The Making of a
CARIBBEAN AVANT-GARDE

Postmodernism as Post-nationalism

Therese Kaspersen Hadchity

THE MAKING OF A CARIBBEAN AVANT-GARDE

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For the first ten years of the millennium I had a gallery in Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados. Though located on a traffic artery between the city centre and the port, it was rarely very busy. Every month had its sprinkle of artists, collectors, students, professionals, expats, tourists and curious pedestrians, who would come in to peruse exhibitions, seek out works of interest or engage in longer discussions about the art scene at large, but the Zemicon Gallery never amounted to much of an art dealership. It did, however, host more than a hundred small exhibitions and, from 2000 to 2010, I found myself in the privileged intersection between the production and the reception of Caribbean art. The material, aesthetic and often personal concerns of the artists I worked with—their hopes, visions, disappointments, self-doubts and, thankfully, perseverance, made the field real in ways that my previous studies in art history and modern culture never could have. I came to share their frustrations with the political and scholarly indifference to their work, with the glaring contrast between its public scope and limited reach, and with the common perception of the field as Eurocentric and elitist, especially when measured against the modest living and working conditions many Caribbean artists endure for the love of their discipline.

Early in that decade, it became evident that the critical change of guard, which had long smoldered under the region's art world, was in full effect. Many artists sensed that the physical and conceptual center of the regional art scene had shifted, and that their own bid for a Caribbean contemporary had been displaced by new aesthetic codes and curatorial briefs: oeuvres that had previously been considered important or promising were suddenly regarded as anachronistic or even conservative. Naturally, this schism instilled a sense of confusion and weariness in one segment of the arts community and spawned new energy and confidence in another. While some artists were able to reinvent themselves and adapt to the methods and social dynamics of the new contemporary scene, others entered into a form of internal exile.

When I eventually closed the gallery, my longing to understand what I had witnessed (and participated in)—especially what seemed to me a peculiar and, at first, incomprehensible convergence between the moment's political and critical

re-orientations—drove me back to academia. This undertaking morphed into a PhD dissertation, which attempted to describe the formation of a post-nationalist hegemony around the visual arts in the Anglophone Caribbean, and which is the basis for this book. It has been a labor of moving targets, and it is with trepidation that I have applied myself—not to the investigation of what is easily identifiable as reactionary, but to the contradictions of what is now widely considered progressive.

Prior to this undertaking and along the way, I have benefited from brief or extensive exchanges with numerous people. Reaching back in time, I have written under the imagined scrutiny of Professor Peter Madsen, who inspired a generation of modernity scholars at Copenhagen University. I am, however, more immediately indebted to the lecturers in the Cultural Studies Programme at The University of the West Indies (Cave Hill), in particular the supervisors of my dissertation, Dr. Yanique Hume and Dr. Aaron Kamugisha for their wisdom, support and unfailing kindness; to its external examiners, Professor Neil Lazarus and Professor Timothy Brennan, for their inspiration and encouragement, and to the peer reviewers of my manuscript for their helpful suggestions. Yet the book is above all reflective of my interactions and discussions with artists and art-students from Barbados and the wider Caribbean, including Alicia Alleyne, Dean Arlen, Simone Asia, Arthur Atkinson, Ewan Atkinson, Walter Bailey, Eric Belgrave, Ernest Breleur, Mark Brown, Ras Ishi Butcher, Holly Bynoe, Charles Campbell, Alison Chapman-Andrews, Joshua Clarke, Vanita Comissiong, Christopher Cozier, Kenwyn Crichlow, William Cummins, Blue Curry, Annalee Davis, Dennis de Caires, Joscelyn Gardner, the late Bill Grace, Stanley Greaves, Versia Harris, Winston Kellman, Katherine Kennedy, Mark King, Denyse Menard-Greenidge, Jeriko, Nadia Huggins, Ian Moore, Petrona Morrison, Adam Patterson, Ras Akyem Ramsay, Sheena Rose, Corrie Scott, Heather-Dawn Scott, Aurelia Walcott, Russell Watson, Alberta Whittle, Nick Whittle, Kraig Yearwood and numerous others. I have likewise learnt much from critics, writers, curators and collectors, including Mervyn Awon, Natalie Batson, Dominique Brebion, Jane Bryce, Trevor Carmichael, Clyde Cave, Amanda Coulson, Khalil Goodman, Alissandra Cummins, Gabrielle Hezekiah, Rodney Ifill, Kate Keohane, Philip Nanton, Veerle Poupeye, Ark Ramsay, Adrian Richards, Rupert Roopnaraine, Nicole Smythe-Jonhson, Lilian Sten, Allison Thompson, Estelle Thompson, Leon Wainwright, Harclyde Walcott, Anne Walmsley, Andrea Wells, Janice Whittle and Kathy Yearwood. My gratitude to Christopher, Anna, Nicolai, and to my mother and father, at whose dinner table my passion for debate began, can never be adequately expressed. The consideration, patience and unfailingly rapid email

responses I have received from the director, editors and staff at Purdue University Press has made the last leg of this long journey a remarkably enjoyable one.

As a part-time lecturer at the Barbados Community College and UWI (Cave Hill), I often wonder how my students will one day—as practicing artists, critics, policy makers and curators—see themselves in relation to art's local and global trajectories. This book represents an attempt at identifying and questioning some of the processes that shape the creative space *they* will inhabit and is therefore dedicated to them.

Introduction

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Background, Motivation and Challenges

In January 1993 the Barbadian artist Annalee Davis launched a newsletter titled *RA* (Representing Artists)[1] with the intention of creating a forum for commentary, debate and information sharing among the region's artists. Submissions and editorials included book- and exhibition reviews, short essays, advertisements, announcements and membership listings. Though the project was short-lived (the final issue was released in 1994), the newsletters offer an interesting record of an emerging regional discourse. Its contributors voiced their exasperation with the politeness and inconsequentiality of what, so far, had passed for local art criticism. More important, the conversations reflected fledgling divisions pertaining to the relationship between art and society, the desirable role of the state in cultural administration, and metropolitan influences versus a nascent Caribbean aesthetic. In a Barbadian visual arts context, these newsletters presented the first juxtaposition of a still fervent anti-colonial nationalism and an emerging postcolonial anti-nationalism. The debates echoed earlier ones in Jamaica and Trinidad, but at this point they heralded the ascent of what was to become an extremely influential avant-garde. The focal point of this book is that avant-garde and the circumstances under which it has consolidated itself and become normative.

Submissions from the Trinidadian artist and critic Christopher Cozier expressed frustration with what he perceived to be Trinidadian artists' tendency to appropriate foreign influences only when these are considered relevant to (ethnoocentric and nationalistic) expressions of cultural identity. In the essay "Outside the Boundaries of 'Relevance'. Bowen's 'Wizards of the Forest'" he writes: "Painting which is considered 'Eurocentric' or 'Metropolitan' is deemed to be valid or to 'fit in' only if it serves this idea of culture. Realistic painters create postcards of national sites and types; others design logos of our various diasporic and/or

other icons of anti-imperialism. It's all a fairly neat package". He then makes the following (widely quoted) observation: "The crisis that our artists face resides in *the difference between representing culture and creating culture*; seeing culture as a static model or as a flexible and expanding phenomena"[2] (my emphasis).

What Cozier voices here is, of course, the perception that art should seek to question rather than preserve current hegemonies, that the artwork should instigate interrogation rather than being an end-product. To extricate art from the domain of cultural or national identity-claims, he advocates an open-ended aesthetic without a fixed message or agenda—an aesthetic, which takes the artist's individual experience rather than the collective vision as its point of departure. A citation of the artist Edward Bowen's declaration "I can't deal with grand themes" is followed by the observation that "Often the Grand Themes are already laid out for us to illustrate; as important as they may be, they can obstruct further search and discovery by our artists". In another contribution Cozier applauds works that eschew the "placatory and harmonious fusing of imagery and/or forms into a narrative form, which is quite common in the compositional approach of previous generations, such as Clarke, King and Harris"[3]: the artwork must, in short, *unsettle* rather than affirm established local narratives. In chapter 1, however, I wish to argue that some of the efforts debunked by Cozier were themselves designed to 'create culture'.

Whereas Cozier was intent on de-coupling art from a national (or indeed any preordained) agenda, Barbadian contributions by Annalee Davis, Allison Thompson and those co-signed by Ras Ishi Butcher and Ras Akyem Ramsay called for stronger national institutions. Thompson's argument for the importance of a national gallery and a written history of art[4] was echoed by Butcher and Ramsay, who demanded substantive governmental investment in the arts and more discerning policies: "The recent attempts to promote Art and Craft as exportable products have not been undertaken with aesthetic criteria in mind, they have been treated as mass produced items, like sugar and rum".[5] Davis, a little less confident in the prospect of establishing well-functioning institutions, suggested that "We are beginning to realize we must learn to function independent of these government or other institutions representing art and artists, until they operate in a fashion that is agreeable to artists",[6] and Thompson second-guessed her demand for institutions by encouraging artists to also explore "alternative outlets and alternative spaces".[7] Butcher and Ramsay, however, cautioned that also within artist-led organizations (such as the Barbados Arts Council and DePAM (De People's Art Movement)) social divisions and a lack of knowledge sharing had led to aesthetic stagnation and internal ruptures.[8]

Altogether, the RA-debates were reflective of a deepening chasm between those committed to an ongoing nation-building project and those turning their backs on it. While there was confidence in the critical potential of art, there were, in other words, differences about its fundamental aims and targets. The submissions by Thompson, Butcher, Ramsay and Davis thus remained anchored in the idea of cultural resistance, institution-building and a collective agenda, whereas Cozier saw the anti-colonial project as derailed and argued for "authentic forms based upon individual sensibility and our knowledge of art in the region and internationally".[9] Barbadian commentators were nevertheless in agreement with his call for a less conservative and more experimental and critical aesthetic, and similarly excited at the prospect of furthering regional interaction. Though unanimously unimpressed with the performance of national institutions so far, the Barbadians were persistent in their demand for increased state-support, but divided over the viability of private or alternative exhibition spaces. They also remained loyal to the idea, which Cozier rejects, of art as an expression of cultural identity, and there was an outright contrast between the postmodern and a-political connotations of Cozier's call for the renunciation of 'grand themes', and the fervent humanism in Davis general reflections on Caribbean art:

> The work I personally responded to at the Biennial, I shall describe as humanist in nature. It became evident how very different our lives are from our friends up north. Our concerns and realities make us feel insecure at times and our work reflects a painful and torrid past that we are still obviously attempting to come to terms with. In many ways, we are still human beings in the old-fashioned sense, trying to catch up with the 'post-human' era that is fast in taking over. Our work is most times passionate and often political. These are our personality traits. Many of the people in our region are concerned with life and death questions daily. We don't have the time to question whether or not we exist; we feel the hunger in our bellies, we live through the harsh realities of international embargoes, we understand political oppression, corruption and opportunism, we suffer from the monkeying of the north and we understand what it means to be vulnerable and dependent.[10]

The ruptures reflected in the RA newsletters are a point of departure for this book, which describes the displacement of one artistic generation by another (henceforth referred to as the 1990s avant-garde or the Caribbean postmodern), and the development of a post- and sometimes explicitly *anti*-nationalist 'common sense' in visual arts practices, criticism and curatorship pertaining to the Anglophone Caribbean.[11]

A fundamental premise for this project is the Bourdieusian notion that visual art, though materially produced in the artist's studio, is conceptually produced in the interface between museums, galleries, criticism, media, audiences and markets. To encircle the cumulative forces, which come to legitimize certain expressions and invalidate others, I have endeavored to scrutinize not only critical, but also institutional and exhibitionary developments. While section 1 of this book describes the intellectual lineage and aesthetic manifestations of the 1990s avant-garde, section 2 therefore describes the physical spaces and communities that have sustained it, and section 3 considers the changing profile of Caribbean contemporary art in an international context.

At a time when the world is witnessing an epidemic of regressive and venomous nationalisms, it may seem perilous to offer a critique of any anti- or post-nationalist momentum. The book is, however, motivated by the apprehension that, for all its rhetorical emphasis on 'difference' and 'criticality', the post-nationalist movement has often displayed the lack of self-scrutiny for which it once faulted its predecessors, and in many ways seems poised to inadvertently sustain, rather than challenge existing global hierarchies. In that regard, the book responds to Neil Lazarus' call for efforts to "alter somewhat the existing balance of forces in the field of postcolonial studies, by way of making the field as a whole more accountable to philosophies and political claims, interests, and demands, to which (to its detriment) it is currently little attuned".[12]

With a bit of conceit, my attempt to portray the post-nationalist hegemony from different angles can be described as a 'cubist' form of ideology-critique. The attempt to anchor discourse analysis in a material reality by fusing discursive, aesthetic, political, institutional and exhibitionary perspectives into one narrative is, I believe, a pioneering effort in an Anglophone Caribbean context, but one that itself is challenged by the scarcity of theory on the region's visual art.[13] The book's argument rests on a combination of cultural theory, critical and curatorial essays, direct observation and scrutiny of contextualizing, but often relatively ephemeral material, and it must be acknowledged that some of the texts on which I have drawn (catalogue texts, pamphlets, blog entries) may not have been published with such close scrutiny in mind. While I have endeavored to be fair in my representation of the views I challenge, positions may, in other words, occasionally be inferred with a greater sense of direction, than was intended by their authors. On that note, I have favored printed sources over personal interviews, because they are traceable and independent of the way my interview questions might have been framed, and because it is such material that circulates and ultimately has (indeed *has had*) a wider and lasting impact.

A greater difficulty, however, presents itself when critical positions must be inferred on the basis of the visual record alone: if the question of interpretive liberty is forever fraught, this too is exacerbated by the rarity of dedicated literature on (or by) individual Caribbean artists.[14] Currently, it has to be said, a large segment of the field also suffers from a theoretical awareness-deficit, which not only can be traced to the perennial gap between art and cultural theory, but also to the low priority of art education, critical *non-academic* writing and informed public debate in the Anglophone Caribbean. It is indeed troubling that many practicing artists (especially those without recent academic training) find themselves on the margins, or altogether outside, of the debates pertaining to their own discipline. While my argument about the received wisdom and general consensus of the moment—be it on nationalism, diaspora-aesthetics, cosmopolitanism or the popular—may be counter hegemonic and occasionally provocative, it is not least intended to stimulate *local* participation in the production of visual arts theory. All the same, I am aware that my argument, to borrow a phrase from Keya Ganguly, is presented in "the mode of keeping an appointment for which one knows one is already too late".[15] My impression that some on the 'informed' side of the said divide regard my inquiry as wholly unnecessary (or ill advised) is not one I have taken lightly, and it seems pertinent to make it explicit that, at a personal level, I have a great deal of admiration for many of the artists, critics and curators whose practices and positions are here put under scrutiny. Many have won the respect of scholars and institutions, brokered opportunities, inspired, encouraged and earned the gratitude of audiences and aspiring artists across the region. It is virtually impossible, at the onset of any artistic, critical or curatorial career, to know by what larger forces one's contribution will be swept up, and, notwithstanding my extensive attention to specific artists and critics, it is self-evident that no one person (or entity) is singularly responsible for the watershed, and indeed the *convergence* of interests, described here—nor, however, do such transitions take place without interested agents acting as catalysts. I am, moreover, quite conscious that I too, through my own history of writing, managing art and crafting policy at a micro-level (and sometimes changing my mind about things), am vulnerable to some of the critiques here leveled, directly or implicitly, at other critics and spaces.

Originating in cultural studies and critical theory, the present study eschews the conventional parameters of art history, but also the moment's general preoccupation with 'visual culture'. It employs terms and categories, such as 'autonomy', 'avant-garde' and 'alternative', which some now see as obsolete, not only because I disagree that such classificatory terms necessarily are indicative of bad faith, but also because the discursive and aesthetic dynamics I describe, so clearly were avant-gardist in

their initial momentum, and because different notions of autonomy, as I hope to show, offer a productive lens for understanding the internal dynamics of the post-nationalist movement. Meanwhile, by straddling several areas of investigation, my argument is, of course, at risk of short-changing them all. Among the topics that could have been explored in greater depth are the various expressions of cultural nationalism that continue to co-exist with a cosmopolitan post-nationalism in the region's national arenas. Most lamentable, however, the book offers only fleeting discussions of the works and artists for whom, in a certain sense, it speaks: those who have been critical, but not dismissive of the nation-building project; those for whom art not only, to paraphrase Fanon, represents a 'passionate research', but also a deep and often opaque form of resistance; those who may not easily be drawn, or fitted, into the new social arrangements, which are now an integral component of the contemporary scene—and, not least, those emerging artists, who are about to discover that the relationship between opportunity and intellectual conformity (supposedly dismantled by the rhizomatic networks of a post-institutional, globalized art world) now merely presents itself in other guises.

Every discussion in the following chapters ultimately refers to questions about the possibilities of visual art and its direct or indirect engagement with its own traditions, society, discourse and politics, and about criticality and resistance in the different contexts of Western modernism, cultural nationalism and what I refer to as Caribbean postmodernism. At every turn, the discussion is, in other words, underpinned by contemplations of how artists in the Anglophone Caribbean have positioned themselves (or been positioned) vis-à-vis competing desires for cultural and critical autonomy, and how these dispositions have impacted on their visibility and success. In order not to overburden subsequent chapters with too much theory, the remainder of this chapter contains an outline of the conceptual baggage that underpins my argument, and an overview of the conversations that are already taking place in the literature pertaining to the field. Readers already familiar with (or less interested in) this admittedly rather dense terrain will find a brief overview of the book's chapters at the end of this introduction.

Problem or Necessity:
Critical Autonomy in the Western Tradition

The centrality of the autonomy concept in theories of modern art can hardly be overstated. In *The Rules of Art* Pierre Bourdieu defines autonomy as the condition, which was imposed on art with the development of bourgeois secularism

towards the second half of the nineteenth century. Now liberated from its former dependence on church, court and aristocracy, art (like a redundant servant) had to invent a function and market for itself.[16] It was, according to Bourdieu, in response to this challenge, that the market for symbolic goods, the inverse economy of deferred rewards, and the elitist cultivation of the 'pure gaze' developed in the form and context of modern art, which eventually *elected* the autonomy that was first imposed on it.[17] Whereas Bourdieu is quite disparaging of what he (quite reductively) construes as the socially divisive impact of art under this dispensation,[18] earlier Marxist theorists had put a premium on critical autonomy. For T. W. Adorno (and other members of the Frankfurt-school) art indeed represented a privileged critical vantage point—a pocket of freedom, through which emancipation from a compromised 'Enlightenment' might still be possible: "What [art] contributes to society is not communication with society, rather something very indirect, resistance".[19] To Adorno, autonomy was therefore neither an imposed and inescapable condition, nor a virtue, but an all-important and *self*-imposed necessity threatened by capitalism's colonization of culture (the 'culture industry'): even though autonomy (and the rather closed and self-referential high modernism it produced) created a problematic distance between 'high' and 'low' art, it was a shield against the corrupting forces of capital and politics: the autonomy prescribed by Adorno was, in other words, never elitist by *intent*. Even Adorno, however, conceded that this elected autonomy could only ever be partial[20] and a later theorist, Peter Bürger, advanced the more nuanced idea, that the question of autonomy divided mainstream modernism from the historical avant-garde. Largely understood as the 'encapsulation', which at once secures the integrity of art and neutralizes its impact, autonomy was thus embraced by the former, and actively undermined by the latter. According to Bürger, the historical avant-garde (particularly a figure like Marcel Duchamp) thus made a point of drawing attention to the institutionalization of art in bourgeois society, though, as the record shows, ultimately to no avail, since the art-institution proved itself flexible enough to absorb and accommodate such rebellion: "All art that is more recent than the historical avant-garde movements must come to terms with this fact in bourgeois society. It can either resign itself to its autonomous status or 'organize happenings' to break through that status. But without surrendering its claim to truth, art cannot simply deny the autonomous status and pretend that it has a direct effect".[21] Autonomy is therefore imposed on art in the sense that it only becomes visible to us if, and when, it is placed at a remove from our general life praxis. And yet it is clear that art not only, as Bourdieu suggests, operates within a symbolic economy, but that it is increasingly entangled in a *real* economy as well, and auton-

omy is therefore, paradoxically, contested both as ideal and as possible or actual reality.

   Poststructuralism's attempt to dismantle the Hegelian dialectic and humanist epistemology to which modernism is intrinsically tied, and that privileges the subject as confidently self-present and able to effectuate meaning and signification, has further undermined the idea of autonomy—not only of the subject, but also as a privileged location within a dominant system from where a future 'outside' may be envisioned. As part of a more comprehensive Enlightenment critique, theorists like Michel Foucault and Jean-François Lyotard have, moreover, challenged the conventional Marxist notion of a particular power structure, such as capitalism, as universally dominant. For Foucault, power relationships are thus neither fixed, nor monolithic, but strictly 'relational'. Power is, in fact, produced by "a multiplicity of points of resistance (. . . which) are present everywhere in the power network" and "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power".[22] This notion of an inescapable circuit of power and resistance has arguably clouded the emancipatory thrust of supposedly liberatory struggles like Marxism and modernism with an air of futility (though this is a point contested by Habermas and others, who remain committed to the Enlightenment project). Meanwhile, if Foucault has had a particular effect on cultural practices, it has not only been a new emphasis on suppressed knowledges and marginalities, but also an adjustment of critical targets. Whereas the utopian horizon for Adorno amounted to a comprehensive social restructuring, the effect of Foucault on the idea of art as a form of criticism, has arguably been a narrowing of scope from that of total systemic change to hegemonic adjustments—a transition perhaps inadvertently reflected in the following statement by the American artist Martha Rosler: "[P]eople began saying 'there is no outside'. Which I felt was misunderstanding what an outside means. If we are talking about specific social institutions, of course there is something outside the institution. No one is saying there is something outside the society as a whole".[23]

   If poststructuralism from the late 1960s gave culture a less utopian inflection, it effectively vindicated the general fatigue with modernism's lofty and compromised ambitions and self-imposed asceticism (i.e., its necessary remove from mass-culture). At a point where modernism had reached a dead end, poststructuralism thus offered itself up as a legitimizing framework for the more inclusive, pragmatic and decidedly anti-Adornian aesthetic, which was labeled postmodernism and which arguably represents a departure from the former idea of art as an expression of negation or resistance. In describing postmodernism as the 'cultural

logic of late capitalism', Fredric Jameson notes that its eclectic and 'schizophrenic' character at once mimics, critiques and succumbs to the logic of post-Fordist capitalism.[24] When postmodern art furthermore repeats the historical avant-garde's attempt to overcome an inherent autonomy (for instance by presenting kitsch as art), it is often said to have surrendered the latter's revolutionary gist in favor of a generally affirmative (or resigned) position[25] that may be celebratory, ironic or, at most, momentarily subversive.

