*  
2007  
Mixed Media  
H139 × W105cm

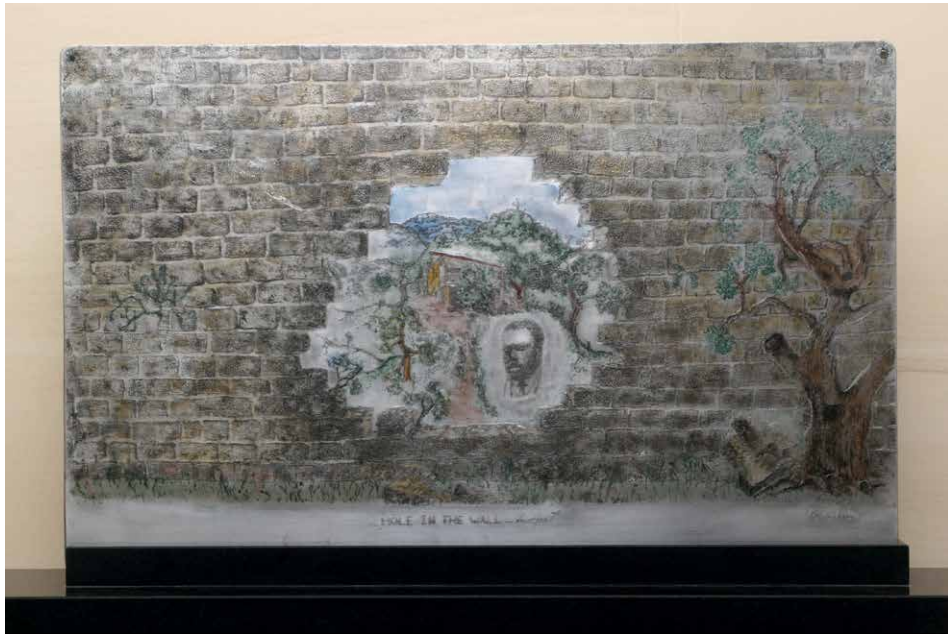


Craig Wylie  
*Portrait of Theresa Roberts*  
2007  
Oil on Canvas  
H134 × W166cm