Meanwhile, partly due to the influence of feminism and postcolonial theory some have assessed the operative freedom and critical possibilities of art *within* the present (i.e., capitalist) system more optimistically, noting that the new philosophy of openness allows for attention to be drawn towards 'difference and marginality'. Thus reverting to the assumption (which Bürger denounced) that art may have a direct impact on society, such theorists may yet see postmodernism as a counter hegemonic agent.[26] On this understanding, however, art primarily attains an instrumental value as a supplementary discursive avenue, and with the removal of its particular insistence on autonomy (expressed through its unmistakable character of 'art'), nothing stands in the way of treating it as a 'resource' or, for that matter, as a 'cultural industry'. A notion of autonomy has, however, survived in the deconstructive concept of intertextuality derived from Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, according to which a work is more directly related to other texts than to the material world.

Postcolonial Strategies in a Postmodern Era

To what extent the trajectory of modernity, modernism and postmodernism in the West are relevant to the postcolonial world is a matter of longstanding debate.[27] The theory that informed Western postmodernism, did, however, also inform the field of postcolonial studies, which, from the 1980s, stole anti-colonialism's thunder and concentrated its theoretical efforts in the metropolitan academy. An influential segment of the field thus channeled poststructuralism's anti-essentialist and deconstructive energies towards the undoing of established categories and hegemonies, including conceptions of nationhood. While reiterating the nationalist preoccupation with cultural and psychological liberation, postcolonial scholarship in every discipline, including the visual arts, thus proffered a critique of the anti-colonial movement for its association with a teleological (and humanist) Western Enlightenment tradition. Central to that movement was, of course, an aspiration towards both political and cultural autonomy. The process of rehabilitating formerly colonized peoples from the scourge of European dominance through the development of independent cultural identities was not a defiant

gesture towards the world only, but also a matter of unifying nations divided by race, class and religion and by the scars of colonialism itself.[28] Indeed, the movement, which in the following chapters will be referred to as 'Creole modernism', was imbued with Fanonian aspirations towards internal unity, cultural confidence and a determination to resist all forms of imperialism. In a national context, this affirmative inscription automatically displaced the Western modernist tradition's demand for critical autonomy. As will be discussed at some length in subsequent chapters, postcolonial critics have subsequently argued that anti-colonial nationalism's cultural agents were co-opted into new hegemonies modeled on colonial antecedents, for instance by stimulating cultural elitism, by normalizing certain identities at the expense of others and by accepting the political and epistemological foundations of Western culture in general.

Far from a cohesive formation, postcolonial theory has, however, itself been divided over the legacies of anti-colonialism and indeed also over the political implications of poststructuralism. Edward Said thus acknowledges Foucault's important work on the relationship between knowledge and power, but does not contest the materiality and human agency behind power itself.[29] As a means of correcting colonial narratives, histories and canons, Said advocates contrapuntal readings, which "must take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it".[30] Homi Bhabha, on the other hand, regards this method as a surrender to the default binarism of Western epistemology, and instead promotes the strategic potential of 'mimicry', which has the advantage of ambivalence and uncertainty. It is, he argues, "the sign of a double articulation, a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power".[31] Its (Derridean) induction of slippage and difference is thus intended to produce a state of hybridity (a non-binary 'third position'), which is neither that of colonizer or colonized, but somewhere outside this relation. Bhabha's strategy thus ultimately aims at dissolving, rather than leveling, the relationship between the two. Meanwhile, as Robert Young concedes, this rigorously anti-essentialist and anti-dialectic approach ironically undermines the notion of a coherent 'colonial condition' as an incitement for resistance in the first place.[32] Geeta Kapur moreover observes that Bhabha's politics of difference, which seeks to eschew the fangs of particular ideological persuasions, leads him to "favor[s] the short maneuver and the subtle negotiation" (while) "the longer navigational pull—to borders, frontiers, horizons [is] deferred to post-politics and pitched beyond the fin de siècle present".[33] Such observations have led to the perception of Bhabha's position as congruent with a politically vague and disillusioned (post-revolutionary) postmodernism, which effectively endorses the status quo. Timo-

thy Brennan's critique of Stuart Hall (and other pioneers of the 'culturalist' turn in criticism) indeed rests on their politically paralyzing rejection of earlier activists' deliberately essentialized racial and economic identities, to the effect that, in Hall's own words, "the strategy of gaining access to the means of representation has been reorganized and repositioned by the 'politics of representation itself '".[34]

An explicitly postmodern imprint on Caribbean critical thought first surfaced in the writings of Antonio Benitez-Rojo.[35] Though Caribbean nations all emerged from the "big bang" of the plantation, he argues, the region is a place of "change, transit, return, fluxes of sidereal matter", its only constant metamorphosis itself. As the world's former peripheries increasingly migrate towards the metropolitan centers, the region moreover "flows outward past the limits of its own sea with a vengeance".[36] While this uncontainable profile paradoxically adds up to a certain Caribbean essence after all, the borders and expanse of the region are thus rendered more diffuse. Édouard Glissant likewise stresses the Caribbean's role as precursor and model for the chaotic, rhizomatic and creolizing nature of globalization's conflicting processes. Even though the relationship between centre and periphery may be a structural totality, it is always under re-negotiation, Glissant argues, and the anti-essentialist and anti-humanist 'relational poetics', which he has championed as a Caribbean (but not nativist) aesthetic, thus rests on a perception of global dynamics as being in a state of permanent movement and recalibration. The rejection of core-identities attached to ancestry or particular experiences of history (say, an Afro-Creole conception of 'Caribbeanness'), notably, does not preclude gestures of resistance, only the immutable targeting of a fixed geo-political or historical opponent. Specifically aimed at the Western humanist tradition, which reduces or consumes everything external to it as an exotic 'Other', Glissant moreover envisages a strategy of opacity,[37] which (unlike Bhabha's 'third position') maintains an oppositional, but *always changing*, conception of centre and periphery.[38]

While Caribbean discourse has been deeply affected by postmodern thought over the last few decades, few intellectuals have domesticated such theory for the visual arts. Among the exceptions are Luis Camnitzer and Gerardo Mosquera, who have supported and documented the rise of a post-revolutionary Cuban art as well as contemporary art movements in Latin American and the Caribbean. With great subtlety and insight, both writers describe generational transitions, artists' concurrent (and often clashing) desires for local and international recognition and their complicated negotiations between social and aesthetic agendas. Though the history of Cuban and Latin American art is longer and more complex than that of the Anglophone Caribbean, many of the trajectories and debates

taken up in this book echo those described in Camnitzer's *New Art of Cuba* (1994) and Mosquera's many essays. Among the differences between the Hispanophone and Anglophone Caribbean, however, those relating to political histories, scale of economies, infrastructure and demographics are particularly significant for the discussion undertaken here. What now follows is an overview of literature and conversations about visual art in a predominantly Anglophone Caribbean context, and a more specific identification of my own theoretical points of reference.

Conversations about Diaspora, Nationalism, Cultural Policy and Caribbean Art

One of the most significant theoretical developments in recent decades has been the departure from a centre-periphery (i.e., 'dependency') conception of global dynamics. With the explicit objective of moving away from nation-based discussions of modernity and modernism, Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) thus proposes a black diasporic counter narrative to the standard Western history of modernism. Though Gilroy in principle maintains the idea of cultural autonomy, it is an autonomy loosened from the material conditions and political inscriptions of particular national situations. His contribution has played a major part in the development of the diaspora-aesthetic, which is one of this book's focal points. Several theorists and art historians (including Stuart Hall, David Scott, Kobena Mercer and Richard Powell) have indeed welcomed the departure from territorially inflected (art) histories, yet, as will be discussed in chapter 3, the diaspora-concept has been brought to bear in very different and sometimes incongruous ways. In a specific visual arts context, Richard Powell's *Black Art and Culture in the 20th Century* (1997) veers towards a diasporic essentialism by seeking to identify structural and thematic commonalities in black art across regions as different as the United States, Britain and the Caribbean. Yet, by effectively reverting to a series of national perspectives, the explicitly diaspora-based essay collection titled *Curating in the Caribbean* edited by David A. Bailey et al. (2012) inadvertently exposes the difficulty of applying a transnational perspective to a discipline as acutely tethered to local policies and infrastructures as the visual arts.

The post-nationalist turn in Caribbean criticism has not least been spearheaded by the influential journal *Small Axe*. Since its launch in 1997, it has been actively implicated in the process Brian Meeks[39] refers to as "hegemonic dissolution" in radical Caribbean thought—though its role, in retrospect, seems as much to have been that of begetting the new hegemony, which, in relation to the visual arts, is portrayed in the following chapters. While the discipline is relatively

marginal to its editorial scope, *Small Axe* has arguably become the region's most influential forum for visual arts commentary, and my broader argument often engages with the writings of its past or present editors, in particular David Scott, Annie Paul and Christopher Cozier.

In the current intellectual and economic climate, the region's incremental production of national art histories, monographs, period- and genre-studies has not gathered much momentum. Landmarks in this genre do, however, include Petrine Archer-Straw and Kim Robinson's *Jamaican Art. An Overview with a Focus on Fifty Artists* (1990), David Boxer and Veerle Poupeye's *Modern Jamaican Art* (1998), Poupeye's *Caribbean Art* (1998), Alissandra Cummins, Allison Thompson and Nick Whittle's *Art in Barbados: What Kind of Mirror Image* (1999), Ann Walmsley and Stanley Greaves' *Art in the Caribbean* (2010), Claudia Hucke's *Picturing the Postcolonial Nation: (Inter) Nationalism in the Art of Jamaica 1962–1975* (2013), Natalie Urquhart's *The Art of the Cayman Islands—A Journey Through the National Gallery Collection* (2016) as well as the illustrated survey-books from Robert and Christopher Publishers in Port-of-Spain: *Pictures from Paradise. A Survey of Contemporary Caribbean Photography* (2012) edited by Melanie Archer, Mariel Brown and O'Neil Lawrence, *See Me Here: A Survey of Contemporary Self-Portraits from the Caribbean* (2014) by Marsha Pearce and *A-Z of Caribbean Art* (2020) edited by Melanie Archer and Mariel Brown.

More critical attention has been directed towards studies in visual culture. Works like Krista Thompson's *An Eye for the Tropics* (2006) and Patricia Mohammed's *Imaging the Caribbean* (2010) show how pictures (ranging from photographs and paintings to postcards and advertisements) contribute to the construction of 'tropicality' and a picturesque 'Caribbeanness'. *An Eye for the Tropics* in particular regenerated a sense of purpose in a number of artistic and curatorial practices (as reflected in the 2011 exhibition *Wrestling with the Image* discussed in chapter 8). With a more current scope, Thompson's *Shine* (2015) focuses on the use of light to transcend conditions of 'un-visibility' in African diasporic visual culture. *Empires of Vision* (2014) edited by Martin Jay and Sumathi Ramaswamy, contains multiple essays similarly centered on art, visual culture and 'scopic regimes'. Though I share some contributors' hesitation to equate the power of vision and gaze with Empire's more material methods of coercion, the expanding field of visual culture has, as the editors point out, enabled an integration between areas of knowledge previously foreign to one another. While the focus of this book remains on the visual arts, its combined perspectives and occasionally polemic tone likewise places it at some remove from conventional art history.

Former boundaries have likewise been breached in cultural policy, where an

outright embrace of the 'cultural industries' is displacing previous efforts (however partial or tentative) towards the protection of culture's critical autonomy. Cultural development in the postcolonial world has, of course, never been far removed from the pursuit of political and economic empowerment, and Caribbean governments' preferential policy investment in more popular art forms and handicrafts at the expense of experimental art, has arguably been an underlying factor in the critical and artistic dissociation from nation and state, which is one of this book's recurring themes. In this area, I have drawn extensively on Suzanne Burke's pioneering study on Caribbean cultural policy *Policing the Transnational: Cultural Policy Development in the Anglophone Caribbean (1962–2008)* (2010). While Burke describes the instrumentality, which (with shifting objectives) has underpinned the region's post-Independence cultural policy, my discussions mainly turn on the alignment between an export oriented cultural policy and the cosmopolitanism and transnational networks, which now set the pace for the region's contemporary art scene.

The overarching argument of this book thus takes its cue from those who have had reservations towards the critical purchase of a diaspora aesthetic, and those troubled by poststructuralism's political corollaries. Among the former, Leon Wainwright's *Timed Out. Art and the Transnational Caribbean* (2011), thus diagnoses the 'politics of time' by which hierarchic relationships are reproduced both within the diaspora and between diasporic and mainstream art in the metropole. Wainwright's insights on generational dynamics in Caribbean art and the false promises of globalization and multiculturalism, as expressed in an expanding body of critical writing, have been invaluable resources for the development of my argument. My purpose, however, is not only to reiterate (as much as I agree with it) Simon During's contention that, coupled with a postmodern "rejection of resistance along with any form of binarism, hierarchy or telos", postcolonialism has effectively become a "conciliatory rather than a critical, anti-colonialist category".[40] What I attempt to demonstrate is the amalgamation of interests, which have ushered in, consolidated and reinforced a post-nationalist momentum in the critical framing of contemporary Caribbean art. The argument therefore borrows most of its conceptual armature from a humanist Marxism and from writers who have striven to set the record straight regarding now vilified anti-colonial movements. It leans on Benita Parry's "Liberation Movements: Memories of the Future" (1998), on the essays assembled by Neil Lazarus in *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World* (1999) and his own *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (2011). The latter also returned me to the work of Fredric Jameson and the controversial ideas he originally posited in "Third-World Literature in the Era

of Multinational Capitalism".[41] Inspired by Lazarus' properly 'Jamesonian' and historicizing analysis of that controversy (and his pertinent observation that the national allegory is not necessarily *nationalist*[42]), I pick up on Jameson's perception of the cultural expression as the (often oblique or unconscious) reflection of a given national situation. My argument is no less indebted to Timothy Brennan for his sharp and rigorous polemic—in books like *At Home in the World. Cosmopolitanism Now* (1997), *Wars of Position* (2006) and *Borrowed Light: Vico, Hegel and the Colonies* (2014)—against the ruses of cosmopolitanism, the left's migration to the right, and the marginalization of Marxism, anti-colonial nationalism and humanism itself in contemporary criticism.

While this book attempts to describe the impact and different manifestations of the post-nationalist turn in Anglophone Caribbean arts communities, time has not stood still during its production. The initial belligerence of the 1990s avant-garde has gradually given way to a degree of acquiescence, and some of its energies have been passed on to a new 'next generation'. My impression that the latter has lost the collective sense of mission and urgency that (for all their differences) was so characteristic of the last two generations has been a contributing motivation for the writing of this book.

Increasingly, however, scholars are pushing for a post-poststructuralist resetting of the field at large. In lieu of such exhausted concepts as hybridity and creolization, which "are a part of the ruins of colonial processes of definition, naming and mapping", Erica James (2009) advocates the "pleasure of disorientation"[43] in an apparent move towards a less overdetermined approach. Similarly frustrated by the deadlock of a black British and diasporic art so fatigued by representational and counter-representational wrangles, that the art itself has become invisible, Leon Wainwright's latest book, *Phenomenal Difference: A Philosophy of Black British Art* (2017) argues for a 'strategic phenomenology'. Meanwhile, along altogether different lines, the curatorial essays by Tatiana Flores and Michelle Stephens for the exhibition *Relational Undercurrents* (briefly discussed in chapter 8) signals a partial return to a material and geographical conception of the Caribbean—yet, with its conceptual basis in Glissant and Deleuze, effectively seems to double down on the post-Marxist and post-nationalist direction of current Caribbean criticism.

In more forthrightly advocating a pan-Caribbean revival, *The Making of a Caribbean Avant-Garde* undertakes a mapping-project of its own by connecting the region's visual arts discourses with aesthetic and institutional developments. It examines different manifestations of a post-nationalist postmodernism, changes in the political and institutional environment and an exhibitionary trajectory that

suggests an increasing conformity in the selection and presentation of Caribbean art when it goes abroad. All the way, the discussion returns to the question of how artists, institutions and policy-makers situate themselves between competing demands and convictions and the need to survive and succeed. The argument is presented in three thematic sections, each containing an introductory chapter, a long middle chapter (presenting case-studies or extended analysis) and a 'spin-off' chapter at the end. The first section is titled Discourse, and chapter 1 (Shaping Up the Past: The Critique of Cultural Nationalism) suggests that, since the 1990s, visual arts discourse in the Anglophone Caribbean has been dominated by voices claiming to represent 'the next generation'. It is argued that the image of this group as open-minded, progressive, anti-elitist and post-nationalist depends on a reverse portrayal of the Creole modernist movement as the opposite, and that current discourse condemns cultural nationalism to a conveniently fixed location in history. In chapter 2 (The Next Generation), I suggest that the post-nationalist momentum has produced a Caribbean postmodernism, which includes a spectrum of aesthetic orientations spanning from the 'conceptualist' to the 'performative or participatory' and 'the culturalist'. Chapter 3 (Diasporic Connections) outlines the conceptual, practical and political dilemmas a diaspora-aesthetic presents for the visual arts. On the whole, section 1 argues, that the post-nationalist turn dismantles the externally resistive thrust of its anti-colonial modernist predecessor, and 'performs' a political involvement, which it simultaneously disables. The second section is titled Spaces and addresses institutional developments. Chapter 4 (The Origin of Alternative Spaces, the Troubled Museum and Cultural Policy in the Caribbean) discusses museological concerns since the 1960s, broadly outlines the Caribbean's post-Independence cultural policy trajectory and identifies some of the problems that follow from an instrumental approach to culture. Chapter 5 (Three Spaces in Context) describes the proliferation of alternative spaces across the Anglophone Caribbean and their rapid transition from margins to mainstream. It portrays three specific venues in Trinidad, Barbados and the Bahamas, observes differences in their national contexts, and seeks to identify what they have in common. Chapter 6 (Stronger Together: The Creative Network) discusses the creative network that links such spaces in relation to questions about the public sphere in a neoliberal policy climate. Altogether, section 2 argues that, in the absence of strong cultural institutions, the region's alternative spaces effectively become institutions themselves, and thereby inadvertently 'cover for' the culturally indifferent neoliberal state. It also raises concerns over the increasing institutionalization of the avant-garde and its implications for a meaningful critical dynamic. The third and last section, Encounters, looks at the

metropolitan prospects of Caribbean art and the apparent 'returns' of the post-nationalist momentum. Chapter 7 (Through the Eye of the Needle) discusses the concept of 'the contemporary' and the respective climates of receptivity, which have emerged with multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism and diaspora aesthetics in the north. Chapter 8 (The Caribbean Contemporary in the United States) relates the trajectory of Caribbean exhibitions in the United States since 1995 to the concurrent development of a Caribbean postmodernism, as well as to the emergence and growing influence of the region's alternative spaces. Building on previous arguments, chapter 9 (Three Barbadian Artists and Their 'National Situation') demonstrates how the critical potency of particular works and oeuvres may change, when the national frame is suspended and works are re-situated in another political context. The core argument presented in section 3 is that the Caribbean postmodern, which generally sees itself as an agent of a globalization from below, may also serve the consolidation of global hierarchies.

Discourse

Shaping Up the Past
The Critique of Cultural Nationalism

❧

T HE VEINS OF THE wood have become the pulsating veins of a man. With an upward gaze, his head is thrown back, touching on the shoulder. From here to the elbow, the right arm is aligned with the torso, but then pushes forward, muscles tightening under the skin. The left arm, in turn, arches down towards the plinth, where the two hands meet. Between that arm and the body is a hollow, protected space, suggestive of an upward arrow, or a house. The man's angular, uncomfortable pose and bulging muscles indicate mounting pressure, perhaps an imminent move. Edna Manley's *Negro Aroused* from 1935 (see plate 1) is a symbol of black empowerment and a new nation in the making. The sculpture was first executed in wood and, with slight modifications, later enlarged and cast in bronze for a public monument. Though the final version only was completed (posthumously) in 1991, it has become an emblem of the Independence movement, of Jamaican national identity and of early modernist endeavors in Caribbean art.[1] It is a work, which appears to lean towards synthetic cubism's condensation of form, but *Negro Aroused* is no detached attempt at form analysis. It is the evocation of a historical subject and *this* time, cubism's liberal gestures towards African form is replaced with the unmistakable presence of a black man.

To establish a background for the more far-reaching argument developed in this book, the present chapter examines the frequent association between modernism and anti-colonial nationalism in Caribbean visual art. The emphasis is on the skepticism towards the former, which, since the early 1990s, has followed from the critique of the latter: as the false promises and outright failures of postcoloniality began to inform the region's critical climate, modernism came to be seen as the aesthetic handmaiden of an increasingly suspect nationalist agenda. However, following on from Benita Parry's observation of the prevalent tendency to "scant the disruptive energies of all anti-colonialist opposition, whether mod-

erate or radical" and Neil Lazarus' contention that "Contemporary theorists seem increasingly given to suggesting that the national liberation movements never were what they were—that is that they were always more concerned with the consolidation of elite power than with the empowering of the powerless, with the extension of privilege than with its overthrow",[2] I want to argue for a less reductive perception of the anti-colonial generation, and, especially, of the many and varied efforts here collectively referred to as 'Creole modernism'[3] and its current-day heirs. This leads up to a portrayal, in the remainder of section 1, of the contemporary movement, which has offered itself up as a successor to that generation and its aesthetic strategies.

An Emphatic Departure

One of the most influential voices in the discursive and exhibitionary trajectory, which connects the RA-moment (discussed in the introduction) with the present, has been that of Christopher Cozier. Since the early 1990s, Cozier has perhaps become the Anglophone Caribbean's most frequently shown, cited and consulted artist, critic and curator. He is moreover a co-founder of the acclaimed project- and exhibition-space Alice Yard in Port-of-Spain and, in 2013, Cozier could, as one of very few artists based in the Anglophone Caribbean, add a solo-exhibition at a New York-gallery to an already impressive CV. Later that year, he received a Prince Claus Award for outstanding achievement in the field of culture and development. The official citation acknowledges his importance for "the evolution of contemporary art discourse in the Caribbean" and his "commitment to research and critical enquiry", which has "expanded the dialogue between traditional academic disciplines and the visual, and helped to liberate local discourse from predictable tropes and stereotypes".[4]

Crucial to Cozier's success has been the perception that his work represented a decisive break with previous tendencies in Trinidadian art—a perception actively corroborated Cozier himself and his early supporter, the German collector Ulrich Fiedler. In the essay "Between Narratives and Other Spaces" Cozier thus proclaims a generational rupture between contemporary artists and what he describes as the nationalist agenda of their predecessors: "The new enemy of the nationalist has shifted from the colonizer to the perpetual 'next generation', whose allegedly ambiguous relationship to the national space is not understood".[5] The fact that Cozier (along with Che Lovelace and Peter Minshall) in the same year was selected to represent Trinidad in the prestigious exhibition *Caribe Insular* in Madrid and to write the essay contextualizing the Trinidadian submission did,

however, indicate that a change of guard was in progress, even if this breakthrough largely was mediated by metropolitan collectors and curators.

Cozier's image and artistic profile has thus been tied to his assessment of peers and precursors as being too close to the nationalist agenda or particular claims over the national space. Early works by pioneer-artists, who "painted Trinidad's landscape in an impressionistic style",[6] are denounced as rhetorical or naively uncritical, while those by modernists like Leroy Clarke, Carlisle Harris and Kenwyn Crichlow are associated with overarching national narratives. Functioning merely as "postcards of national sites" or "icons of anti-imperialism", such works, it is argued, serve to stabilize the national project, rather than uncover its inherent biases.[7] Whereas early Caribbean pioneers participated in the production of what Krista Thompson refers to as 'the picturesque', later artists, we may infer, have thus modeled themselves a little too closely on Western modernism, and yet been unreceptive to the postmodernist critique of that modernism—indeed, what Cozier advocated was ostensibly a *second* round of the selective adaptation Brathwaite refers to as 'interculturation'. The radical break ascribed to him and his circle (Irenee Shaw, Steve Ouditt and Edward Bowen) in the early 1990s therefore did not lie in a complete departure from earlier practices, but in the aesthetic and philosophical paradigm to which they attached themselves, and in the redirection of scope from nation building to nation critique.[8] Cozier has thus sought to separate himself from the previous generation's self-imposed commitment to the postcolonial nation state of which he has been unequivocally dismissive: "To me the concept of nation in the Anglophone Caribbean context is the smallest moment of our larger history since the alleged 'discovery' by Columbus in 1493. Trinidad, for example, became independent from the UK in 1962. Also, the island state is the smallest location on the Caribbean map, physically and mentally—perhaps an immature and very aggressive guarded territory that belongs to politicians and their funders".[9]

In contradistinction to the nation building generation, Cozier has therefore (as will be discussed in chapter 2) been dedicated to the idea of visual art as a persistently critical and investigative activity. This ambition and (perhaps not least) the need to create distance to a previous generation, has contributed to a broad-based movement from traditional to new media, from an emphasis on collective identity claims to the highlighting of individual experience, from suggestions of binary or dialectical relationships to the foregrounding of difference, hybridity and rhizomatic structures, from a focus on narrative, representation and product to a focus on concept, ambiguity and process.

Cozier's dissident position found an early supporter in the Jamaican critic An-

nie Paul. The latter's contribution to the discourse on visual art has to a large extent manifested itself in a persistent critique of the Jamaican art establishment, which she—in a Bourdieusian irony that also applies to Cozier—increasingly has come to personify. Her contention (indeed under reference to Bourdieu's perception of the art world as a product *and* guarantor of social elitism) has been that the canon and national narrative created by the National Gallery of Jamaica (starting with the endorsement of Edna Manley as the founder of modern Jamaican art) reflects the adoption of Eurocentric values by an Afro-Creole middle class. The Manleys and the Drumblair-government, Paul contends, were determined to "singlehandedly sculpt a better nation, to impose order on the unassimilable and inchoate". In reference to the work of Petrona Morrison, she speculates "Perhaps there is also an urge to rescue and rehabilitate, to bestow the old, broken and obsolete, the mantle of dignity". These 'misdeeds' are committed "in the name of a normalized essential Caribbean psyche, which is visualized as black (. . .)".[10] According to Paul, the bourgeois nationalist aesthetic fell into the complementary categories of 'intuitive' and 'modernist'. While the former (loosely defined as un-academic works by self-taught artists) was relatively contained, modernism gradually came to dominate national canons in Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean. In Jamaica, she argues, this trajectory, which represents "a move that maximizes artistic autonomy by privileging the mode of representation over that which is represented, or presentation over representation",[11] describes the progression from Edna Manley to artists like David Boxer, Petrona Morrison and Hope Brooks. Uncritically adopted from a Western matrix, Paul maintains, this modernism demands the cultivation of a Bourdieusian 'pure gaze'—the increasingly self-referential aesthetic codes of the educated elite.

It is, however, not so much the obedience to a Western script, to which Paul objects (in another essay she cautions that, unless artists take heed, "contemporary Jamaican art may be seen to be out of sync with what is known as 'international contemporary art'"[12]) as it is the *remoteness* of this aesthetic from popular taste. Positioning herself inscrutably between populism and working-class solidarity, she thus concludes that "In relation to the 'habitus' of art legislated by the National Gallery the public whose money goes toward maintaining such an institution finds itself excluded by virtue of not possessing the 'pure' gaze required to decode the latest acquisitions of the national collection".[13] Through the course of Paul's extended argument, however, a number of statements come into conflict with one another and undermine the impression of a coherent position on the relationship between aesthetics, national culture and the state. There is, for instance, her criticism of the Manley government's investment in national cul-

ture, versus her approval of the post-revolutionary Cuban government's success in forging a thriving (and internationally acknowledged) national art scene.[14] The Jamaican problem, it thus appears, is not government intervention in culture per se, but its preference for a particular aesthetic direction, such as Edna Manley's modernism. Likewise, Paul's advocacy for artists with great commercial traction (like Ras Daniel Heartman and Judy Ann MacMillan), sits uncomfortably with her contention that "serious contemporary work" cannot be "exhibited within the walls of an institution such as the National Gallery that has been so much part of creating and maintaining an art market".[15] Her admiration for Heartman is, moreover, difficult to reconcile with her equal enthusiasm for conceptual artists like Nicholas Morris and Charles Campbell, whom she commends for refusing to be "co-opted into nation stories", but whose appreciation arguably requires more 'distinction' than most things previously mounted on the walls of Jamaica's National Gallery. Paul's concern is therefore not, after all, with 'nation stories', but with the notion that the National Gallery advances a story with a *middle-class* bias. What is at work in her writing is, I think, a precarious effort to combine a deconstructive anti-essentialism with a postmodernist populism, nodding at once towards the masses *and* the intelligentsia in the conviction that postmodernism can serve them both. Indeed—while Cozier never (to my knowledge) directly refers to his own position as postmodern, Paul explicitly seconds Stuart Hall's description of postmodernism as a broad-based anti-elitist momentum, which "built on and transformed (modernism) by taking it out into the world".[16]

Over the last two decades, Paul and Cozier have become two of the Anglophone Caribbean's most prominent critics[17], often involved in the same projects and cited in the same context (these include some of the major international exhibitions discussed in chapter 8). My discussion so far should, however, have reflected several significant and, one would think, far-reaching differences. One notes a discrepancy between Paul's contention that Caribbean modernism aims at autonomy versus Cozier's perception that (being in the service of nationalism) it isn't autonomous enough, between Cozier's aversion to art, which is 'representational' and Paul's aversion to art, which is not representational enough. Paul's disparaging remarks about "the artist as Romantic hero and heroic individualism"[18] implicitly sanctions the idea of collective aspirations, but clashes with Cozier's converse advocacy for an art reflective of individual experience—and whereas Paul is fiercely critical of Jamaican modernism, Cozier is dismissive of its nationalist application, but maintains modernism's original quest for critical independence. While both call for greater openness towards extra-regional currents and encourage skepticism towards the normalizing tendencies of nations

and national canons, Cozier's principal position can perhaps best be described as anti-*nationalist* and Paul's as anti-*elitist*, if not altogether anti-nationalist. While Cozier's rejection of identity narratives, needless to say, extends to those of national institutions, Paul's critique of the National Gallery of Jamaica therefore does not preclude the possibility of a more representative future institution.[19] These differences notwithstanding, Cozier and Paul have contributed hugely to the perception of the previous artistic generation as the instrument of a socially elitist Caribbean nationalism with an Afro-Creole bias.[20]

Such views resonate with the more analytical and far-reaching critiques of the nationalist movement and the postcolonial establishment offered by scholars like David Scott and Percy Hintzen.[21] The latter, for example, argues that "the nationalist discourse was not, however, a 'narrative of liberation'. Historically, postcolonial political economies have failed to reflect the ideological promise of self-determination, development, and de facto democratic participation. The promise of liberation has failed to materialize in postcolonial social constructions. Instead, colonialism has been replaced by even more egregious forms of domination, super-exploitation, and dependency". Hintzen, notably, does not merely imply a stalled or failed liberation movement, but one that was always (or immediately) corrupted: "Once in control of governmental institutions, state power was employed by these elites for the intensification, deepening and widening of their access to economic, social and cultural capital. Thus, the power of the state was employed for accumulation of wealth, income, status and prestige".[22] To Hintzen, Creole nationalism was, moreover, a "quest to be fully European", and its notions of status and prestige rested on the embrace of "European institutional and cultural forms".[23] He further argues, that the supposedly anti-racist elevation of the racially 'hybrid' (i.e., mixed or Creolized) to *norm*, served to dissociate Creole society from (undiluted) blackness, and effectively reestablished a social hierarchy based on race.[24] With the emphasis on the second, rather than the first syllable, 'Afro-Creole' thus becomes a euphemism for Eurocentricity.[25]

Resonating with Hintzen's contention, that "The conflation of intellectualism and political power is very much part of the postcolonial reality of the West Indies",[26] Cozier and Paul thus suggest a high degree of *artistic* complicity with the Afro-Creole political and economic establishment. It is in response to that artistic legacy, that they have championed the 'new contemporaries' (those who, according to Paul—and notwithstanding her previous reservations towards 'difficult' art—"in more recent times, have been experimenting with the new media of installation, site-specific work, performance and video") as inherently more progressive than their predecessors.[27] In chapters to come, I examine the alter-

natives with which this avant-garde has countered the nationalist endeavor, but presently I want to cast a glance at what was superseded. While the portrayal of the preceding moment as 'nationalist' in many cases is accurate, it included a wide range of expressions and positions, and, first of all, I take exception to the default and undifferentiated perception of its unanimous compliance with a nationalist agenda, a Western matrix and the interests of local elites. Undermining the notion of an unbridled Afro-Creole nationalism, Claudia Hucke, for example, observes that the artists of the Contemporary Jamaican Artists Association (especially Karl Parboosingh, Eugene Hyde and Barrington Watson) "were adamant that they would not place restrictions on themselves and resisted the demands to produce a nationalist, 'authentic' Jamaican art. Instead they drew on foreign influences and personal experiences while they were abroad. They made themselves part of the international art world, and in this respect, they provided an alternative to the politically driven, Afrocentric folk-art that was being promoted in Jamaica".[28] I will substantiate my own claim that the broader moment, which I will provisionally refer to as 'Creole modernism', was more diverse than Cozier and Paul allow (that the former generation's outlook indeed amounts to more than a "fairly neat package" as Cozier suggests) with a brief look at three specific works, which occupy quite different positions vis-à-vis the 'national project'. What such works do have in common, however, is the effort to find ways of taking ownership of both modernity and modernism, and to project a relative (but by no means total) degree of cultural autonomy. But first some general observations.

A Tentative Outline of Creole Modernism

If the academic critique of Caribbean nationalism—and modernism as its primary aesthetic articulation—to a large extent has been centered on cultural theory and literature, it is not only because the anti-colonial movement to a far greater extent was shaped by writers than by visual artists, but perhaps also because expressions of resistance and subversion are more recognizable as such within the operative field of a national language, than in the 'universal' language of visual art. It was not only through thematic, but also through linguistic, and therefore *structural,* measures that Aimé Césaire could 'hi-jack' literary surrealism (the pinnacle of European high modernism) and, by redirecting its focus from the individual to the collective subconscious, convert it into a catalyst for historical restitution and healing.[29] Kamau Brathwaite likewise used modernist techniques to break down the traditional iambic pentameter of English poetry[30], and Wilson Harris arguably realized a modernist potential unknown to (Western) modernism by using

fragmentation, not to represent the 'modern self', but what Fanon called 'the existential deviation' or the double consciousness imposed on the colonial subject.[31] It is, in other words, widely agreed, that Caribbean writers were successful in appropriating Western modernism and turning it into something other and more complex than it originally was, but such gestures were often contingent on the clearly regularized syntax, grammar and vocabulary of standard English, Spanish or French, or on the cumulative structure of literature itself. But how, we may ask, would the visual artist express Cesaire's 'I Who Krakatoa' or emulate the spatio-temporal ebb and flow evoked by the sounds and images of Brathwaite's poetry? Unlike his literary counterpart, the (Afro-) Caribbean painter cannot invoke deep ancestral traditions. The visual artwork does not have an official grammar or the power to create and theorize itself in one and the same gesture, nor is its first 'reading' a temporal or wholly intellectual process. Whereas the literary product immediately establishes its linguistic and/or national context, a visual work may cross language-borders and, through the use of color and form, reach directly for emotive impact. Since the inherent possibilities of the visual artwork therefore are particular and unlike those of other disciplines, it is evident that visual artists had to develop their own strategies of subversion and anti-colonial resistance.

A number of possible directions thus presented themselves to those who wished to participate in the broader project of cultural decolonization: one option was the cultivation of an 'indigenism', which rejects modernism, but may or may not reject *modernity*. This direction was taken up by artists like John Dunkley, Amos Ferguson, Canute Caliste, Everald Brown, Francis Griffith, Mallica 'Kapo' Reynolds and Philip Moore. Another option would be a new naturalism (or, alternatively, a new social realism), which builds on the core values (but not the surrealist aesthetic) of négritude. This approach would subvert the nostalgic, folkloric or patronizing subtext of colonial representation in favor of a dignified and sympathetic portrayal of Caribbean people (thus underscoring their agency and right to self-representation), but was keen not to alienate the viewer. Artists like Karl Broodhagen, Barrington Watson (albeit with excursions into modernism) and the young Boscoe Holder took this avenue. Third, artists could embrace a purely abstract modernism, which renounces representation altogether in order to explore the freedom and formal, cognitive or metaphysical possibilities of the painterly medium itself. Such abstraction clearly breaks away from local and colonial, but not from Western traditions. This direction has had relatively few exponents in the Anglophone Caribbean, but includes Hope Brooks, Kendal Hanna, Bendel Hydes and Kenwyn Crichlow. Most important for the present discussion, artists could also develop a narrative, semi-abstract modernism. Adopting (and

widening) the term proposed by Natalie Melas in reference to Wilfredo Lam,[32] I will refer to this direction as a 'Creole modernism',[33] which at once turns its back on the colonial tradition and on the formalism and individualist ethos of Western modernism. It notably *also* positions itself in opposition to the proto-postmodern maneuvers of the pop art, which was in vogue in the 1950s and 1960s, when the Caribbean Independence-movement peaked and Creole modernism flourished. As Melas argues, Creole modernism was an effort to *re-territorialize* modernism, thereby forcing it to own up to its universalist promise. I will expound a bit further on its implications in the following paragraphs.

Coinciding with rapid industrialization, urbanization and major advances in psychology, physics and philosophy (i.e., the work of Freud, Einstein, Bergson and Nietzsche), Western modernism is generally understood as the aesthetic response to the condition of 'modernity'.[34] Towards the end of the nineteenth century, vastly expanded insights into the human mind, the relationship between time and space, and, above all, the ubiquitous impression (induced by trains, automobiles, high-rise buildings and moving pictures) of perpetual movement and changing perspectives, had undermined faith in naturalism's ability to fully represent reality.[35] In the visual arts, modernism is therefore associated with the removal of the central perspective, with an emotive or rhetorical distortion of form, color and space, and, above all, with a heightened material and formal self-consciousness, which sometimes led to complete abstraction, or a continued search for the boundaries (or essence) of art itself. Both advocates and critics of modernism have, however, tended to simplify its legacy and downplay its often self-contradictory character. According to Huyssen "Adorno's modernism theory relies on certain strategies of exclusion, which relegate realism, naturalism, reportage literature and political art to an inferior realm".[36] To stimulate its own image of rebelliousness, postmodernism thus promoted a simplistic perception of modernism as an ascetic and formalist opposition to mass culture. Adorno's idea that art, in its relative autonomy from the praxis of life, offered a unique critical vantage point, furthermore propagated the widespread perception of modernism as embodying a heroic, but permanently frustrated social utopianism. However, as culture in the post-war years once again became subject to commodification and institutionalization, the credibility of this (somewhat imposed) image gradually gave way to the converse perception of modernism as dogmatic, hypocritical and remote, and of postmodernism as its open, pragmatic, egalitarian and liberating opposite.

Meanwhile, when artists of the Anglophone Caribbean first embraced modernism (as early as the 1920s and 1930s in Jamaica, but elsewhere generally not

until the 1950s and 1960s), it was hardly upon critical examination of its Euro-American (or even its Latin-American) trajectory,[37] but because its potential was perceived to be universal. Caribbean visual artists therefore devised particular and local strategies to make themselves at home in modernity and modernism alike—according to Hintzen "the power of the ideology of development, embedded in nationalist discourse, was its transformative guarantee of modernity. Implied in the latter was the notion of racial equality. To be 'modern' was to be 'equal'".[38] To start this process, however, Caribbean artists were faced with the initial challenge of educating and cultivating local audiences, and this, it was understood, could only be done by telling Caribbean stories in a language that announced itself as 'new', but did not leave the viewer behind. Applying a sweepingly inclusive definition, 'Creole modernism' was therefore practiced by a wide array of Caribbean artists. Some of these (for example Ralph Campbell, Whitney Miller and Sybil Atteck) merely simplified lines and intensified colors, while others went for more pronounced form-experiments (Eugene Hyde, Gloria Escoffery, Hartley Alleyne, Joyce Daniel, Edmund Gill, Carlisle Chang, Leroy Clarke etc.). What all these artists had in common, however, was a desire to play their part in ushering the region out of the past through the methods of renewal available to their discipline.[39] Such works are not always thematically focused on 'modernity', and one may look in vain for obviously radical tendencies, but it is important to bear the promise and fragility of the moment in mind, and also the extremely conservative traditions that preceded these gestures. What needs to be acknowledged is the explosion of efforts towards self-discovery on the part of people, who had historically been subjected to stereotypical and pejorative representations, and who were now pushing for independence and self-government.[40]

One exponent of an emerging, if still quite timid, Creole modernism was the Jamaican artist Albert Huie, who was associated with Edna Manley's 'Institute Group' in the 1940s. With its discrete stylization and didactic composition, his well-known *Crop Time* (1955), betokens a growing sense of aesthetic and ultimately also social possibilities (plate 2). As observed by Walmsley and Greaves[41], the painting stands in remarkable contrast to the colonial plantation-scene (by artists like James Hakewill, Joseph B. Kidd and Isaac M. Belisario), in which slaves and field-workers are discretely and organically integrated into the landscape. Emphatically deviating from such conventions, Huie transforms fore-, middle- and background into distinctive regions. The plantation is no longer presented as an idyllic country-estate, but as a factory where cranes, chimneystacks, bundles of sugarcane in mid-air, and puffs of smoke convey an impression of industrial activity. But it is clearly towards the workers that Huie wants to direct the viewer's

attention. Pulled right into the foreground and quite demonstratively separated from the factory by the cane-fields, the laborers are engaged in a variety of collaborative efforts—slashing, raking and carrying off the cane-stalks. Altogether, they form a large and coherent entity, visually set apart from both cane-field and factory. The painting thus suggests a quintessentially *modern* economy, where workers, product and factory are separate entities, and its compositional 'divisions' are social as well. This visual dynamic furthermore attains a temporal dimension through the two ox-carts' opposing directions (one heading towards the factory, the other towards the viewer), which underscores, and actively *stretches*, the distance between the plantation/past and a people-centered foreground/future. Huie thus integrates his subject matter and compositional devices to visualize the collective determination, agency and collaboration, which were called for, if Jamaica were to transform itself into a modern state.

Although the modernism of Edna Manley and her circle was directly tied to the nationalist movement, it is not always easy to determine whether artists of this generation primarily were preoccupied with nationalism and politics, or with modernism and art itself. What they responded to was, undoubtedly, the perceived connection between modernism and 'progress', here less understood as the relentless pursuit of novelty than simply as an abstract notion of agency made visible through the rejection of the past and its traditions. Modernism thus represented an act of dismissal, which a naturalistic approach, no matter what degree of dignity it conferred on its subjects, could not match. The departure from a strict naturalism, moreover, allowed for the representation of a complexity, which is at once inherently Caribbean and inherently modern: one could now combine references to Africa, India, Europe and the Caribbean, to the real and the imagined, to the past, present and future, all at once. To many artists, modernism in its broadest sense therefore represented exactly the un-dogmatic and open-ended domain, which postmodernism came to represent for later generations.

Of course the adoption of a modernist technique in itself constitutes neither 'nationalism', nor anti-colonialism, but the simultaneous and unmistakably enthusiastic investment in modernist techniques and collectively relevant, local subject matter arguably does. Turning their backs on individualism and purely formalist pursuits in favor of community and narrative, many Caribbean artists (from the 1920s to the 1990s) have thus dipped into the pool of modernist vocabularies and applied them to social commentary (Osmond Watson, Gloria Escoffery), national allegory (Edna Manley, Hartley Alleyne), landscape renditions (Albert Huie, James Boodhoo), documentation of cultural practices (David Pottinger, Jackson Burnside), metaphysically inflected abstraction (Leroy Clarke, Ronald

Moody) and political commentary or satire (Eugene Hyde, Stanley Greaves). As Veerle Poupeye puts it "Artists sampled freely from post-impressionism, symbolism, expressionism, cubism, art deco and, later, surrealism, but generally ignored the radical formalist and conceptual explorations of early modernism (. . .) modernism was thus not an end in itself, but a vehicle for indigenous content".[42] The modernism(s) developed by these artists thus diverged from the canonized Western matrix by stressing communicative over formal qualities, by adopting a direct and mostly affirmative rapport with the 'life-world' and by maintaining a general commitment to collective, rather than individual themes. Herein lies a significant difference, which I think Annie Paul fails to recognize, from a modernism corresponding with Adorno's 'downcast eyes' and Bourdieu's 'pure gaze'. It is, in other words, not through formal pursuits alone, but through the combination of form experiment and certain thematic inflections, that Caribbean artists posit a distinctive modernism—as well as a distinctive Caribbean identity—that becomes both nationalist and (in respect of Western traditions) oppositional, or indeed, to cite Hucke again, *both nationalist and internationalist.* I wish to offer a token suggestion of the variations in degree and articulation of this 'nationalism' through three specific examples.