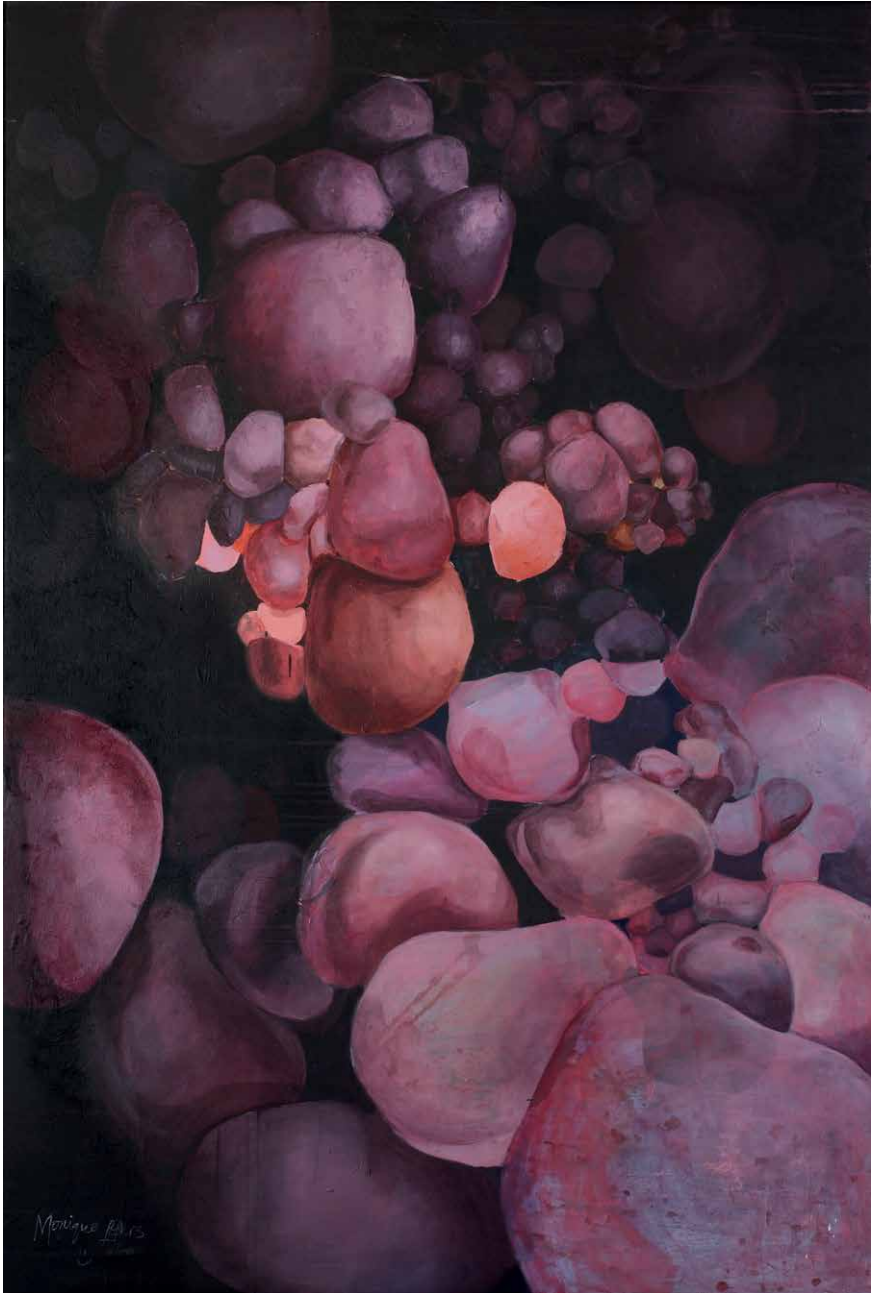




Basil Watson  
*Shadow*  
2008  
Bronze  
H47 × W17 × D17cm



Michael Hayden Elliott  
*Hole in the Wall*  
2009  
Mixed Media on Aluminium  
H38 x W61cm