More than a Fairly Neat Package

The Barbadian artist Hartley Alleyne's painting *Untitled (The Eleven Plus)* (plate 3) refers to an important educational milestone, but also captures the gist of the national motto 'Pride and Industry'. In blue, black and gold (the colors of the Barbadian flag), Alleyne depicts children in a classroom in a manner that closely resembles workers in a factory. The loosely sketched blackboards in the background thus resemble large machines, and, bent over their books and desks, the silently concentrated figures are themselves fitted together like the interlocking parts of a big engine. The 'engine' may be regarded as a metaphor for modernity itself, the school/factory as the newly independent Barbadian nation, and the pupils/workers its first postcolonial generation. The semi-abstract approach (i.e., the distortion of form and space, and the effacement of individual features) is thus Alleyne's way of reaching for and domesticating a modernity, which until recently had belonged to other regions of the world (indeed, the mechanization of the work-process could be seen to hold particular promise in a region marred by the memory of slavery and servitude). The containment of the 'machinery' in the background, and the depiction of the 'class' as a unity of individuals, which fills the central space with collaborative activity, creates an impression of harmony,

effort and human agency. Cutting across the occasional description of machines as aggressive, potent, 'destroyer-creators' in Western modernism, the piece can be said to embody a celebratory and optimistic third world nationalism. It does not, however, require a high degree of 'distinction' to register as a commentary on Barbados as a young aspiring nation, and Alleyne's painting does not sustain the allegation of modernism as inherently elitist.

The title of Leroy Clarke's painting *Towards the Apotheosis of El Tucuche* from 1989 (plate 4) refers to a Trinidadian mountain. As a metaphor for the artist himself, however, the mountain, and its apotheosis, represents Clarke's self-realization and spiritual restitution, and the painting, as well as Clarke's oeuvre in general, is inflected with a black diasporic nationalism. Deeply influenced by his readings of Fanon, which "drove home to me that I was a fragment of myself",[43] Clarke's works gesture towards the entire legacy of Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean culture and history—from music and literature to religion, carnival and local mythology. His complex modernist language, with its rhythmic repetitions and transformations of shapes and themes, its multiple layers and symbols, its sometimes shard-like, sometimes organic forms, its combination of strong linearity with drips and marks is, in the words of Clinton Hutton, "the gathering and choreographing of fragments to create a redemptive universe, or redemptive whole".[44]

More than a critique of European culture, the oeuvre is a critique of modernity itself, for, as Jeremy Taylor observes, Clarke sees his work as a "deliberate evocation of untainted African energy and spirituality" (which is) "erased from modern consciousness". His affirmation of black identity is therefore the positive aspect of his attack on "the enemies of humanity, particularly African humanity".[45] Occupying a much more radical position than that of Alleyne, Clarke thus seeks to overturn the entire epistemological tradition, which has informed Western modernity. It is far from certain, however, that the ordinary (or even the educated) viewer will realize the breath and scope of Clarke's references and intent, and when critics like Cozier and Paul associate Caribbean modernism with an Afrocentric nationalism, or a certain educated elitism, the work of Leroy Clarke arguably fits the bill. Wedded to an anti-imperialist agenda, Clarke's critical engagement (like that of Hartley Alleyne) does, however, have a global, rather than a purely local aim.

Yet another relationship between modernism and nationalism is evident in Stanley Greaves' *The Annunciation* from 1993 (plate 5). The work belongs to the *There Is a Meeting Here Tonight* series, which consists of four bleak trilogies commenting on Caribbean politics. Greaves (who is Guyanese, but lived in Barbados from 1987 to 2006), has described his oeuvre as an effort to develop a Caribbean

metaphysic. What plays out in this dismal series is, nevertheless, a confrontation between the electorate and a corrupt political establishment. Greaves' magical, or clairvoyant, realism envisions the redemption of the people (embodied by the female cane-cutter and further referenced by the obeah-implements in the foreground), who will rise and 'cart away' the sly and double-talking politician represented, at once, by the man in the barrel and the dog around the corner. His duplicity is not only intimated by the two microphones (i.e., two divergent messages, each with its own shadow or hidden agenda), but also by the telling hints at shifting foreign allegiances and a dubious electoral process (the X simultaneously referencing the individual vote and its erasure). In his notes for the series, Greaves wrote: "It is a savage irony, that the institution of politics, which should be the instrument of protection of the people (. . .) and contain the potential for significant action, should be the instrument of the destruction of the same values".[46] Alongside his wry commentary on the region's theatre of politics, Greaves thus appropriates surrealism and (subverting its Western antecedents) gives it a collective and political scope. Unlike those of Alleyne and Clarke, moreover, Greaves' work itself has a dual purpose—at the same time a fierce and overt critique of the region's political scene, and, more subtly, a subversion of an individualistic Western modernism.

I have tried to show that the movement here labeled 'Creole modernism' contains a wide spectrum of aesthetic methods and political commitments. What holds true for a majority of artists working in this vein is, however, that they coupled their appropriation of modernist elements, which would register as new and meaningful in a Caribbean context, with a strategy of partial subversion. Their works were often celebratory and affirmative, but occasionally also critical of the postcolonial nation and the current world order, and some of them indeed exemplify the transition from a 'national' to a 'social' consciousness, which Fanon saw as an indispensable aspect of the nation-building project. The works I have discussed do not invalidate the allegation of an inherent Afrocentricity, but this tendency is no more typical of Creole *modernism* than of most other aesthetic directions (save the purely abstract or conceptual) embraced by Caribbean artists, including the popular realism of Ras Daniel Heartman occasionally championed by Annie Paul. It is moreover debatable, whether the inflection of the Afro-Caribbean image should *always* be interpreted as normalizing and prescriptive. It could merely indicate a hesitation to speak about other (Indian, Chinese, white, etc.) identities.

If it is more difficult to redress the contention that these artists' work is (or has become) 'elitist', it is mainly because the meaning of that term remains curiously

unclear in this context. While works in the vein of Creole modernism sometimes reflect a middle-class experience, many artists displayed a pronounced and explicit sympathy for working people and the poor, which manifested itself in both subject matter and approach (many artists are financially insecure themselves). Neither Alleyne, nor Greaves, can be accused of using an elitist language, nor does an artist like Greaves promote a smugly normative Afro-Creole identity (in his work, both working-class persons and members of the political elite appear in every shade of 'black' and 'brown'). The question remains whether it can be held against artists, that those who have *acquired* their works may well be the bourgeois anti-colonial nationalists so loathed by Fanon? The related suggestion, that the institutions, which also collect and display such works, are *inherently* elitist, raises far-reaching questions (some of which will be further pursued in chapters to come) about the prospect of visual art meeting an audience at all without being 'contaminated' by the system. If such reservations are upheld, we must, however, insist, that they also be applied to the works of more contemporary artists, and to those other disciplines (especially music and film) that are sometimes held up as exemplary in their ability to reach and engage the general public. Indeed, it is one of my arguments, that the monetary or intellectual commodification of a previous generation's art objects is easily matched by the current avant-garde's unacknowledged political complicities.

Whereas the majority of Creole modernists mentioned over the preceding pages now incontrovertibly belong to an older generation, one of the more alarming aspects of the rhetoric employed by the 'next generation' is the implicit (and effective) relegation of artists, who remain committed to the values and methods associated with modernism and anti-colonial nationalism to a position of contemporary irrelevance.[47] Among the latter are several (by now middle-aged) Barbadian artists I have discussed in various essays and catalogue texts.[48] Like Greaves (and indeed Cozier), artists such as Ras Ishi Butcher, Winston Kellman, Ras Akyem Ramsay and Nick Whittle have been critical of the nation-building project. Working primarily in painting and mixed media, such artists have highlighted the postcolonial reproduction of Western values as well as social and racial conflicts in contemporary Caribbean society. But they have nevertheless remained loyal to a Pan-Caribbean agenda and the perception of nation building as an ongoing and necessary process. Their work is neither celebratory like that of many Creole modernists; detached, ironic or sensationalist like contemporary Western postmodernism; nor is it cosmopolitanist, activist, or 'culturalist' like the Caribbean postmodernism I will endeavour to portray. When these artists mainly operate within traditional media, it is, I suspect, because they need an established

canon and history to work *against*. Such artists, in other words, reach for a degree of both critical *and* cultural autonomy.

One work in this vein is the Barbadian artist Ras Akyem Ramsay's painting *Migration* (1996) (plate 6). In a reduced red, blue, brown and white palette, Ramsay takes us to the heart of the urban (but geographically unspecific) ghetto—a shadowy world of ominous figures, rickety houses, boat-people, harpoons, fragmented limbs, sculls, bones and a plethora of more inscrutable symbols and objects, including the bird in flight, which is Ramsay's metaphor for the departing soul. Dominating the left picture plane, a large horned figure portentously holds up a half-strangulated, cold-sweating 'ankh-like' figure, while a naked, wincing and almost skeletal cyclist desperately pedals away, struggling to control the bicycle and barely averting the jagged object in his path. Suspended in mid-air, just above the saddle, is Ramsay's signature 'yam-head'—the artist/protagonist's alter ego/guardian spirit and a recurring symbol for 'the sufferer' elevated to universal principle.

In this chaotic urban jungle, past and present is presented as a continuum of struggles and misery. The diminutive boat on the left side of the canvas is a reference to the river Styx, to the mythological as well as the real 'underworld', but also to the Middle Passage and modern boat-refugees (*Migration* was painted in the wake of the Cuban refugee crisis). In this environment, it is impossible to tell friend from enemy, everything is for sale, no-one is safe and real choice an illusion, as suggested by the 'this way'-arrow pointing in both directions, near the upper edge of the canvas. Thus depicting the ghetto-dweller as a modern and emasculated Sisyphus-figure, the painting is about the wretched of the earth, those continually subjected to miserable poverty and always caught up in one predicament or the other. Ramsay's timeless figure embodies a humanity shaped by a social Darwinism that favors the ruthless and the crafty—indeed the ill-tempered, forward-moving bicycle can be seen as a metaphor for capitalism itself.

Like Alleyne, Clarke and Greaves, Ramsay thus appropriates a modernist technique to suit his needs—here, a darkly humorous modernity-critique infused with historical reflection and an anti-imperialist agenda that negates the expressionistic individualism of its Western counterpart. While his work may be less hopeful than that of his Creole modernist predecessors, and while it does not display any obviously 'nationalist' features (there are no direct references to Caribbean locations, and the figure is unmistakably destitute, rather than unmistakably black), its unambiguous assessment of the relationship between modernity, capitalism, imperialism and continued poverty, resonates with the sort of consciousness that suffused anti-colonial nationalisms across the world.[49] One of my contentions in

this book is that works like Ramsay's *Migration* (despite the obvious currency of its title), which undertake and 'own' a comprehensive social and historical analysis, and does so in a traditional medium like painting, are exceedingly rare in contemporary Caribbean art and its international representation.

Summary of Chapter 1

Over the preceding pages, I have argued that Creole modernists explored different stylistic and conceptual avenues in response to the modernity that dawned with Caribbean independence, and what they knew of 'Western' modernism (and did so in ways that could be hopeful, celebratory or critical, or all at once). The reduction of these expressions to a coherently elitist, Euro-derivative and Afro-Creole reflection of middle-class values, and the perception of traditional media as the 'toddlers' blanket' of which such artists refused to let go, is, however related to the more general tendency, in postcolonial theory, to treat anti-colonial nationalism as a form of crypto-fascism. What this position completely ignores is, as Peter Hallward puts it, that "the nationalism that encourages imperialist aggression has nothing in common with the nationalism that resists it".[50]

It is, however, impossible to refute Cozier's contention that Caribbean nationalists were invested in "great narratives" and the "harmonious fusing of images into narrative form", and Annie Paul is not wrong, when she observes that Caribbean modernists and policy-makers regarded their activity as an aspect of decolonization: "It was the belief of the Drumblair movement headed by Edna Manley and her husband, Norman, that colonialism was to be combated with a multifaceted but essentially middle-class national modern, which would be written, painted, sculpted, sung and danced into existence. The proto-national space was to be studded with images of the newly independent populace. The Jamaican people had to be able to see themselves in the handiwork of their artists. This was not an uncommon sentiment to be found among the ruling elites of many a post-colonial country".[51] Meanwhile, by engaging in self-representation, by arguing against imperialism at many different levels—for instance by adopting *and* subverting the language of modernism, practitioners of this generation believed, as Cozier does about his own, that they were 'creating culture'.[52] To my mind, assessments in the vein of those by Cozier and Paul therefore justify Tamara Sivanandan's observation that postcolonialism often "fails to take on board that anti-colonial nationalists were able to adapt the received or imposed nationalist ideology for their own needs".[53] While I certainly concede that Caribbean modernism occasionally became trite, safe, self-sufficient and uncritical, I submit that

the critics who have denounced a whole generation of anti-colonial artists as being complicit with an increasingly conservative establishment, themselves are guilty of the simplifications which, as Huyssen pointed out, enabled Western postmodernism to promote itself as modernism's radical 'other'. Meanwhile, the critique of Creole modernism paved the way for a new aesthetic, which, to paraphrase Cozier (p. 22), often has made a point of being understood as "the enemy of the nationalist". In the following chapter, I examine the 'postmodern'—and implicitly post-nationalist—alternatives advanced by Paul, Cozier and other influential critics more closely.

The Next Generation

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I N CHAPTER 1, IT was noted that the 1990s avant-garde proclaimed itself 'the next generation', but when I refer to the aesthetic strategies developed by this avant-garde as a Caribbean postmodernism, it is not a label its artists and advocates have claimed for themselves (at least not unequivocally). The 'post' does, however, seem justified, not only by proponents' occasional rehearsal of various postmodernist slogans, but also by *their* insistence on a definitive rupture.[1] It is, I contend, justifiable to treat it as a 'movement', for, notwithstanding a number of (even quite fundamental) internal differences, the general departure from the methods and ethos of the preceding moment inspired a sense of common purpose: though features like hybridity, process and interactivity became more important over time, the embrace of new media was initially generational succession made visible!

As already established, the critique of Creole modernism, which reached its climax towards the end of the 1990s, was structured around accusations of middle-class elitism, of uncritical nationalism with an Afro-Creole bias, of concessions to Western tradition (but also of aesthetic xenophobia), and of alienating the general population, if not, on the contrary, pandering to the public with 'icons of anti-imperialism'. More squarely put, the Creole modernists were at once accused of being 'too local' in the global scheme of things, and not 'local' enough in the local scheme of things. While writers like Annie Paul and Christopher Cozier might have been the most vocal exponents of such sentiments, the new hegemony that gradually evolved in and around the visual arts, reflected the growing impact of postcolonial and diaspora theory (often filtered through the *Small Axe* journal) on practically every aspect of Caribbean thought and cultural practice.

The present chapter seeks to portray the aesthetic spectrum that emerged with the transition from an anti-colonial to a postcolonial purview and to identify the core elements (and internal disparities) of a Caribbean postmodernism. This movement, it is argued, has taken three primary, but often intersecting directions,

which will be referenced respectively, as 'conceptualist', 'performative and par-
ticipatory' and 'culturalist'. Readers should nevertheless be reminded that the
theoretical currents, which contextualize and feed into the region's visual arts
discourse, do not always inform specific practices in a straightforward manner:
artistic choices and methods are also reflective of time, place, educational tra-
jectories, personal dispositions and community dynamics. While my discussion
turns on different positions vis-a-vis competing demands for critical and cultural
autonomy—and ultimately on the different strategies contemporary Caribbean
artists adopt to find their place in the world—I do, moreover, agree with both
James and Wainwright (see p. 15) that visual art is short-changed when simply
taken in evidence of discursive positions, including the ones taken up here. What
is needed in Caribbean visual arts commentary is, I think, more critical atten-
tion to the relationship between form and *intent*, but this can only come about
through a mapping process that contextualizes the evolution of different modes
of expression.

Conceptual Art as Anti-Nationalism

Since the anti-colonial generation had been accused of harboring an Afro-Creole
bias and a middleclass elitism, its successor might well have made a point of avoid-
ing similar associations. While the 'conceptualist' direction, with its ceaseless at-
tention to 'difference', indeed strives to expose various forms of (racial, ethnic,
gender-based, etc.) prejudice, it has nevertheless engendered an elitism of its
own, if only in the sense that viewers may need some additional references to
understand its aesthetic maneuvers. Generally speaking, however, it represents a
prioritization of *critical* over *cultural* autonomy. While the following discussion
to a large extent revolves around the example of Christopher Cozier, what is en-
deavored is less a portrayal of Cozier as artist, than of the critical position, which
has buttressed his ascendance and opened doors for other experimental artists
struggling to find acceptance in a culturally conservative region.

    When installation and conceptual art emerged internationally in the late
modernist period, its principal aim was, according to Victor Burgin, to challenge
the notion of the art object as "the human essence made form, civilization made
substance. Conceptual art had a special relationship to this object: it wanted to
explode it".[2] In the intervening years, it has become an umbrella term for a vast
array of non-narrative and process-oriented expressions, of which many involve
physical interaction with the viewer, while others retain the character of 'object'.
In Jamaica, pioneers of installation and conceptual art include David Boxer, Al-

bert Chong, Nari Ward, Nicholas Morris and Charles Campbell; in Barbados, Russell Hatcher, Annalee Davis, Joscelyn Gardner and Walter Bailey; in the Bahamas, Janine Antoni, John Beadle, Blue Curry and Heino Schmid; and in Trinidad, Francisco Cabral, Christopher Cozier, Steve Ouditt and Nicole Awai.[3] Since many of these artists' work maintain some degree of symbolism or narrative, their conceptualism is not always 'pure', but the general trend has been towards a less *explicitly* narrative approach. Currently, a majority of Caribbean works, which reach the international exhibition circuit (including many of those I will categorize as performative, participatory and culturalist), can be characterized as conceptualist in the widest possible sense.

When new media, as Jose Manuel Noceda observes,[4] became the preferred instrument of Caribbean cutting-edge art in the 1990s, it was perhaps not so much (as might have been the case in the metropole) an attempt to undermine aggressive market-forces,[5] as the adoption of an intrinsically modernist logic, according to which it is the task of an avant-garde to negate the aesthetic preferences of the previous generation. Though these agendas can be difficult to separate, the implied progressiveness of new media and installation was therefore as connected to a cosmopolitan impetus as to an anti-capitalist one. From the mid-1990s, the spotlight thus fell on Caribbean artists, who were working with installation, performance, mixed media, drawing, photography, video and sound-installations. While there is no *necessary* connection between new media and an anti-nationalist, deconstructive agenda, they were generally thought to be less conservative and 'old world' than painting and sculpture, and due to their often transient, exploratory or participatory character, more in tune with the poststructuralist rejection of permanence, certainty and universal truth-claims. By reverse association, traditional media came to be regarded as monolithic, purist and tied to obsolete notions of authenticity and ownership. In their curatorial introduction to the 2004-exhibition *Curator's Eye 1* at the National Gallery of Jamaica, which set out to redress the prevalent perception of installation-art as 'un-Caribbean'[6], Lowery Stokes Sims and Petrina Dacres, interestingly, confer a certain Caribbean *primacy* on the installation by observing that ordinary life in this region already is replete with them (from painted push-carts to the colorful 'tap tap busses' of Haiti), and that installation therefore returns Caribbean art to a lesser degree of separation from life than the 'precious object'.[7]

The new aesthetic was, however, not only associated with new media, but also perceptibly *critical*, especially of politically commodifiable identity and redemption narratives. This is reflected in strategy of perpetual departures and deferred arrivals, which assimilates the poststructuralist values of skepticism, ambiguity,

difference, liminality and irony. Interviewed by Claire Tancons, Cozier says: "I think that all art that is serious carries a critical, sometimes a curatorial DNA. My retreat to drawing or my return to the drawing board has been an investigation of narrative and the time-based investigation of a line moving between two points as well as the way in which the viewer has to become active in making sense of things encountered, the way in which the viewer produces the experience and, by extension, the work itself. Also, for me, works on paper imply a speculative or investigative feeling, which is like thought, ephemeral and fleeting (...)".[8]

Meanwhile, if Cozier has seemed ambivalent about both modernism and postmodernism, it may reflect the difficulty of identifying a postcolonial position, which transcends them both at once. Notwithstanding his recitation of the postmodernist mantra, that art should remain independent of 'great themes', there is, for example, an apparent return to the ethos of high modernism with the pursuit of critical autonomy and the suggestion that artists may now wish to "dig deeper into their own iconography, into their own experiential domain"[9]—though the subjective experience is now a warrant against universalism, rather than its embodiment.

Cozier's assertion that "Canvas is like millennium talk, it's like the big statement (...). The empty canvas is a territory of the Western canon, or the nationalist one. Painting implies a kind of surety, a kind of purpose for posterity. Drawing, to me, is ephemeral and immediate. I want to talk about occupying the frame with my thoughts",[10] ironically suggests that the dismissal of the Western canon is as explicitly informed by an anti-*nationalist*, as by a specifically anti-*Western* position.[11] Rather than surrendering uncritically to a Western postmodernism, however, Wainwright suggests that Cozier has been an advocate of dialogues between "us and other southern locations"[12]. Yet, in response to demands for being recognizably 'Caribbean', Cozier's navigation of global relationships has become increasingly circumspect, and his declaration that "of course we are responding to our location culturally and historically, but to me there is no 'them' out there",[13] ultimately seems aligned with the faction of postcolonial criticism, for which a confrontational anti-imperialist discourse falls prey to a reifiable identity-politics. Though he is exceedingly averse towards categorization ("at home and abroad, there is a pressure account for oneself in a certain way . . . a pressure to be readable"[14]), I think it is fair to describe Cozier's default position as deconstructive and anti-essentialist. In place of the narratives of identity and nation building, which gave Creole modernism its anti-colonial inflection, he has advocated a more experimental and less overdetermined conceptual aesthetic that posits questions rather than answers.

To maximize interpretive openness, many Caribbean conceptualists have thus adopted the 'trickster-mode' known from Afro-Caribbean folklore (especially the Anancy stories, where the protagonist, according to Richard Burton, tends to be a "scrambler of systems, manipulator of masks, and transgressor of boundaries", if not necessarily "a figure of resistance or a leader of revolts"[15]), or embraced the more established deconstructive techniques of indirection, ambiguity and irony, to the effect that many works deliberately seem to operate in the register of 'plausible deniability'. According to Cozier "The work doesn't want to be *read* in certain ways. It wants to tell a story, but it doesn't want to tell *that* story" (original emphasis).[16] In the young Barbadian artist Versia Harris's work *Fantasy Land: Separation* (plate 7), for example, practically all interpretive options seem equally acceptable: the solitary female figure emerging out of the forest is confronted with an enemy; the figure has found (or been found by) her own 'tribe; the piece is about kinship and difference; the piece is about tradition and modernity; the piece is about gender, solitude, sexual identity or repressed desire (etc.). As every interpretation entails a risk and a loss, the piece speaks not only to the *impossibility* of hermeneutic certainty, but indeed also to its *undesirability*.

In a more strictly conceptual and 'post-narrative' vein, the Bahamian artist Blue Curry has dedicated much of his oeuvre to the dismantling of stereotypes and assumptions about the Caribbean. In order to expose the 'production' of the tourist-destination and "dissect the paradise myth and try to understand the allure of the Caribbean for the west",[17] one piece quite simply presents the viewer with a cement mixer swirling suntan lotion around and around. In a similarly sardonic mode, the installation *Like Taking Sand to the Beach* (plate 8) consisted of 1,927 pounds of authentic Bahamian beach-sand spread over a gallery-floor in Germany (in the meantime an explanatory sign covered the hole left by the missing sand: "This section of beach temporarily on loan for international exhibition. Apologies for any inconvenience."). Such works evidently 'feed' viewers what they apparently desire, but starve them of substance and, reciprocally, reduce *them* to their preconceived notions and expectations of the Caribbean. In leaving the viewer deprived of (rather than educated by) a counter-narrative, Curry notably adopts a deconstructive rather than a contrapuntal method. With no affirmative claims about its actual character, the region is, in other words, negatively defined and, as is characteristic of works in this vein, intentionally 'absent' in its own representation.

Cozier's own strategies are, however, more complex and characteristically ambiguous. In her preamble to a 2003-interview, Annie Paul describes his self-perception as outsider both at home and abroad: "Christopher Cozier is a prime example of (. . .) the alter *natives*—that is, artists who are not interested in fos-

tering a Caribbean aesthetic or promoting and supporting national agendas. The alter *natives* (...) who by virtue of differing race, class, gender, or sexual variables find themselves on the wrong side of nation stories (...) and suffer a double illegitimacy when they go abroad because their artistic practice is seen as elevated above or irrelevant to the realities of third-world countries by metropolitan critics (...)". Paul nevertheless observes that the talent of such artists often is "recognized abroad before it is accepted at home", and that Cozier in that regard has something in common with "the unassimilable Jamaican 'rude bwai', the most famous of whom was Bob Marley."[18]

By his own account, Cozier left the United States (where he earned his MFA) in the late 1980s "to get away from how multiculturalism demanded that I become something already known, fixed, and prepackaged in order to be recognized"[19] only to discover that similar tendencies were at work in Trinidad. This triggered a decades-long preoccupation with the social dynamics of that postcolonial nation, punctuated by the (short-lived) 'black power' revolution of 1970, the oil-boom of the 1970s, the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s, and the (likewise short-lived) Jamat al Muslimeen coup of 1990.

The oeuvre in general can be described as a 'barometer' registering fluctuations in the national psyche and acutely attuned to its postcolonial contradictions, not least the conspicuous gap between the island-nation's brutal realities and conventional forms of aesthetic representation. Early works like *Wait Dorothy Wait* (1991) and the *Cultural Autopsy* series (1995) thus paraphrase those popular paintings that trade in Caribbean exotica or stereotypes, and confront them with the horrors they so blatantly deny (killings, police brutality, etc.). Other works, such as the *Conversation with Shirt Jac* performance (1991) and the *Blue Soap* installation (1994), adopt a more explicitly dialogic format. The latter integrates different voice-tracks and characters, including the extended arm of the disciplinary system (politician, policeman, teacher, priest) in the drawing of the 'Fuck-up-Man', thereby, as Maica Gugolati observes, evoking a complex social dynamic, as well as a Foucauldian sense of panoptic surveillance and diffuse oppression.[20] While the dialogue is spun around a wide range of topics (race, class, gender, power and postcoloniality), the notion of national consciousness as *inherently* oppressive begins to emerge with the perpetual recitation of Eric Williams's national watchwords on the eve of independence: "discipline, production and tolerance". Cozier's critique of nationalism arguably culminates in the installation *Attack of the Sandwichmen* (2004), where the rectilinear line-up of flag-carrying sandwiches portrays the 'nationalists' as the defenders of a sanitized modernity associated with a narrow range of pre-packaged identities. While the little squares may repre-

sent people, or a new-world housing development, the arrangement also has con-notations of military mobilization. In one version of the installation, moreover, the silhouette of a blackboard is projected onto a wall, hinting at the educational channels which serve to impart such a straitjacketed nationalism, and evoking an unsettling sense of ubiquitous supervision and control. Through a strategy of allusion and ambiguity, Caribbean nationalism is thus imbued with connotations of standardization, oppressive normativity, militancy and totalitarianism, which at the same time are diffused with the disarming humor of a 'sandwich army'.

Later works tend to be more process-oriented, at once more portentous and less specific in their assessment of the postcolonial nation. Consisting of hundreds of drawings (which can be displayed in innumerable combinations) the *Tropi-cal Night* series (plate 9), according to the artist, reflects on the "flow of oil and blood in this economy".[21] With their sense of dread and amputation, each of these vaguely surreal, but eerily powerful drawings registers as a fragment of a night-mare, where the semiotics of everyday life suddenly becomes ominous. What emerges, however, is less an analysis of the oil economy, than a pervasive sense of social oppression and elitism, punishment and coercive rewards, de-colonization, re-colonization and diaspora, and, above all, a zero-sum social dynamic, which, whatever combination the drawings are presented in, invariably descends into the same kind of purgatory. The ink-drawings (titled *Entanglements*) of frighteningly adaptable many-legged creatures, which Cozier has produced since 2015 as further meditations on the oil economy, are similarly suggestive of a contradictory and seemingly *untranscendable* socio-psychological dynamic.

With its bleak assessment of the postcolonial condition, the oeuvre in toto therefore justifies Andil Gosine's characterization of Cozier as an artist, who has "challenged nationalist agendas, characterizing them both as a continuation of colonial impulses and fraught with new dangers".[22] I will, however, not be the first to observe that, in view of his decidedly anti-nationalist rhetoric, the centrality of Trinidad to Cozier's work is surprising. Despite his characterization as some-one who sees "the nation as a punitive, manipulatory entity devoid of humanity or humor", someone "who is not interested in fostering a Caribbean aesthetic or promoting and supporting national agendas",[23] the oeuvre most of all comes across as a bittersweet and melancholic conversation with Trinidad as nation and idea, and as a concerted effort to diagnose the nation's ills—an endeavor that seems redundant unless intended as ameliorative. In a discussion of *Attack of the Sandwichmen*, Aaron Kamugisha indeed seeks to preempt the conclusion that Cozier's work should be linked to "an effective deconstruction of the Caribbean state".[24] While such interpretive dilemmas in themselves are characteristic, Rich-

ard Fung's use of the term "uncomfortable"—not to indicate Cozier's motivation, but his critical *position*,[25] indirectly acknowledges the political paralysis induced by the deconstructive stance: one can thus be uncomfortable with something, but directly *opposing* it would imply a loss of autonomy.

Generally speaking, the works in Cozier's personal portfolio (even when he employs "things co-opted from everyday life" (see note 7)) seem to insist on their critical autonomy by clearly identifying themselves as 'art' (in the Kantian tradition, by not being recognizable as anything *else*). Meanwhile, as his advisory assignments have expanded to the rest of the region and, not least, as he has become closely associated with Alice Yard, his curatorial umbrella has come to cover a wide range of works, many of which are more ambivalent about critical autonomy (such works will be discussed later in this chapter). Altogether, however, his record supports Craig Calhoun's observation that "'differences' work now more or less as 'identity' did before",[26] and Cozier's disposition does indeed seem to be governed by the great *postcolonialist* theme of skepticism towards nation-building and universal values. Nonetheless, my earlier observation, that it is difficult to pin him to a particular position,[27] testifies to the fuzzy boundaries and overlaps between an Adornian fear of political co-optation, and a Derridean/Bhabhaesque pursuit of anti-essentialism and hybridity.[28] A sense of postmodern affiliation may, however, be inferred from the artist's preference for "tactical invertions", which, as Grant Kester avers, privileges "dissensus over consensus, rupture and immediacy over continuity and duration (. . .)" and displays *extreme skepticism concerning organized political action* and a hyper-vigilance regarding the dangers of co-option and compromise" (my emphasis).[29] A statement by Roshini Kempadoo after a joint panel-appearance with Cozier is similarly suggestive of a politically conscious, but *uncommitted* stance: "To think and act autonomously, independent of political and cultural pressures that conform to an agenda of economics and current politics, and yet collectively sustain and develop new ways of thinking and acting is not easy and requires much effort".[30] Notwithstanding their often quasi-leftist rhetoric, the conceptualist position occupied by Cozier and his allies thus unquestionably belongs to the post-Marxist flank of Caribbean criticism for which the problem of discursive totalization displaces the incitement towards political allegiance.

Though easily the region's most influential champion of a conceptual, postnationalist aesthetic,[31] Cozier is by no means is a solitary agent. An essay by Rocio Aranda-Alvarado on artists Nicole Awai and Terry Boddie is, for example, similarly characterized by references to difference, de-territorialization and issues

of representation, as it explains how the two artists' "reductive aesthetic" serves to "extract the work of the Caribbean artist from the rhetoric of nationalism".[32] Nicholas Laughlin's review of the 2012 Kentucky-exhibition *Into the Mix*, takes the further step of denouncing any preoccupation with artists' nationality as a premise for the *interpretation* of their work. We have, he argues, entered a new era, where artistic curiosity is "not bounded by (or bonded to) location" and "in that moment of first encounter, knowing where the artist came from, or how, seems less important than what he or she did here".[33] Troubling this attempt to de-couple artistic expression from particular geo-political locations is, however, the fact that the artists in question generally had *not* turned to a detached exploration of form or material, or to purely philosophical questions, which might render the question of origin less pressing. They were often reflecting on personal trajectories, routes and states of being in-between—thus turning Laughlin's prescription into a game of charades, where the Caribbean only can be invoked as a negative presence, the un-nameable 'thing', which, if pronounced, is bound to hold everyone prisoner.[34]

Echoing Laughlin, Nicole Smythe-Johnson's curatorial essay for the 2014 exhibition *Float* (in Washington, DC and Kingston) declares: "Float cannot be said to, and does not aspire to, represent the Caribbean region or any part thereof. Float is not about being from the Caribbean, it does not really seek to give an insight into Caribbean/Jamaican/Trinidadian culture, it does not respond to prevailing notions of those cultures. It is not for or against anything, it only shouts 'Present!' when its name is called". In rejecting standard expectations of Caribbean art, she suggests, the artists "exchange safety for freedom" and "these floating objects claim an agency—a subjecthood—through a rejection of any anchor or assigned meaning (…). These are not exotic (or oppressed, or resistant) objects from some other place and time. They are simply present (…)".[35] While the celebration of 'being' itself and of agency without purpose or direction may be an invitation to re-set our conceptual buttons, the idea of liberating Caribbean criticism and creative expression by simply erasing the imprint of its history, seems not only wishful, but it also eliminates the premise for a progressive agenda. The suggestion of freedom from previous binaries is, at any rate, undermined by the implicit reference to a location, where "prevailing notions" of the Caribbean are produced.

Indeed, by proposing Heino Schmid's inscrutable bottle-balancing act in the video-installation titled *Temporary Horizons* (2010) as a mockery of a phony art world (and qualifying its poignancy with the presumably pompous and affected international event for which it was produced), Laughlin himself precisely re-

minds us *why* the work's context of origin is important, if the work itself is not to
be mistaken for what it mocks:

> *Temporary Horizon* also discloses an inside joke. His bottle act was inspired
> by the antics of a street hustler he observed outside a popular watering-hole
> in Port of Spain. The rum-shop bottle-balancer makes clever use of an un-
> conventional skill to entertain a well-heeled crowd of drinkers and earn a
> few dollars. Schmid prods us to recognize that the art world is full of smart
> performers playing similar tricks. Knowing the context in which *Temporary
> Horizon* was first shown, at the 2010 Liverpool Biennial, sharpens the edge
> of the observation. Does the unceasing worldwide proliferation of biennials
> and art fairs—few countries are untouched—amount to a circuit of play-
> grounds for rich patrons and favored entertainers, smoke and mirrors, fast
> talk, and shell games?[36]

On the above mentioned (p. 46) occasion, Roshini Kempadoo introduced
Cozier as a 'cultural activist'[37], which was thought-provoking, since arts activism
often implies a departure from the critical autonomy Cozier generally tends to
assert. The following sub-section of chapter 2 turns to another manifestation of
the Caribbean postmodern, which is centered on performative, participatory and
indeed 'activist' works.

Activism, Performance, Participatory and Digital Art as Anti-Elitism

In 2004, co-editors Annie Paul and Krista Thompson opened a special visual arts
issue of *Small Axe* with an epigraphic reference to Okwui Enwezor's rhetorical
quip: "From what is art autonomous?", thus implying that art today is so entirely
co-opted by dominant social and economic forces, that we may as well stop pre-
tending otherwise.[38] After Enwezor's *Documenta 11*, it is furthermore pointed out,
"the staples of modernist art agendas —painting, sculpture, photography, instal-
lation, assemblage—that still dominate art locales in some parts of the Carib-
bean" have, on the international stage, been replaced with "media, such as video,
film, site-specific projects, and concept-based artwork". Contemporary artists
now produce "the kind of images and visual information that would challenge
the very operating systems of global power brokers such as the United States and
Britain" (by focusing on) "processes of transitional justice, truth and reconcil-
iation commissions, state-sponsored torture, state impunity, systemic violence,
repression, war crimes, and human rights violations".[39] The editorial intention
with all of this was, presumably, to nudge Caribbean artists in the direction of
a more overtly 'political' approach, and away from the static art-object with its

futile pursuit of autonomy, which in this light seems not only obsolete, but also patently irresponsible.

In this sub-section of chapter 2, efforts to shed or transcend the artwork's autonomy are treated as a question of artistic method. It describes another strand of the Caribbean postmodern, which is oriented towards performance, viewer participation and the public space. The discussion, however, begins with an outline of the forerunners for this movement in the metropolitan avant-garde movements of the 1950s and 1960s, and of the different objectives, which may inform an art that seeks to bypass institutions and reach directly into the public sphere. The discussion subsequently turns to the question of how these ideas have been adopted and transformed by Caribbean artists, and how the 'performative and participatory' direction at once differs from and intersects with the deconstructive conceptualism discussed in the previous section.

One of the motivating factors behind Guy Debord's 'Situationist International' (SI), which existed from 1957 to 1972, was the limiting modernist notion of 'self-reflexivity' as the *only* means of producing a critical art. The movement described itself as 'radically autonomous' in the sense that it operated entirely outside of the art-institution. Undertaking a form of guerilla-warfare against 'the society of the spectacle' (where art is fully co-opted by capitalism), the group committed itself to the organization of politically inflected public events. The purpose was to dissolve the boundaries between ordinary life and artistic activity, while at the same time maintaining absolute independence.[40] Though definitely left-leaning, SI was extremely conscious of not becoming institutionalized, and its position has generally been characterized as anarchist. The not infrequent references to SI in contemporary discourse have, however, brought the complexity and confusion, which surrounds the autonomy concept into full view.[41] If the latter is understood as exteriority to the art institution (in the form of museums and galleries), or as being of no instrumental value to anyone, SI was indeed autonomous—but if autonomy is understood in the Greenbergian sense as keeping politics out of the artistic message, it clearly wasn't. At a semantic level (let alone a practical one) it can therefore be quite difficult to distinguish SI's *radical autonomy* from the (converse) *elimination* or dismissal of autonomy, advocated by other artists and theorists (including Enwezor).

Meanwhile, the widespread fatigue with the utopianism, self-restraint and sheer inconsequentiality of Western modernism, which emerged in the aftermath of abstract expressionism and minimalism, also gave rise to less iconoclastic forms of institutional critique, and to a wave of arts activism, which (fuelled by the moment's anti-authoritarian spirit) took up the political concerns of feminism, en-

vironmentalism and the civil rights movement. The former thus took issue with
the conservatism and hypocrisy of art institutions that were originally established
for public enlightenment. While early proponents not only called for "a critical
reassessment of the purportedly autonomous and neutral art museum, but also
for public cultural institutions that operate free of political and ideological in-
terests",[42] others precisely wanted institutions to take an actively political role in
exposing and overcoming inequality. *Activist* art, however, aimed at "evading the
official art world and the attendant professions and institutions that legitimate
it, developing practices capable of operating outside of the confines of the mu-
seum and art market".[43] Its objective was to penetrate the public sphere and more
directly 'touch' the world, and, according to one of its pioneers, Lucy Lippard,
"Activist art is confined to no particular style and is probably best defined in terms
of its functions, which also cover a broad span. It does not, for the most part, limit
itself to the traditionalist art media: it usually abandons frames and pedestals
(. . .). In practice, activist art might include teaching, publishing, broadcasting,
filmmaking, or organizing in or out of the art community".[44]

   While activist art faded into the background at the height of the postmodern
era during the 1980s and 1990s, another set of extra- (or anti-) institutional prac-
tices emerged, for example with the 'relational art' theorized by Nicholas Bour-
riaud.[45] Contrary to the negative aesthetic associated with the Frankfurt-tradition,
its focus and method is quite simply human interaction: "Each particular artwork
is a proposal to live in a shared world, and the work of every artist is a bundle of
relations with the world, giving rise to other relations".[46] Relational art (which
remains relatively controlled and scripted) is akin, but not identical, to other con-
temporary arts movements, such as 'littoral' and 'dialogic' art, which tend to be
more directly invested in developing collaborative partnerships between artists
and social or political agents. The artists behind these collaborative ventures are
quite willing to let go of authorial control and autonomy (i.e., to surrender the
project's distinctive character of 'art'), preferring instead to let projects take their
own course based on ongoing dialogue and non-hierarchical negotiation between
participants. In either configuration, however, these new art forms, collectively
referenced as 'social practice', are thought to be socially constructive (one writer
describes them as "social" rather than "socialist"[47]) and intrinsically opposed to the
market and the art-institution's product-orientation.

   Evidently, the affirmative and 'constructive' foundation for social practice art
places it in opposition to a deconstructive, conceptualist aesthetic based on a per-
ception of 'the self' as incomplete and fragmented, and to the notion (derived
from Derrida and Levinas) of 'community' and 'collective identity' as intrinsically

violent and totalitarian. The deconstructive tradition has, however, produced its own school of tactical and site-specific art, which, by contrast, aims at disrupting the ontological certainties of Western metaphysics, and holds the artwork's meaning "open to continual reassessment".[48] Though realized in public spaces, such projects are less likely to invite viewer-participation, or to see the work itself as a redemptive or directly 'political' gesture.

The differences between the two directions have come into focus through a prolonged and reverberating debate between art historians Claire Bishop and Grant Kester. Bishop thus argues for neo-conceptual projects, which *maintain* a high degree of autonomy (seeing themselves as the continuation of a discrete tradition, which previously produced sculpture and installations). Kester, conversely, advocates projects that willingly let go of their autonomy by creating a hybrid between art, politics, education and social work. Such artist-initiated collaborative projects are intended to produce moments of spontaneous community-feeling, which may ultimately awaken a political consciousness, or at least a sense of *possibility*, in the participant and thereby "train[ing] us to act more responsibly in the 'real' world of daily life".[49] However, to the extent that such projects intend to be 'political', they must, Kester insists, be extremely sensitive to local contexts and circumstances "rather than blundering along with little more than good intentions".[50] For proponents of Bishop's deconstructive position, he charges, "those forms of identity that appear incoherent, singular, fragmented or partial are viewed as intrinsically superior" to those (of his own preference) "that are premised on a more coherent, stable or collective sense of self".[51] Bishop's aesthetic, he argues, belongs to an intellectual tradition (extending from Schiller to Barthes) for deferred political action, which merely seeks to prepare and educate the public, and moreover holds on to a perception of the *work*, rather than the life-world, as the appropriate site of political intervention.

In response to the movements favored by Kester (and Bourriaud), which see themselves as attempts to re-humanize "a society rendered numb and fragmented by the repressive instrumentality of capitalism", Bishop, in turn, warns that "the urgency of this *political* task has led to a situation in which such collaborative practices are automatically perceived to be equally important *artistic* gestures of resistance". With no way of determining whether one social collaboration makes better art than another, these projects can only elicit an *ethical* (but not an aesthetic) judgment and merely "add up to a familiar summary of the intellectual trends inaugurated by identity politics: respect for the other, recognition of difference, protection of fundamental liberties, and an inflexible mode of political correctness", while leaving no room for other (say, surreal or absurdist) forms

of expression.[52] Bishop moreover seizes upon the post-utopian character of ef-
forts to mend human relations in the present, rather than "bet[ting] on happier
tomorrows"[53]—a point justified by Bourriaud's explicit dismissal of any revolu-
tionary aspirations (especially those of the modernists) "based on the illusion of
a marginality that is nowadays impossible" as futile, if not directly regressive.[54]
Nonetheless, while Kester's faction is committed to the present, and Bishop's to
an unspecific future, both remain focused on small steps rather than comprehen-
sive systemic change.

Meanwhile, the third, and distinctively *postcolonialist* position occupied by
Okwui Enwezor, arguably bridges the other two (this may be possible because
the restitution of the self as 'whole' (Kester/Bourriaud) remains a postcolonialist
priority, even though the concept of ontological certainty has become problem-
atic (Bishop)). Enwezor thus attempts to combine a Fanonian anti-colonialism
with a deconstructive, anti-essentialist and non-autonomy oriented position. In
the curatorial essay for *Documenta 11* (see also chapter 7), he writes: "If the avant-
gardes of the past (. . .) anticipated a changing order, that of today is to make im-
permanence, and (. . .) a-territoriality the principal order of today's uncertainties,
instability and insecurity. With this order in place, all notions of autonomy which
radical art had formerly claimed for itself are abrogated".[55] Enwezor thus advocates
an aesthetic aligned with Hardt and Negri's 'uprising from below', committed to
"making empire's former 'other' visible and present at all times"[56], but also to plu-
ralism and difference, and a radical politics configured as post-ideological, infor-
mal and transient. In contrast to postmodernism's cynical passivity, he posits a new
strategy according to which artists, we may surmise, are to become 'watchdogs' for
injustice and totalitarian impulses in both art and life: "While postmodernism
was preoccupied with relativizing historical transformations and contesting the
lapses and prejudices of epistemological grand narratives, postcoloniality does the
obverse, seeking instead to sublate and replace all grand narratives through new
ethical demands on modes of historical interpretation".[57] Though Enwezor's overt
advocacy for an ethical and non-autonomy seeking art places him in opposition
to Bishop, his emphasis on a-territoriality and displacement may yet approximate
her notion of 'disrupting ontological certainties', which explains the occasional
overlap between the artists they have promoted. In the specific artwork, some of
the nuances between these positions may indeed be quite imperceptible, and, as
will shortly become apparent, many actual works tend to confound the categories
laid out here.