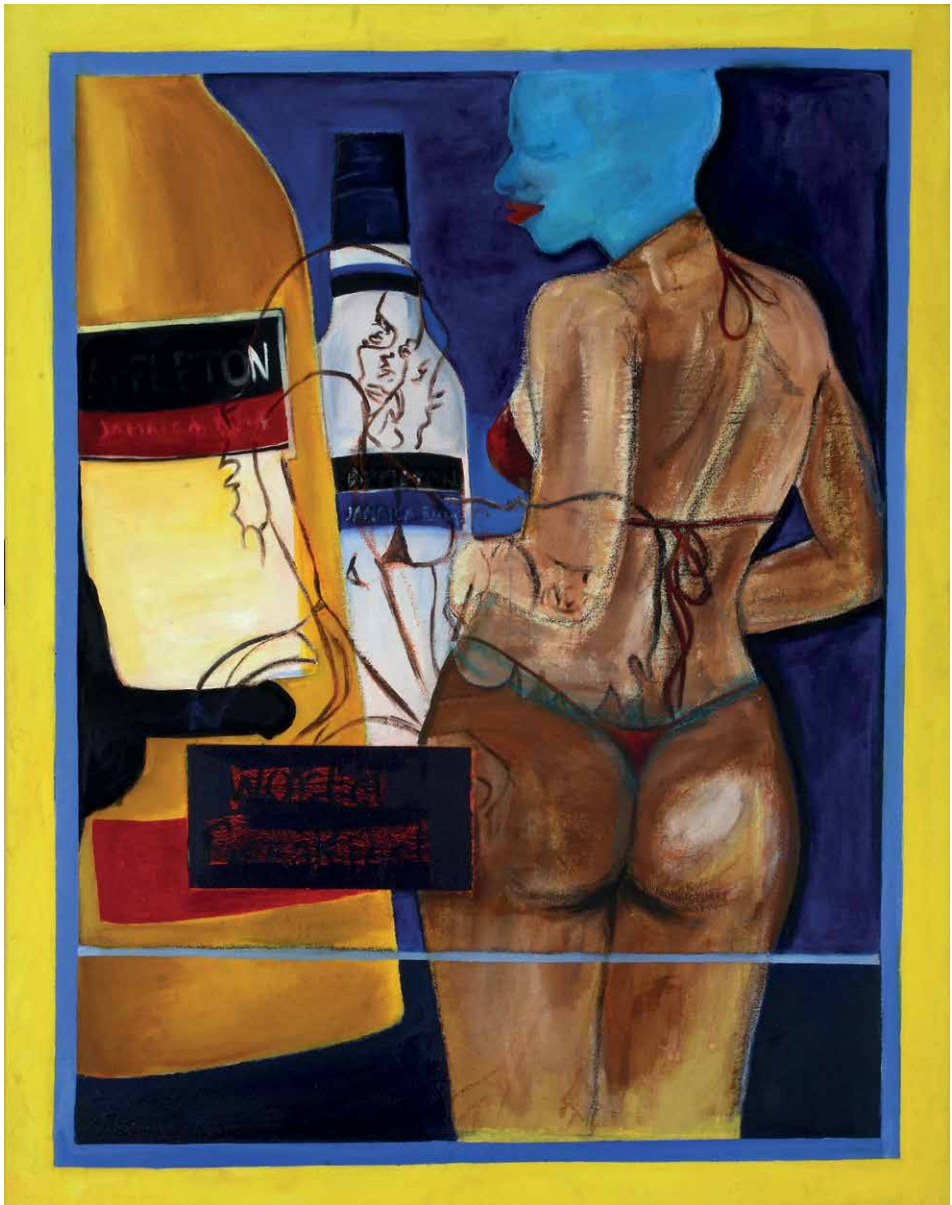


Monique Lofters  
2 (Fat Cells)  
2009

Acrylic on Canvas  
H189 × W131cm







Kristina Rowe  
*The Assets*  
2009  
Acrylic on Canvas  
H168 × W118cm

Kristina Rowe  
*Untitled*  
2009  
Acrylic on Canvas  
H145 × W112cm



Kai Watson  
*Vibrations*  
2009  
Oil on Canvas  
H88 × W69cm





Michael Elliott  
*Dog Skull 2*  
2010  
Oil on Canvas  
H97 × W69cm



Michael Elliott  
*The Core*  
2011  
Oil on Canvas  
H60 x W49cm



Laura Facey Cooper  
*Comb*  
2011  
Wood  
H60 × W22 × D20cm



Christopher Lawrence  
*Ethan the Faun*  
2014  
Acrylic and Oil on Hardboard  
H40 x W40cm





Marlon James  
*Request (Lonely Wanderer Series)*  
2017  
Digital Print on Paper  
H189 × W130cm



Alicia Lisa Brown  
*Priest 1*  
2017  
Oil on Canvas  
H16 × W12cm

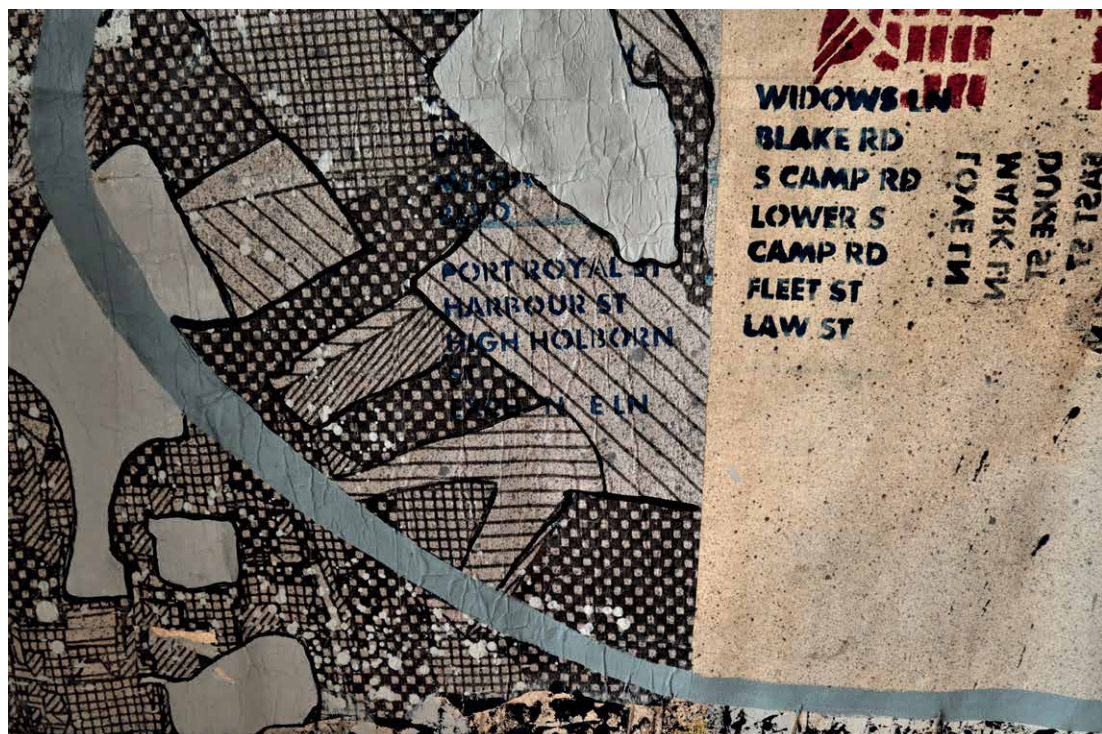




Alicia Lisa Brown  
*Priest 2*  
2017  
Oil on Canvas  
H16 × W12cm



Sireita Mullings  
*Heaven's Chant*  
2017  
Digital Print on Paper  
H100 × W133cm



Desanna Watson  
*Retention of a Colonial Past* (Detail)  
2018

Mixed Media Installation  
L2286 × W244cm  
Collection of the Artist

This work is on display in the second site of the exhibition:  
Reception of the John Lennon Building, Liverpool School of Art and Design,  
Liverpool John Moores University,  
2 Duckinfield Street, Liverpool, L3 5RD.



O'mar McKay  
*Hidden Identity*  
2019  
Digital Film 18–35mm  
Collection of the Artist



Phillip Thomas  
*Self-Portrait*  
2019  
Oil on Panel  
L65 × W63cm