The preceding discussion has sought to outline some of the motivations be-
hind contemporary arts activism, social practice and site-specific works, but it

should also serve as a reminder that public outreach and site-specificity *alone* does not necessarily indicate political intent, nor does it *always* reflect a desire to overcome the artwork's inherent autonomy. Unless directly informed by Bourriaud's (reparative) relational aesthetic, public outreach-projects range in aspiration from that of stimulating people's imagination and critical acumen or creating awareness about artistic activity per se, to that of initiating particular social or political processes. While the discourse around such outreach projects is invested in ideas of 'community and collaboration', which likewise underpin the formation of alternative spaces (as will be discussed in section 2), these projects must, however, be carefully distinguished from collaborations between members of a given artistic community: their outreach is precisely towards the 'real' world with the intention of avoiding the elitist stigma of the conventional gallery—or, as the case may be in the Caribbean, of *creating* a public space for art, where none exists. Over the following pages, I briefly describe a number of public outreach efforts by contemporary Caribbean artists—partly to indicate the purchase works in this vein have on the Caribbean contemporary, but also to contest the notion that media like "video, film, site-specific projects, and concept-based artwork" necessarily enhance the artwork's political efficacy or ability to "challenge the very operating systems of global power brokers".

The first arts-activist in Barbados was Annalee Davis (the RA newsletter discussed in the introduction was itself a form of arts activism), who more recently has established the alternative space known as Fresh Milk (see chapter 5). Like Cozier, Davis has been a tireless advocate for a more critical and 'contemporary' art, but, unlike him, she has on occasion made a point of blurring the boundary between art and politics. Davis was thus one of the driving forces behind events like *Art over Sugar* (1992) and the *Copyright Exhibition* (1993), both of which made significant waves in Barbados. Her collaborative projects date back to the *Raw Testimonies* print-series (1997), which was based on interviews with Barbadian school children about the meaning of 'home'. The later video-works about the circulation of labor within the Caribbean, *On the Map* (2008) and *Migrant Discourse* (2009) (plate 10) where a number of regional migrants offer their (often disheartening) perspectives on Caribbean integration, are, however, more explicitly political. Collaborative to the extent that participants are invited to present their own case as part of a larger, scripted project, these works are presented as finished statements—yet their expected public circulation lends them a more process-orientated dimension, and their impact is, needless to say, envisaged as long-term.

All activist (and interactive) art has a performative character, and a few remarks

must be made on performance art and the gestures towards 'hybridity', which often converge in a postcolonial context. Whereas the public spectacle has several precursors in Caribbean popular and spiritual traditions (including carnival, sea-baptisms, Hosay, Phagwa, Vodou, etc.), contemporary performance art in the Anglophone Caribbean is thus more typically informed by Judith Butler's perception of identity as inherently performative and based on imperceptible social coercion, hetero-normativity and the suppression of difference. To undermine any fixity in the "ideological construction of 'otherness'",[58] moreover, Homi Bhabha introduces the concept of hybridity, which insists on the 'impurity' of origins and (Derridean) non-identity.[59] Rather than offering up counter-narratives, 'hybridity' thus seeks to eliminate questions of normativity and authenticity altogether.

Unlike the *social* performance, which Butler describes as subject-based and 'constructive', performance *art* may, as Jade Boyd explains, be seen as "potentially subversive in that they create liminal spaces, in-between temporal places, where social norms are played with and, at times, inverted".[60] If this is *not* achieved, however, the performance merely replaces one humanist identity construction with another, thus reconstructing rather than deconstructing the concept per se. To evoke a sense of hybridity and 'constructedness', postcolonial performance art therefore differs from conventional theatre by putting *distance* between the artist and a given identity or set of assumptions.

One such performance is the Jamaican artist Charles Campbell's *Actor Boy/ Transporter*-series (2009–2010). Alice Yard describes Campbell as one "among a new generation of contemporary Caribbean artists working to explore and disrupt the region's dominant social narratives", and the *Actor Boy/Transporter*-series does indeed, according to the artist, attempt to imagine "other possible futures" than those previously anticipated (and achieved) through the region's post-emancipation trajectory.[61] Ostensibly gesturing towards what David Scott describes as the out-of-jointness of the present with the 'futures of the past'[62], Campbell's performance posits a continual re-negotiation of the relationship between past and future, reality and utopia.

Actor Boy/Transporter involves a set of large geodesic spheres that are inspired by the utopian modernist architecture of Buckminster Fuller and embellished with the silhouette of Jean-Jacques Dessalines. For the events, these spheres are rolled out and placed in public spaces (plate 11), often accompanied by Campbell dressed up as 'Actor Boy'. In the Jonkonnu tradition, the latter was regarded as an "agent of chaos and change", known for mocking the colonial masters through mimicry.[63] While the costume and the spheres thus gesture towards folklore, history, revolution and modernity, the central theme is arguably the principle of hy-

bridity itself. With the mobility of the spheres and the rebellious connotations of the characters, the performance is an invitation to break free of linear and binary thinking as well as historical overdetermination. The "possible futures" Campbell directs us towards are thus composite and inclusive, but also without any specific vectors—indeed the distinguishing feature of the spheres is their inherent maneuverability.

In 2014, the performance was turned into a participatory procession (it was then renamed *Actor Boy/Fractal Engagement*). Campbell arranged for a group of twenty-five participants to move through a rough neighborhood in downtown Kingston under the pretext that they would witness a piece of performance art (plate 12). Along the way, the participants experienced both staged and un-staged events, but, always unsure whether the performance had actually commenced (and, later on, whether it had ended), they did not realize that the procession itself was the main event. According to the artist, however, the purpose was not only to turn spectators into performers, but also that of "disorienting the audience and confusing the uptown-downtown boundary". The project's creative edge was, needless to say, tied to the unpredictability of the environment (which was confirmed by the unanticipated encounter with an aggressive police-officer),[64] but exactly how the project 'confused' the uptown-downtown boundary, and to what end it aspired to do this, is not clear. The invocation of the 'fractal' in this social context is nevertheless compelling, since it suggests the infinite repetition and expansion of the local, but not actually its transformation. To my mind, Campbell's *Actor Boy* performance indeed exemplifies the kind of tactical intervention that confers a privileged status on the artist as 'social broker', but ultimately stops short of positing a more-than-discursive objective.

The Jamaican artist Ebony Patterson has likewise undertaken a number of collaborative and performative projects. As artist-in-residence at Alice Yard in 2011, she presented a work-in-progress titled *9 of 219* that gestured towards Port-of-Spain's alarming murder-rate. An announcement on the Alice Yard website invited the public to partake in the event: "Both an installation and a performance, the work will stage a version of a 'bling' funeral using the artist's characteristic heavily decorated objects. Audience members are asked to participate by bringing candles to join in the vigil". Other projects have focused on urban youth, dance-hall culture and gender-dynamics in Jamaica. For the *Cheap and Clean* event (2012) Patterson thus invited a group of adolescent boys to participate in a workshop with the intention of interrogating "notions of 'the masculine' as it relates to role-playing, performativity, fashion, home, relationships and community".[65] Based on her individual exchanges with the boys, the artist helped each partici-

pant design a personalized outfit representing his 'ideal man' and, at the end of the event, a collective photo-shoot was arranged in a purpose-made 'doll-house' studio (highlighting the play-acting/performative character of gender roles). In a likely effort to preempt allegations of creative exploitation, the participants were, according to the project-website, "able to keep their hand embellished tailored outfits along with a photograph of themselves in said outfit". In its simultaneous efforts towards community building and masculinity critique, the inflection of *Cheap and Clean* was (paradoxically) relational and deconstructive at once.

Another avenue for bypassing the institution and changing the artwork's terms of engagement has emerged with digital art, which, of course, has historically unparalleled opportunities to insert itself into the public sphere. Such works may not only fulfill Walter Benjamin's hope of undermining the unique art object's 'aura', but also catalyze new forms of collaboration. As a gesture in this vein, Christopher Cozier reached for audience-participation by inviting online viewers to design and submit their own breeze-blocks (a typical feature of Caribbean houses from the 1950s and 60s) as a supplement to the drawings included in his 2013 New York-exhibition *In Development*. Viewers thereby became co-exhibitors and the notion of the artist as the singular author was diluted.

A considerably more far-reaching digital project is the *Neighborhood Report* by the Barbadian artist Ewan Atkinson,[66] who relates it to his interest in 'plot' and the way images 'mean'. The series assimilates the unwieldy format of the soap opera with an ever-evolving script and new visual events intermittently posted online (plate 13). The *Neighborhood Report* is set in an unspecific, but slightly eerie location, which nevertheless bears some resemblance with a Caribbean island. Viewers are offered a multitude of precise and yet seemingly disconnected details about the site and its inhabitants, whose identities therefore remain extremely elusive. The character of the 'narrative' itself alternates between an anthropological case study and a detective-story, where the anthropologist/detective/narrator himself is continually observed or under investigation. There is, moreover, a performative dimension to the works, since Atkinson himself fills the role of every character—a feature that adds to the uncertainty about who is who, and what the artist's intention might ultimately be. In addition to being 'interactive' (at the narrative level) and 'performative', the *Neighborhood Report* is thus process-oriented (continually evolving), hybrid (the visual artwork crossing into the terrains of popular culture, fiction and theatre) and deconstructive (at once emulating and dissecting the soap-opera concept, while also challenging assumptions about gender and social identities). Altogether, this leaves audiences with a high degree of

interpretive freedom, which may be seen as a form of continued co-authorship and active participation. The virtual form, moreover, precludes ownership and the artist points out that "When people ask if they can buy one, I tell them they already have it".[67]

It is evident that each of these projects makes a concerted effort to enter the public sphere in innovative and less mediated ways that those offered by the conventional gallery-system. Such measures may, as mentioned, aim at stimulating the imagination and creativity of audiences and participants, catalyzing their individual or social awakening, inducing a sense of agency, or challenging 'the system', whether that is understood as governmentality, capitalism, the establishment, social prejudice, conventional morality or the art institution. Though deliberately reaching beyond the walls of the art gallery, Cozier and Campbell's projects do, however, quite clearly identify themselves as 'art' (albeit less so in the participatory version of Campbell's performance), and therefore veer towards Bishop's neo-conceptual, autonomy-oriented stance. The projects by Davis, Patterson and Atkinson, by contrast, seem intent on shedding the work's autonomy (and immediate recognition as art) by turning the artwork into activism, social experiment or a hybrid form of 'entertainment'. Whereas Davis' *Migrant Discourse* arguably leans towards Kester's affirmative and dialogic forms, Patterson's *Cheap and Clean* and Atkinson's *Neighborhood Report* may thus approximate the genre defying and non-autonomy seeking postcolonial practices Enwezor might have had in mind. In the remainder of this section, however, I want to contest the prevalent notion that such maneuvers automatically vouch for the work's 'progressiveness' or reinforce its political expediency: notwithstanding the artists' generally sympathetic efforts to connect with people or gesture towards social problems, the political purchase of a given work, I maintain, may yet be attenuated by a residual autonomy, by conflicting agendas, and by the very proposition of the work as a political act in itself.

Though Davis has adopted a format for her migrant videos, which in principle is more accessible to a mass-audience than the conventional art object, their political reach may thus be impeded by the very fact of their origin in the 'art-world' as the product of an established, professional artist. Unless such works can escape the aesthetic sphere, where they are disseminated through the narrow channels available to visual artists and tend to meet with relatively likeminded audiences, they are, in other words, at risk of becoming self-congratulatory, rather than instruments of social change (to her credit, Davis did in fact attempt to circulate the said videos outside the familiar art circuit, for example at the Barbados Workers Union in 2008).

Subjecting Atkinson's *Neighborhood Report*—for which he makes no political claims at all—to a discussion about 'political efficacy' may seem unfair (and it may also not be the kind of 'watchdog work' envisaged by the *Small Axe* editors), but the project does show how one apparent agenda can cross another. For while the de-objectification and free dissemination of these works represents a genuinely anti-elitist and democratizing gesture, the opacity of the plot, the inscrutability of the characters and the continually changing points-of-view deliberately seems to short-circuit the assessment of specific social processes. While Atkinson's 'surrealist' technique may be regarded as the realism of an overwhelmingly complex world, what the *Neighborhood Report* encourages is indeed a perpetual *self-* rather than *system*-interrogation. If the project's unlimited circulation and accessibility is based on the premise that there is unequal access to art, it arguably *compensates* for (rather than combats) that inequality.

Unlike the *Neighborhood Report*, however, an intensively promoted project like *Cheap and Clean* is an unmistakably social intervention, which therefore does invite political scrutiny and moral accountability.[68] Yet despite Patterson's erstwhile investment of time and effort, I am unconvinced that its ultimate effect is anything but system preserving. The preoccupation with attire, demeanor and role models, as means of redressing a prevalent 'hyper-masculinity', it seems to me, precisely obscures and diminishes the deeper issues of unemployment, lack of education and economic disenfranchisement that, needless to say, underpin the performance of hyper-masculinity. Rather than stimulating social awareness, Patterson's interaction with the boys in fact pointed in the direction of what David Scott and Deborah Thomas (as will be discussed momentarily) refer to as "self-fashioning through radical consumption", thus precisely showing the participants what they presumably already know: how to live better *within* the system.[69] Indeed, it seems to me that the 'cui bono' question (often leveled at participatory projects) is warranted with particular exigency here: What long-term benefit did the project offer the participants, but getting to keep the 'said outfits'? Is an event like *Cheap and Clean*—where the 'socially conscious' artist enters into a poor or divided community, organizes a widely publicized event and subsequently returns to a comfortable domicile abroad with another career-enhancing line on their CV—a likely catalyst for political organization, or does the momentary exposure and gratification bestowed on the participants (thus showing 'the system's occasional benevolence) in fact achieve the opposite?[70]

By engaging in activist, performative or participatory projects, by attempting to breach the artwork's inherent autonomy and making a point of penetrating the wider public sphere, these artists offer themselves and their collaborators up

in lieu of the traditional art object. Though such gestures often are taken in evidence of a new and burgeoning social commitment, however, I maintain that it is not the attempted loss of autonomy, which determines the artwork's political inflection and potential, but the extent to which it initiates (or at least encourages) social analysis, envisions shared values and objectives, and not least, precisely *accepts* its own political limitations. Whereas the projects I have discussed exude a keen and, there is no reason to doubt, heartfelt concern for the Caribbean community, and in some sense can be regarded as extensions of earlier nation building efforts, such events oftentimes seem to be offered up *as* political acts, rather than incentives towards them. Given their episodic nature, however, they bear no resemblance to the sustained and methodical engagement of real politics and may effectively have a palliative, rather than a catalyzing effect. From a political perspective, such autonomy-shedding collaborations are therefore not so different from a deconstructive autonomy-seeking conceptualism: in either case, tentative gestures towards social awareness and momentary engagement are applauded, while specific political visions and ideological alignments are deferred or actively discouraged.[71]

As for the question of *cultural* autonomy, Patterson's and Campbell's projects arguably stand out from the others by advancing a notion of cultural specificity through references to popular Caribbean culture. The strategic incorporation of Caribbean popular forms define the 'culturalist' strand of the Caribbean postmodern to which I now turn.

The Popular as Anti-Westernism

In her contribution to the catalogue for the 2010-exhibition *Rockstone and Bootheel*, Annie Paul urges visual artists to start taking their cue from the Jamaican music-industry, which (it is implied) has earned far greater legitimacy than any form of visual art through its vernacular language, popular appeal and commercial viability: "When more visual artists in Jamaica start taking a leaf out of the book of its musicians, perhaps an interesting art scene might begin developing here".[72] As glib as it may seem, this provocation feeds into longstanding debates over the 'popular' in Caribbean studies, where a (necessary) anti-elitism at times morphs into a facile anti-intellectualism. Though Shalini Puri, early into the millennium, cautioned that the over-attention to the popular ("the anti-systemic values of reputation") in Caribbean studies has led to "the neglect of other oppositional possibilities",[73] "Cricket, calypso, carnival, reggae and folk religion", according to Nadi Edwards, remain "icons of Caribbeanness".[74] Partly because of its seemingly

egalitarian premise and its simultaneous rootedness in Caribbean studies and postmodern theory, and partly because it may seem to renew the resistive thrust of Caribbean culture more *structurally*,[75] various conceptions of the popular have indeed become the template for yet another strand of the Caribbean postmodern, which I will henceforth refer to as the 'culturalist' direction.[76]

Rather than attempting to define 'the popular', it may presently be more germane to distinguish between its different *usages*—for example as an indication of anti-elitism/intellectualism, as a catalyst for national or political mobilization, or as a locally or globally subversive gesture (though these rationales tend to be linked). In Marxist cultural theory, attempts to politicize the popular have historically generated multiple divisions. Whereas Adorno thus despised the commercial and standardized nature of mass-culture (produced *for* ordinary people), but acknowledged the local, collective and un-commercial character of folk culture (created *by* ordinary people), Walter Benjamin was excited by mass-culture and held a deep aversion towards the bourgeois notion of uniqueness and authenticity that confer a special aura on the traditional art object. In a similarly anti-Adornian vein, studies of popular culture became central to the work of Birmingham Marxists like Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall—the latter especially influenced by Antonio Gramsci, who saw popular art forms as a potential vehicle for counter hegemonic formations.[77] Though Gramsci may not have influenced early Caribbean anti-colonial thought directly, there are striking similarities between his idea of a 'national popular' and what has been baptized a 'Marxian populism' in the thought of C. L. R. James.[78] Like many of his contemporaries, James felt that the lack of cultural confidence in Caribbean society had to be overcome by a cultural nationalism (thought in regional, rather than strictly national terms), which would conceptualize and express a new Caribbean identity. This agenda might in principle be left to a cultural intelligentsia (the likes of Lamming, Naipaul and Harris[79]), but the concurrent objective of forging political unity across the social and racial spectrum of Caribbean society, would, he felt, be better served by popular expressions like cricket or carnival, which are inherently participatory and place individual effort in the service of a common cause. As Lazarus explains, the game of cricket is thus identified as "a privileged site for playing out an imaginary resolution of social antagonisms in the colonial and post-colonial West Indies".[80]

In the work of Edward (Kamau) Brathwaite, however, the emphasis on the popular is less related to political unification than to cultural and philosophical subversion at a global level. As an element of 'nation language', the popular is not only directed towards the expression of cultural identity, but also towards the

creation of "new critical terminologies and conceptual fields".[81] Nation language thus foregrounds an African legacy through the emphasis on orality and enlists vernacular language in the 'othering' and 'creolization' of standard (imperial) English. According to Pollard, "Brathwaite uses nation language not to renew written English as a colonizing cultural presence in the Caribbean, but to resist English as a colonizing cultural presence in the region".[82] Despite his subversive ambitions, Brathwaite's gesture towards the popular thus effectively remains within the aesthetic domain —adopted *from* the people and elevated to art *by* the poet—and therefore represents an inadvertently more elitist position than James's vision of collaborative and more immediately unifying forms of creativity.[83] For James, the popular is therefore mainly an instrument of national politics, and, for Brathwaite, a globally counter hegemonic intervention.[84]

Though the emphasis on the popular in the Caribbean intellectual tradition initially was associated with the anti-colonial movement, the remainder of this chapter offers a discussion of its re-deployment in a post-nationalist visual arts context. It seems timely, at this point, to reiterate that (notwithstanding some critical attention to 'intuitive' artists) the relative marginalization of visual art in Caribbean studies precisely relates to its Eurocentric and elitist connotations. Among the points made in this chapter is that the recent gravitation towards the popular (and the public space) reflects a desire to overcome this lack of attention and perceived relevance.

In *Refashioning Futures* (1997) David Scott suggests that Caribbean criticism must cease to model itself on a cultural nationalism based on increasingly irrelevant middle class values. Instead, he proposes, it ought to seek out society's ultimate 'other', which, for example, may be located in dancehall culture and in the figure of the 'ruud bwai' (rude boy), who "constitutes a site of internal danger to the norms of bourgeois-liberal civility. Ruud bwai self-fashioning constitutes a practice of the self by means of which the (typically) young, working-class male refuses the disciplined body of post-colonial order, refuses to be a 'docile body' available to be worked over by capital, to be worked over by the police, or to be counted by the statistical ideologues of representative democracy".[85] Though her endorsement of the 'ruud bway' is more nuanced and hesitant, Deborah Thomas is likewise hopeful that the figure may have a liberatory capacity by "refashioning selfhood and reshaping stereotypical assumptions about racial possibilities through—rather than outside—capitalism".[86] Such romanticized cultivations of the 'ruud bway' (especially as it culminates in Scott's pitch for the Kingston 'don' Zeeks[87]) has, unsurprisingly, unleashed a number of rejoinders—among them Brian Meeks' refusal to invest the figure with an inherently progressive or

counter hegemonic potential.[88] While I agree with Meeks, I do, however, think that the 'ruud bway', as Paul suggests, is quite an apt metaphor for the restless and irrepressible criticism advocated by Cozier.[89] If, on the other hand, the figure simply is seen as an embodiment of the vernacular voice, its critical potential is both essentialized and institutionalized. I contend that that is what generally becomes of the popular in the writings of Annie Paul. But before Paul's argument is further examined, a brief and cautionary lesson should be extracted from Veerle Poupeye's essay "Intuitive Art as Canon". As this genre increasingly has become subject to management and connoisseurship, Poupeye suggests, it has ended up being "located in a no-man's land between high and low culture" to the effect that practitioners are not "empowered to take control of their representation, which remains dependent on the artistic establishment".[90] Even though the popular presently means dancehall or carnival ('mas'), rather than intuitive art, its champions should indeed be mindful of establishment-colonization.

Paul's longstanding wish that contemporary Jamaican art, as she puts it, should "break out of the aesthetic arena into the life of people itself", has already been discussed.[91] As noted above, she has moreover suggested that visual artists take a glance at the music-industry, which is "sidestepping the middle-class middlemen who have leached it of its cultural specificity and refined it into their notion of what a Jamaican export should be"[92]. What Paul advocates is, we may conjecture, a vernacular expression committed to the representation of a culturally specific Caribbean identity, but defying the demands of predatory dealers. While this notion of cultural specificity is a bit peculiar given the often deconstructive tenor of Paul's discourse, the more troubling aspect of the statement is, however, its apparent motivation. The culturally specific expression is thus intended to help the region penetrate a global market, which itself remains unquestioned. For decades, Paul has indeed argued that a "vibrant local art (…) can be used to embellish and project the image of the Caribbean".[93] A similar rationale surfaces in her demand for 'post-institutional' entities (now ironically calling for *more* middlemen): "The region needs more than anything a post-national gallery—or a series of them—entities that mediate art in regional and transnational terms, providing artists in the Caribbean with wider publics as well as more immediate ones".[94] This (purportedly anti-elitist) insistence on marketability is oddly resonant with a cultural industries model, which may well substitute middle-class aesthetic values with more popular ones, but offers no strategy for altering the economic structures to which such hierarchies can ultimately be traced.

As an alternative to the officially sanctioned modernism, however, Paul has oc-

casionally gestured towards Homi Bhabha's vernacular cosmopolitanism, which, while invoking a sense of 'locality', operates in the borderlands and interstices between languages and belongs "to no one culture".[95] Needless to say, this nebulous description can be applied to a wide range of expressions ranging from the documentation of daily life to citations, emulations or incorporations of popular practices.

The documentary category comprises a number of photographers, including the New York-based Jamaican, Radcliffe ("Ruddy") Roye. Much of Roye's work undertakes a socially sensitive documentation of the living conditions and visual culture of black people in locations from Jamaica, to the United States and Congo. The subject of *dancehall*, however, seems to effect a transition from editorial discernment to an inverted form of self-censorship: assuming that there is an ethical dimension to the occasional brutality of these candid shots, they quite demonstrably *refrain* from exercising any editorial discretion, which might be deemed moralizing. There is nevertheless an ironic similarity between such photographs, and those by past generations of Western ethnographers in search of exoticism and black bodies being-in-the-moment. Roye's statement of intent indeed reflects a fascination that seems almost ethnographic in character: "My dancehall images are about women, fashion, dance, culture and photographs. They are about looking and being seen (. . .). Dancehall celebrates (. . .) *the everyday rituals of an Afro-Jamaican* heritage" (my emphasis).[96]

Other artists working in the 'culturalist' vein have been invested in the recognition of *carnival* as a distinctive Caribbean art form. This has indeed been the demand of the preeminent 'masman', Peter Minshall, himself. In his catalogue-essay for the 1995-exhibition *Caribbean Visions*, and in the short essay "To Play Mas", he thus asserts that carnival, far from being mere fun, is "profound, artistic, visual and inventive".[97] In her much more recent essay "Curating Carnival? Performance in Contemporary Caribbean Art", the curator Claire Tancons likewise pleads against curatorial discrimination against 'mas' (which is said to be the most 'visual' aspect of carnival) as a serious art form.[98] To Minshall's claim that carnival is a "response to the growing irrelevance of conventional object-oriented art to the dynamic modern world" and that "Mas can (. . .) transcend the object in favor of the experience, yet in a manner that is not elite and inaccessible, but by its nature popular and participatory", Tancons adds that mas is also "collective *on a massive scale* in a way that little performance art is"[99] (my emphasis).

Cozier, however, reminds us that carnival no longer is community-driven, but itself highly controlled and commoditized,[100] and Laughlin, though generally enthusiastic, concedes that carnival today is "both a state-sanctioned cultural display

and a commercial enterprise" deeply implicated in "ideals, assertions and debates about Trinidad's cultural identity, heritage and social change".[101] Whereas both Cozier and Laughlin wholeheartedly agree with Tancons' perception of Minshall as an artist, neither therefore claims that carnival is *always* art.[102] On the contrary, Laughlin suggests, the most successful incorporations of carnival into the visual arts are those, where "artists have adopted and adapted its aesthetic of collaborative and improvisatory public performance".[103] These qualities, he volunteers, have also informed the conceptualization of Alice Yard (discussed in chapter 5) with which both he and Cozier are closely associated. However, in response to Cozier's complaint that the neighborhood's 'masmen' rarely venture into Alice Yard, Tancons observes that "Carnival was once a critical space in which a dialogue about art and politics emerged in the popular debate. And yet masmen, even from the Callaloo Company (…), are wary of crossing the threshold that separates contemporary art and carnival as if the bridges built between the two by Peter Minshall in the 1980s have crumbled".[104]

Underpinning these debates about popular expressions and visual art is, of course, the more fundamental question of what it is we want art 'to do' and, consequently, how open, inclusive, and flexible the concept can be. Though the subtext of the critical and aesthetic turn towards popular forms is the (undoubtedly accurate) perception, that the Caribbean establishment seeks to 'police' the boundaries of art, it might also be worth asking *why* it is so important for contemporary art and criticism to reach for popular expressions like carnival and dancehall, and whether this aspiration does not, in fact, reflect and reinforce the perception of 'art' as the elevated domain. To my mind, the power of refusal, which the masmen in the vicinity of Alice Yard seem to exercise, does more to renegotiate the hierarchies of culture, than the yard's gesture of inclusion. The insistence on treating carnival as art, in other words, raises the converse question about the popular expression's freedom and ability to *resist* interpellation by the art institution.

If, as Cozier suggests, all serious art carries a critical objective (p. 42), the absorption of popular expressions like carnival into an overarching conception of 'art' also induces another dilemma. The issue is, notably, not one of talent or creative genius versus its opposite, but simply the question of *intent*. According to Arthur Danto, the first (though not only) criteria for something to be considered art is that it "is about something", has meaning and that something embodies this meaning[105] (if not always in an obvious or unequivocal manner), and it must therefore have one or several author(s). Yet the reason for carnival's centrality to this discourse precisely appears to be its incompatibility with notions of ownership and direction (though Tancons' curated carnival, which simply replaces

the artist-as-author with the curator, maintains both)—and, perhaps most important, since collective representation currently is regarded with such skepticism, the sense that it channels an *unmediated* form of public self-representation. In the writing of Paul and Tancons, there is moreover a Bakhtinian perception of popular culture and carnival as being, almost by default, subversive and counter hegemonic.[106] Both Laughlin and Cozier, however, seem most interested in those instances, where carnival has been a thematic or formal inspiration for specific, named artists, or where, as in the case of Minshall himself, it is conceptualized and directed by someone who *intends* to make art. Laughlin's concession, that "Minshall is a problem for carnival"[107] (i.e., not for 'art') is, on that note, significant.

Perhaps, however, Tancons' valorization of carnival and 'the carnivalesque' does not so much reflect a desire to convert carnival into an establishment art form, as a wish to draw on the energies of what she sees as a "medium of emancipation and a catalyst for civil disobedience".[108] Under direct reference to the Situationists and in general alignment with ideas originating in the Italian autonomist movement, which envisages working class revolt as self-organized and independent of political party structures, Tancons thus sees carnival as a matrix for the "tactical re-territorialization of public space and political discourse, of social formation and cultural production, carried out as a concerted effort to regain democratic rights and liberties".[109] Meanwhile, even though participants in these events (largely corresponding with Hardt and Negri's concept of 'the multitude') are united by not being of the wealthiest 1 percent, Tancons eventually argues that the 99 percent are almost as different from one another as they are from the 1 percent. What is really liberating about the carnivalesque, she rather surprisingly suggests, is therefore the effective dissolution of the class-concept altogether:

> What is at stake here is not so much whether the carnivalesque is turning OWS into a revolutionary movement. Rather, what matters is the bringing to light, through carnivalesque ritual strategy and hierarchy inversion, of the expanse (and expense) of the gap between the 1% and the 99%, and *the diversity and disparity within the 99%.* As much a site of resistance as a relational mode, the carnivalesque occupation of Wall Street is *a symbolic struggle to break the high-low binarism* that has besieged contemporary American society, whether in class or race[110] (my emphasis).

The widespread confidence in the progressive forces at work in mass-events like occupations, protests, carnival and dancehall culture[111] raises obvious questions about the risk for these manifestations of becoming 'system-preserving', and indeed also of which political agenda might be best served by the dissolution of

a high-low binary? Slavoj Zizek's gentle warning to the Wall Street occupants indeed strikes me as prescient: "Don't fall in love with yourselves. We have a nice time here. But remember, carnivals come cheap. What matters is the day after, when we will have to return to normal lives. Will there be any changes then? (...) There are truly difficult questions that confront us. We know what we do not want. But what do we want? What social organization can replace capitalism? What type of new leaders do we want?"[112]

Meanwhile, though I remain skeptical of the critical patronization of the popular and (unlike Paul) second Silvio Torres-Saillant's contention that "it behooves us to think twice before imputing resistive and liberatory content to the work of popular music performers unless we can feel certain that they offer something uncharacteristic of their industry",[113] I think visual art can offer a sympathetic *critique* of popular culture, and that some works and artists in this category do just that. The Jamaican artist Leasho Johnson's engagement with dancehall, which initially was a vehicle for coming to terms with a scene he could not easily identify with, has gradually evolved into a thoughtful cultural analysis.[114] His *Back-a-Road* mural (2013) (plate 14) not only portrays, but attempts to 'out-do' the dancehall's performance of hyper-sexuality through the rendition of cartoon-style figures in sexually explicit postures with allusions to controversial acts like 'daggering' (a strongly evocative simulation of vigorous sexual moves). The dancehall is presented as an arena of provocative transgression and contradiction (where performers willingly embrace cultural stereotypes), which is at once redoubled and exposed in Johnson's own performative act of reduction, radical exaggeration and humorous alienation. The depersonalized cartoon-style can thus be regarded as the necessary optic for grappling with, rather than merely applauding, the dancehall's radical behavior. In another mural, *Back-fi-a-Bend* (2015) (plate 15), Johnson shows five (fully dressed) women of the colonial era posing with bunches of bananas on their heads, followed by a naked, forward-bent dancehall woman who instead carries a bunch on her backside. Unlike the more open ended *Back-a-Road*, this piece offers a sharp critique of a historical dialectic, which for centuries has seen Caribbean women subjected to both sexual and economic exploitation, as referenced by the (at once phallic and exportable) bananas. Meanwhile, the transition from a naturalistic to a cartoonish drawing-style in *Back-fi-a-Bend* suggests not only continuity, but also a definitive *break* in this trajectory. The dancehall woman thus appears to inhabit a different *ontological* space (perhaps a space where 'identity' is something one performs) to that of the others and, interestingly, seems to have *less* agency and self-presence than the older figures.[115]

The curatorial vision advanced in Krista Thompson's essay "How to Install

Art as a Caribbeanist?" likewise sees an opportunity for a critique of Caribbean culture in the engagement with the popular. There is a job to be done, she argues, in revealing those "structures of visuality" (i.e., 'the imperial eye') that continue to dominate the approach to the region's visual narratives: "If we can understand something more of the complicated, unique, and multiple histories surrounding the 'learning of looking' in the region, we could develop more in-depth analyses of artists working in the Caribbean and the complex visual grammars they work through and against. Such understandings (. . .) could contribute to more nuanced global perspectives on the history of art, as well as the critical interrogation of its narrative assumptions, teleologies, subjects and curatorial practices".[116] In the carnival-costumes designed by the Trinidadian artist Marlon Griffith, Thompson thus identifies a constructive critique of current trends in Bahamian Junkanoo. Contrary to the popular 'pretty mas' outfits of today, she argues, Griffith's monochromatic costumes (and use of shadows) not only prioritize creative qualities over instant effect, but also exposes to the tendency in Caribbean culture to render the beautiful visible and the shameful 'un-visible'.[117] I find a lot of merit in this argument, which offers more than mere veneration of the popular as a carrier of an intrinsic criticality (supposedly targeting both local and global hierarchies). Thompson, however, also suggests that the two survey-exhibitions *Rockstone and Bootheel* and *Wrestling with the Image* attempted to overturn conventional expectations of Caribbean contemporary art (the former precisely by focusing on the popular). As I will argue in chapter 8, I am of the converse view, that they did very little to unsettle the 'structures of visuality' that presently govern the contemporary art world.

In concluding this section, I wish to underscore the difficulty one may find in identifying the socially progressive aspect of many current incursions towards the popular, and to propose that such endeavors indeed can be as much in the vein of 'colonization'—i.e., occupation for the purpose of extracting resources—as an earlier establishment's capture of intuitive art. In a post-nationalist climate, where associations with the state-apparatus generally are regarded with suspicion, it may indeed seem opportune for contemporary art to wrest certain popular manifestations (especially carnival) away from the opportunistic patronage of the state (a patronage, which may also inhibit a similar support for 'fine art').

The pluralist criticism proposed by David Scott (see note 87), moreover, precludes the interpretation of the current outreach for popular forms as a nationally unifying endeavor (as it was for Brathwaite and James). Rather, it now represents the visual arts make over Annie Paul so urgently recommends—not just as a warrant against the Eurocentric connotations of 'respectability', which have haunted

Caribbean visual art, but as a means of enticing greater audiences, more partici-
pants and new markets. The implication that artistic legitimacy depends on big-
ger numbers and wider appeal, however, betokens a form of populism, which is
entirely unrelated to serious efforts towards social restructuring. In this context,
Tancons's valorization of 'mas' on account of being "collective on a massive scale"
becomes doubly significant, for when she furthermore invokes carnival's conno-
tations of primal energies, sensuality and bodies at play,[118] it is semantically poised
on the edge of the vocabulary in which a new experience economy is deployed
from the heart of neo-liberalism.[119]

In transitioning to chapter 3, it is important to note that the 'culturalist' strand
of the Caribbean postmodern is founded on a strong notion of Caribbean iden-
tity and cultural autonomy, which nevertheless has become transnational and de-
territorialized, rather than pan-Caribbean.

Summary of Chapter 2

In this chapter, three principal positions, which I have labeled 'conceptualist',
'performative and participatory' and 'culturalist', have been identified as different
strands of a Caribbean postmodernism. Though the first and last seem theoret-
ically incompatible, elements of both (or all three) trends may well intersect in
particular works, and, despite my taxonomic efforts, many artists and artworks
cross freely between the categories. Altogether, the three directions can, however,
be regarded as a critique of Creole modernism with varying emphasis on its na-
tionalist, elitist and Eurocentric inflection. Meanwhile, the most easily observable
common feature of this Caribbean postmodernism is a rejection of the traditional
art object in favor of new media and an emphasis on experiment, transient expres-
sions, process and collaboration.

Reaching primarily for *critical* autonomy, the conceptualist direction is of-
ten explicitly deconstructive and anti-essentialist. Its aim has been to challenge
politically driven identity-constructions (extending to both touristic and local
constructions of tropicality and 'Caribbeanness'). To this end, artists employ in-
direction, irony, de-contextualization, non-linear narratives and visual heteroglos-
sia, and stress difference, movement and impermanence. Though this position
in principle seeks independence from 'great narratives', it can be argued that the
aversion towards fixed identities, unambiguous statements and the indefatigable
promotion of uncertainty and marginality itself has assumed the character of a
great narrative.

The 'culturalist' direction is particularly attentive to ordinary life and popular

cultural practices, which it portrays, cites or emulates. Whether intended as a (supposedly democratizing) elevation of the popular expression to art, as a catalyst for popular self-representation, as a marker of Caribbean identity, or as an outreach to those for whom the codes of 'high culture' (including a deconstructive conceptualism) represent a form of oppression, it is also considered a vehicle for generating more audiences and symbolic or material returns. While adherents may differ on the question of critical autonomy, this direction is anchored in a pursuit of *cultural* autonomy. The weakness of this avowedly anti-elitist and anti-Western direction is, however, the tendency to mistake mass-participation or the enhanced visibility of previously marginalized cultural expressions (including Caribbean art itself) for social or global restructuring.

The 'performative and participatory' direction may lean towards either of the other two in motivation and critical inflection. Whether or not it wishes to retain the character of 'art', this strand of the Caribbean postmodern finds legitimation in placing or enacting works in public, non-institutional spaces with or without audience-activation. In stretching the conventional limits of art towards the domains of social work, public education, activism or entertainment, it often steers away from *critical*, but not necessarily from *cultural* autonomy. Projects in this vein generally seek to inspire awareness, creativity, or a sense of agency in the participants, but may also feed the growing demands for transient activity and spectacle brought about by a neo-liberal event-economy.

In section 3, I will argue that, collectively, these directions represent a cosmopolitan turn that has served the Caribbean avant-garde well in its international aspirations. By now, it will nevertheless be clear that not every strategy or artist is explicitly *anti*-nationalist. A poignant example is Annalee Davis, whose personal portfolio cannot generally be characterized as deconstructive, and for whom the question of 'difference' has been tied to a "multicultural, civic nationalism, whose core is not informed by ethnicity or the burdens of history",[120] but whose role in promoting the movements this book describes has been crucial. Indeed, the fact that practically all the artists I have discussed are consistently preoccupied with Caribbean affairs pushes forward the question of what a critical pan-Caribbean nationalism might now mean. It is crucial, here, not only to maintain a clear distinction between a progressive, anti-imperialist nationalism and a regressive, xenophobic one, but also to separate the former from the mere suggestion of 'local flavor'. While some of the expressions I have discussed may be *potential* allies of a new egalitarian agenda, there is a worrying shortfall when it comes to the cultivation of shared visions (including the shape of a civic nationalism "not informed by the burdens of history"), to an equal appetite for rigorous critique

and consensus building, and (as will be discussed in section 2) to the unrelenting push for representative *and* transparent Caribbean institutions. A criticism that sees social problems everywhere but makes no *fundamental* demands for social restructuring (or simply settles for enhanced visibility and 'new narratives'), and a supposedly pan-Caribbean aesthetic merely infused with enthusiasm for dance-hall and carnival, inevitably plays itself into the hands of the status quo and its neoliberal policy makers. Indeed, though heavily invested in partnerships and collaboration, the different strands of the Caribbean postmodern primarily seem to be unified by a shared aversion towards value judgments, oppositionality, collective representation and long-term commitments, thus confirming Hallward's observation that the "emphasis on the hybrid, blurred composition of cultural performances, downplays the possibility for inevitably divisive political action".[121] While I certainly won't suggest, that there is nothing to be gained from picking 'the usual story' apart, or from foregrounding and supporting 'difference' (a crucial and sadly neglected aspect of ongoing nation building efforts), it seems as if the important adjustments, which should have been *embedded* in a more comprehensive social restructuring, have taken its place. The conclusion seems inevitable, that many of the 'radical' gestures offered up by the contemporary avant-garde are no less complicit with the order of the day than the more directly commodifiable products of the anti-colonial generation.

However, in closing this chapter, I reiterate that my intention is not to condemn the use of new media or to dismiss the many brilliant artists who have made it their language. I share the concerns that motivate Davis' Caribbean migrant projects and eagerly await each new installment of Atkinson's *Neighborhood Report*. I find Cozier's drawings powerful and compelling, and am awestruck by the beauty and intricate craftmanship of Campbell's mobile spheres and Patterson's elaborate robes. I also understand the frustrations with the conservatism of local audiences and the lack of exhibition-facilities, reception and discourse, which compel artists to reach directly for the public sphere, and indeed the survival instinct that drives artists towards themes and methods with contemporary traction and international appeal. I am, however, concerned by the near erasure of dissenting voices from a contemporary scene that prides itself in promoting diversity.

The importance of the hybridity concept for the Caribbean postmodern extends to the perception of Caribbean art as part of a much larger diasporic formation. That notion, and the particular problems it poses for the visual arts, is the subject of the following chapter, which nonetheless begins with a brief reflection on the field of visual culture.

CHAPTER 3

Diasporic Connections

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Tʜᴇ ᴀᴄᴀᴅᴇᴍɪᴄ ʀᴇᴠɪsɪᴏɴs ᴏꜰ the last few decades have included a significant movement from art history towards visual culture[1]. As it emerged out of cultural studies in the 1980s and 1990s, this steadily expanding field has sought to supplant established methods of constructing knowledge around visual information. Generally received as a democratizing departure from a narrow preoccupation with the precious or monumental art object, visual culture has increasingly also become the chosen framework for the study of Caribbean art. One of the field's pioneers, Nicholas Mierzoeff, explains that "The constituent element of visual culture's practice is the visual event. The event is the effect of a network in which subjects operate and which in turn conditions their freedom of action".[2] In this interdisciplinary and quintessentially hybrid field (where agency is assigned to the network, rather than the subject), the *diasporic* identity is, moreover, considered emblematic: as the lived expression of border crossing, it is symptomatic of the 'permanent impermanence' that now defines the human condition. Nodding towards R. B. Kitaj, du Bois and Gilroy, Mierzoeff thus observes that the diasporist, who appears in "every polyglot matrix (. . .) Jew, Black, Arab, Homosexual, Gypsy, Asian, émigré from despotisms or ethnicity"[3], imbues the diasporic visual image with a default 'bifocality', which is taken to be a warrant against nationalist narrow-mindedness.

Theorists like Kobena Mercer and Stuart Hall have endorsed the transition to visual culture on the grounds that it seems more suited to deal with themes of *migration*. Interviewed by Annie Paul, Hall explains that "visual culture is cultural studies in visual arts and this is beginning to replace the traditional history of art, you know, connoisseurship etc., of the old art history type. There's a bit of a struggle going on between art history and visual culture. I can say then I've found myself, appropriately, in the new visual culture. But then I've been interested of course in migration, interested in the fate of migrants in Britain (. . .)".[4]

While the post-nationalist and diasporic momentum generally has been re-
ceived with enthusiasm in visual arts circles, its merits and implications have
met with more reservations in other fields. Shalini Puri thus warns against the
erasure of important distinctions in the focus on "border crossing, nomadism,
travel, homelessness and nationlessness (. . .) as important tropes for cultural lib-
eration"[5], Laura Chrisman avers that critics of national narratives tend to forget
that "people may share needs, values, interests that override their differences"[6]
and Simon Gikandi, aiming at postcolonial theory in general, observes that while
it "has provided us with some powerful critiques of the nation and nationalism,
its engagement with the decolonized nation has been minimal".[7] Following in
the footsteps of these admonitions, the argument developed on the following
pages examines some of the particular effects and problems the turn to a diaspora-
aesthetic presents for Caribbean visual art and artists.

A Black Atlantic Community

In many ways, Cozier's reservations towards the nation and Paul's objection to
anti-colonial modernism resonate with the more carefully theorized position of
David Scott (who rarely engages with the visual arts). As discussed in the pre-
vious chapter, Scott's influential book *Refashioning Futures* (1999) represents a
concerted effort to steer Caribbean criticism away from the nationalist frame-
work that motivated the first generation of Caribbean intellectuals. The anti-
colonial nationalists were, he argues, so rigid in their pursuit of sovereignty and
misguided notions of progress and freedom that the Caribbean postcolonial na-
tion ultimately came to embody another form of colonialism. Echoing Hintzen,
he contends "The point of the liberal nationalist story of resistance to colonial-
ism is to retain the overall framing of the colonialist narrative, but to reverse the
plot, so that, in effect, the nationalist can appropriate the place hitherto assigned
to the colonialist".[8] Scott does, however, concede that postcolonialism, even
though it has sought to redress the fallacies of essentialism and the failures of
the humanist Enlightenment-project, may have lost sight of politics altogether.[9]
So where, he asks, is a viable postcolonial criticism to turn under the hegemonic
rule of neoliberalism? And thus, in seeking to formulate a post-Marxist and post-
nationalist scope for a Caribbean criticism, which no longer should pivot around
truth-claims, but operate as strategic engagement, Scott, in his own words, "folds
Fanon into Foucault" and throws Gilroy's transitional anti-anti-essentialism into
the mix.[10] Contrary to Gilroy, who re-positions the entire legacy of black anti-
colonial thought and creativity as aspects of a modern Black Atlantic culture in

the Boas/Herskovits ('African-retentions') tradition, however, Scott envisions "a black diaspora criticism that does not depend for its authority upon such a cultural theory",[11] but that still maintains the image of slavery as its legitimizing premise:

> [T]his tradition is a trans-local (and specifically a trans-Atlantic) one (. . .) it enables us to refuse the naturalization or normalization of certain forms of community as the privileged unit of affiliation or identification — that of the nation-state, for instance. However, in my view the point of this ought not to be an ethnographic one; it ought not to depend upon the formal similarities and differences among black cultural practices. Rather I take the point of understanding diaspora in this way as an attempt to signal the *ideological* convergences and divergences in the way cultural practices across the black Atlantic *put* 'Africa' and 'Slavery' to use (. . .). On this view, the minimal condition of participation in the moral community of a black diaspora discourse or tradition is the mobilization of the common possession of the figures of Africa and slavery as markers or assertions of identity\difference. In this way, insofar as these figures are in play, there is the potential for recognition and solidarity on the part of a black diasporic subject.[12]

The formation of a Black Atlantic "moral community" is, in other words, meant to enable the conception of a transnational Caribbean culture united by the modern experience, rather than by African roots, and thus to unmoor the scope of black resistance from the inherently corrupt, self-preserving, inward-looking and normalizing framework of the nation and its usual core-identities.

While Scott therefore uses the diaspora concept to overcome a nationalist bias in Caribbean criticism, and Hall summons it to dissolve a centre/margin polarity and competing notions of 'authenticity', Mercer sees it as a means of transcending a moment in British cultural life, where (in a phrase borrowed from Gramsci) "the old is dying and the new cannot be born".[13] Meanwhile, when Hall suggests that the Black Atlantic model reveals "the lateral exchanges and 'family resemblances' across the region as a whole, which a nationalist history obscures",[14] it is difficult to say whether these diasporic traits coincide with Scott's "ideological convergences and divergences", and to what extent such commonalities override the material circumstances that also separate different segments of any transnational diaspora.[15] The suggestion of a free-flowing circulation of people and ideas, moreover, glosses over the fact that some ideas, images and artists are far more 'exportable' than others (indeed, as will be argued in section 3, the migratory subject privileged by current criticism frequently coincides with the cosmopoli-

tan, and often middle class, artist or curator). The endlessly regurgitated tropes of 'hybridity' and 'diaspora' are, in other words, taken as self-evidently liberating, equalizing and in need of no further qualification.

Brought to bear on a visual arts discourse, the diaspora concept has, however, more often been oriented towards Mierzoeff's hybridity-based conception, than towards Scott's anti-anti-essentialist (i.e., transnational *black*) strategy—though the inflection tends to oscillate as a matter of strategic convenience. Yet, the changing inflection and usage of the diaspora concept in different disciplinary and national contexts *alone* (as for example noted between Scott, Hall and Mercer) speaks to vastly divergent needs and interests within the diasporic formation. In a Caribbean context, the diaspora concept is thus typically thought to *overcome* the privileging of black culture as a matrix for national identities, while it adds critical mass to a collection of minority-formations in the metropole.

The most manifest impact of the diaspora framework on the visual arts has, however, been the substitution of a pan-Caribbean perspective with a transnational one. This has legitimized a considerably widened critical and curatorial scope, now no longer limited to the geographical Caribbean, but encompassing artistic communities in the metropole and beyond. Subsuming Caribbean art under a broader diasporic network moreover implies that no argument can any longer be made about aesthetic relevance in the region (though the nationalist expression necessarily become obsolete). While I would oppose any rigorous distinction between Caribbean artists, who reside inside and outside the region, I do contend that the diaspora-concept is likely to sideline those local particularities and geo-political inequalities that inform artistic dispositions and direct their criticality. To substantiate this position, I now turn to some of the specific challenges a diaspora-aesthetic poses for the visual arts.

The Petty Problem of Inclusivity

This chapter has already indicated different approaches to the concept of a diaspora-aesthetic—Mierzoeff's universal polyglot, for example, differs in both intent and extent from Gilroy's Afro-Atlantic formation, which in turn differs from Scott's black diasporic *moral* community. Whereas the infinite openness of the first renders it practically meaningless,[16] Scott's demand for the "mobilization of the common possession of the figures of Africa and slavery" induces the petty, but necessary question of eligibility: the black Trinidadian painter Kenwyn Crichlow, whose work is purely abstract and does not in any obvious way mobilize

such figures or invoke a shared diasporic identity, would presumably not be a relevant candidate—nor would white artists like Joscelyn Gardner or Laura Facey, even though much of their work has been centered on blackness and slavery. And even if Crichlow, Gardner and Facey were included on the basis of birth or thematic engagement, this gesture would hardly be extended to a white, British born landscape-painter like Alison Chapman-Andrews. Chapman-Andrews, who has spent her entire working-life in Barbados, has, however, been a significant inspiration to several younger Barbadian artists (for example Natalie Hinds), who *would* be eligible by both birth and subject-matter. If the 'Black Atlantic' concept thus falls short as explanatory frame for aesthetic dynamics, it forces us to ask which insights it *can* yield and where its application-value really is. As indicated above, I believe the answer lies in the enabling of a (professionally and politically) convenient expansion of frames of reference for Caribbean criticism and curatorship—but an expansion, which, rather than erasing previous notions of center and margin, inadvertently accedes to them.[17]

Diasporic Hierarchies

In his discussion of black Caribbean artists in the UK, Stuart Hall makes the perfectly acceptable claim of simultaneous kinship and difference between the geographical Caribbean and its British diaspora: "black British identities are not just a pale reflection of a 'true' Caribbeanness of origin, which is destined to be progressively weakened. They are the outcome of their own relatively autonomous formation. However, the logic that governs them involves the same processes of transplantation, syncretisation and diasporization that once produced Caribbean identities".[18] Against Hall's implicit suggestion that black British identities might find themselves disadvantaged by the notion of a more 'authentic' Caribbean identity, however, I submit that the opposite obtains for visual artists. Far from the original matrix for a diasporic expression, the region, in this arena, tends to be seen as an embarrassing latecomer in need of enlightenment. Wainwright's reservations towards the diaspora-concept are indeed related to the 'diffusionist' assumption, that diasporic artists in both Britain and the Caribbean have modeled themselves on *American* pioneers:

> [T]he growing dominance of US based understandings of the Caribbean and Britain has placed these regions at an outer circle of cultural identification with the African diaspora. In this visual economy of blackness, a 'diffusionist' model of black history passes unquestioned: a vision of black

culture emanating as if from a single place to take seed internationally. It is a scheme of the migration (or even a diaspora) of diaspora consciousness. This implies that certain regions of the African diaspora lag behind in catching up with an ostensible vanguard of black cultural heritage epitomized at an American epicenter.[19]

Wainwright's reservations are relevant in a British-Caribbean context as well: in the foreword to the essay-collection *Curating in the Caribbean* (an outcome of the 'Black Diaspora Visual Arts' partnership briefly discussed in chapter 7), David Bailey thus proposes that the book "seeks to contextualize the cultural production of post-war Black Art against the background of generational shifts as a result of migration across the diaspora. Furthermore the publication has proven both relevant and instructive for delivering a Caribbean agenda of social inclusion and community cohesion by using visual art as a medium for breaking the silences common in the postcolonial constellation of developing countries".[20] The veiled suggestion in this passage is that of black diasporic artists in Britain (invoked by the term "post-war Black art", which has relevance in the UK, but not in the Caribbean) as a taskforce stepping in to back Caribbean artists up in their frustrated struggles against oppressive local hegemonies. The most significant aspect of the passage is, however, the sleight-of-hand by which politically enraptured phrases like "social inclusion and community cohesion" and "breaking the silences" themselves silence the fact that postcolonial "developing countries" here means 'aesthetically underdeveloped', and that the role of the diasporic emissary is that of bringing the region up to speed by drawing on its own experience of penetrating the metropolitan canon.[21]

Advocates of a diaspora aesthetic thus typically fail to acknowledge (or simply choose to ignore) the comparative advantage of the diasporic artist in the metropole, who, irrespective of past or present marginalization, does have access to a certain institutional infrastructure, and who, precisely by virtue of the Black Atlantic 'umbrella' can locate him/herself (physically and conceptually) both inside and outside his place of residence. The Caribbean artist, who, by contrast, operates with very limited institutional and critical support, is usually far less mobile than the myth of perpetual migration suggests, and, in real terms, the 'umbrella-option' is highly discriminatory. There is, in other words, still some truth to Arif Dirlik's terse remark, that postcolonialist discourse (now articulated in the form of a diaspora-aesthetic) reflects the self-image of "First World intellectuals of Third World origin" and tends to be "an expression not of powerlessness, but of newfound power".[22] A similarly metropolitan bias inadvertently surfaces

in the writings of Richard Powell. His *Black Art and Culture in the 20th Century* represents one of the first and most direct art-historical applications of the diaspora-concept, though its criteria for inclusion occasionally extends beyond artists' ethnicity to the thematic engagement with blackness. In his introduction, Powell thus argues that diasporic culture is expressed in "distinctive cultural repertoires" and "forms that are not only alternative to mainstream counterparts, but proactive and aggressive in their desire to articulate, testify, and bear witness to that cultural difference." Black diasporic culture is thus defined as "the things that significant numbers of black people do".[23] The book features works by a wide (if predominantly American) selection of artists, who have addressed 'black issues'. However, the omission of a Caribbean artist like Leroy Clarke, who emphatically defines himself as a black diasporic artist, and the inclusion of Stanley Greaves, who just as emphatically does not, is thought provoking. More troubling, however, is the tendency for the method to confuse rather than clarify, for example where Powell posits the following comparison between Jean Michel Basquiat and the Barbadian artist Ras Ishi Butcher: "Butcher, Basquiat, and other iconographers used black subjects (and sometimes actual figures), to revisit the cultural nationalist's goals of recognizing and celebrating distinctiveness, but with a postmodern difference".[24] Apart from the general inscrutability of the passage, the writer himself fails to recognize and celebrate distinctiveness, when he neglects to point out that cultural nationalism and postmodernism would mean very different things for artists based in the Caribbean and the United States. Ironically, the difficulty of making meaningful use of the diaspora-concept surfaces once more in Powell's catalogue-essay for Butcher's 2009-exhibition *Secret Diaries*. In "The Systems and Semiotics of Ras Ishi Butcher" he thus starts off by assuring us (and, one senses, also himself) that Butcher's work has intellectual merit and that its relevance extends beyond the Caribbean:

> Looking at earlier paintings and more recent works by Ras Ishi Butcher, one notices certain technical procedures and recurring motifs that, apart from distinguishing him as a remarkable witness with something special and powerful to say, individuate Ras Ishi as a dedicated and cerebral painter whose trajectory shows every sign of being almost boundless. While it would be easy to partition off those works (and Ras Ishi Butcher) as only Caribbean (meaning, in the very narrowest of contexts, hopelessly regional and artistically peripheral to the major metropoles of contemporary art), like the title '400 years' such a cultural designation only hints at something bigger and more profound when experiencing Ras Ishi's paintings.[25]

Throughout his subsequent quest for structural or thematic evidence of a diasporic DNA, Powell loosely connects Butcher with artists as diverse as Jean Michel Basquiat, Chris Cozier, Kerry James Marshall, Stuart Davis, Cezanne and Picasso as well as with Dogon and Bamana sculpture. Surprising though they may be, there is in principle nothing wrong with making such connections, but Powell makes no attempt to *also* consider the meaning and function of Butcher's work in the narrower, but more decisive context of Barbadian or Caribbean art. By detaching the oeuvre from its particular historical and political context and inserting it into a less specific transnational formation, Powell's method thus dilutes its critical thrust.[26]

National or Nationalist?

Yet another reservation towards a diaspora-aesthetic relates to the fact that visual art invariably is in direct or indirect conversation with national (or even more localized) structures and conditions, which makes nonsense of the idea that the nation is "effectively dead as a political and analytic category".[27] This is not only because the first-hand experience of visual art (unlike more easily disseminated art-forms like literature, music and film) usually is restricted to audiences in physical proximity to its place of exhibition, but also because places of exhibition are part of an institutional framework (circuits of training facilities, museums, galleries, alternative spaces, newspapers, etc.) which usually finds its legitimacy, purpose and funding in a national context. Such institutions may be public or private, established or transient, but altogether they are part Bourdieu's 'cultural field' in which artistic expressions obtain meaning, even if works and artists often cross national borders and produce work while on-the-move. Following Lazarus' example,[28] I wish to substantiate the further claim that the *national* perspective, which takes such factors into consideration, does not have to be a *nationalist* perspective, by turning to Fredric Jameson.

As recalled earlier (chapter 1, note 41), Jameson was famously berated by Aijaz Ahmad, for suggesting that all third-world texts are 'national allegories'.[29] In a 2008-lecture, however, he returns to the idea of the national allegory as an inescapable component of *all* literature, though far more detectible in the cultural production of nations, that are small or marginal in respect of power or language.[30] Jameson begins by establishing that the national should not be perceived as a normative, unified or hegemonic entity, but as the "dialectical union of opposites". There are important differences in the national experience, he argues, which must be related, not to theories of culture or identity, but to the *national situation*:

The smaller and more economically and globally marginal the country, the more intense is this unique taste of the national in its citizens' mouths, the more sour the limits of their collective identity-feelings. This is what explains the formal necessity of what I call national allegory. Whatever the existential contents of the individual story or experience, it will always carry with it the overtone of this national subalternity, it will always be allegorical of the national misery. But as one approaches the center and the super-state, the more easy is it for its citizens to know the blindness of the centre, to think of themselves in uniquely private terms, to forget the national relations, the foreign relations which also define them, but which now, as we might put it, define them unconsciously and can be repressed and forgotten—a relief not possible in other parts of the world. There is then very much a national level to our existential experience, however apparent it may or may not be.[31]

Jameson further argues—and this is the point I wish to pick up here—that what the concept of the 'national situation' renders visible, is not so much the individual achievements of the nation's artists, as "what we may call institutions of cultural communication (. . .), vehicles through which a foreigner can approach the national situation of a given country, including its literary and intellectual situation". The assumption of a direct relationship between the (foreign) reader and text must therefore, he argues, be replaced with the model of a "four-fold relationship in which the reader of one national situation achieves such contact with the text of another by way of the mediation of the relation between two national situations". This, needless to say, is reflective of a complex interplay of national and historical circumstances that produce unique configurations of modernity. Rather than a transcendental space, which shares the same universal values, world literature (and indeed world *art*) must be regarded "as a space and site of struggle, of competition and opposition (which) first of all must be grasped in terms of the struggle between big power languages and small power languages, a struggle over and between the institutions of translation and transmission". The work, Jameson concludes, "thus emits two messages simultaneously. It is at one and the same time about itself and about the world".

Whether artists approve or disapprove of the nation in which they happen to be citizens, or of the nation-state in principle, whether they ignore it or dedicate their oeuvres to its continuation, critique or dissolution, whether they produce at home or abroad, their work, and the channels through which it finds an audience, is always implicitly reflective of a 'national situation'. A transnational criticism solely dedicated, as Powell suggests, to the identification of "things that significant

numbers of black people do", or which takes Laughlin's and Smythe-Johnson's lead by downplaying artists' place of origin, does not take account of the ways in which the meaning and function of visual art is impacted by its conditions of production and channels of circulation.

Though Jameson's national allegory may belong to the unconscious, subliminal or discrete layers of the artwork, I furthermore contend that national perspectives (and particular interests)—even in the most fervently post-nationalist discourse—often push through, when the discursive perspectives and explanatory power of 'diaspora' simply prove infertile.[32] Again, a compelling example is *Curating in the Caribbean,* a product of the Black diaspora transatlantic partnership that literally consists of a series of chapters focused on *national* issues and challenges across the region. The book therefore never realizes the partnership's underlying the objective of identifying the commonalities that supposedly transcend differences between the region and its metropolitan diaspora. To my mind it therefore precisely presents an argument for the regionalism that a diasporic-aesthetic supposedly subsumes.

Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter has evaluated the transition from a pan-Caribbean to a diasporic orientation in Caribbean visual arts criticism. It has been argued, that the diaspora concept has come to mean several things (ranging from an exclusively black formation to a fluctuating collection of difference and hybridity), but also that the idea of a Black Atlantic community poses real and difficult problems of inclusion, and often falls short as explanatory framework for aesthetic dynamics at the level of lived experience. It was furthermore suggested that deeper geo-political power structures tend to transplant themselves to the diasporic 'fraternity'. Finally, it was argued that the visual arts are particularly dependent on institutional structures, which means that the national premise persists, even when nationalist perspectives do not.

It has, of course, not been my intention to argue that visual art should be approached from a national (and certainly not a national*ist*) perspective *only*. The need is for criticism and curatorial practices to draw out layers of meaning and significance as it relates to *both* local and global conditions of production and reception, as well as the competing demands and biases of metropole *and* margin.[33] At a moment, which to many is defined by the migration of people and ideas, it is, in other words, crucially important not to sacrifice, on the altar of global

market-expansion and enhanced visibility, the contextual specificity, which gives art its critical inflection.

While a diaspora-aesthetic in many quarters, and perhaps not entirely without justification, has been welcomed as a 'Trojan horse' device, which may offer new pathways for Caribbean artists to penetrate the metropolitan circuit, it has also become a legitimate vehicle for a curatorial establishment, increasingly anxious to 'deliver' in an extremely competitive arena, and to circumnavigate the challenges of operating in an under-resourced region. Section 2 examines the cultural climate and institutional dynamics, which have emerged with a neoliberal turn in cultural policy, more closely.

Conclusion to Section 1

Section 1 has sought to describe the formation of a post- (and, at times, explicitly *anti-*) nationalist movement, which posited itself in opposition to a preceding generation, that was portrayed as nationalist, elitist and Eurocentric. It has been proposed that the resulting Caribbean postmodernism comprises three main directions, and that Caribbean visual arts discourses generally have been subsumed under the mantle of diaspora-aesthetics.

As already expressed, I have no intention to invalidate the artistic production associated with this movement (it is indeed almost impossible for contemporary artists not to be swept up by it). I have, however, hoped to draw out some of the conceptual and political contradictions that have emerged alongside the many openings this momentum has produced, and to protest its increasing character of regime: in the name of anti-essentialism and anti-nationalism, of difference and tolerance, works and practices have ironically come under scrutiny for compatibility with an overarching theoretical framework. Artists who, in Robert Spencer's fitting phrase, commit "crimes against hybridity",[34] for example by maintaining an unambiguously anti-colonial, Rastafarian or Marxist world-view (especially if expressed in traditional media) have effectively been eliminated from the discourse and international representation of the region's contemporary art, though of course not without token exceptions. I would, however, venture that many practicing artists are relatively unaware of the subtext and corollaries of this critical momentum and, if directly asked, might not fully endorse an agenda that turns its back on the nation as analytical frame or political project. The decisive factor in the consideration of contenders for the Caribbean contemporary may indeed not be an explicit subscription to a legitimizing discourse, but rather the *absence*

of elements that might get in the way of a post-nationalist interpretation. In clos-
ing this section, however, I recall Lazarus' lamentation that "there is so much
that we *fail* to attend to" when we routinely deploy concepts of "extraterritorial-
ity and the rhizome" or the "explicitly post-nationalist debates on diaspora and
hybridity".[35]

Spaces

The Origin of Alternative Spaces, the Troubled Museum and Cultural Policy in the Caribbean

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T O COMPLEMENT SECTION ONE'S description of a post-nationalist turn in the Anglophone Caribbean's artistic and critical arena, this section addresses the emergence of alternative spaces and a creative network that has nourished and consolidated the region's postmodern momentum. The following chapters look at the role and growing influence of these spaces as creative hubs, facilitators, discursive fora and incubators for younger artists, but also at more problematic aspects of this trend, especially as it intersects with neoliberal cultural policies and throws the meaning of 'alternative' into question. A broad based introduction to the concept of alternative spaces, contemporary museological challenges and Caribbean cultural policy, is followed up in chapter 5 with three case studies of alternative venues in Trinidad, Barbados and the Bahamas. This leads to a discussion, in chapter 6, of art and the public sphere in an era, where 'the nation' has come under pressure.

A Brief History of Alternative Spaces

Though not-for-profit galleries can be traced back to venues supporting the abstract expressionists in the post-war years, the 'alternative space' as a decidedly oppositional concept was an invention of the 1960s.[1] Such venues did not only respond to the physical or philosophical restrictions of museums and commercial galleries, but they also tapped into the anti-authoritarian ethos of the moment. The term referred to sites, which did not have an institutional status or a commercial objective, and its connotations were clearly those of avant-gardism, progressiveness and counter culture. Coinciding with the birth of arts activism, alternative spaces thus promoted aesthetics, media and artists, which public or commercial institutions could (or would) not accommodate. In the United States

such venues were, however, already in the early 1970s encouraged to institutional-ize themselves to be eligible for public funding. Though some did retain their in-dependence and distance from the marketplace, alternative spaces in general thus became less transitory, but also less subversive, and many eventually morphed into art establishments in their own right (PS1, for example, has been an independent associate of Museum of Modern Art since 1999), notwithstanding their funda-mental objective of expanding, democratizing and decentralizing the art world.

   Often situated in unoccupied or even derelict buildings, the first alternative spaces cultivated a raw aesthetic in which works were displayed, or simply placed, in an unmodified environment. As Martin Beck points out, this signaled a fun-damental difference from the standard modernist 'white cube gallery', which was perceived as "antiseptic, elitist, manufactured, manipulated (. . .) the antithesis of raw. Through this opposition, a distinction is constructed between the space of the establishment, qualified as static, homogenous, and bourgeois, and the space of the alternative qualified as process oriented, experimental, and working class".[2] Later on, certain alternative spaces did nonetheless adopt the white-cube concept and simply filled it with 'alternative art', underscoring the difference in the work, rather than its environment. In the 1980s, a rapidly expanding and often hysterical art-market stimulated a new proliferation of alternative spaces, but also gave new credence to their anti-commercial ethos. Meanwhile, if the cooler market and neoliberal spending cuts, which drastically reduced public support for culture in the 1990s, redoubled the need for alternative venues, it reduced their chance of survival as well. Thus, in so far as they managed to stay open, alternative spaces at once exposed and alleviated the problems neoliberalism created for culture. In this section, I will argue that a similar scenario prevails in the Anglophone Caribbean today.

   Given the low prospects of fiscal returns, the early alternative spaces were typ-ically established and managed by their only stakeholders, the artists themselves, who thereby tried to seize control of the manner and context in which their work was displayed. The objective was, in other words, not merely to complement ex-isting exhibition facilities, but to challenge the curatorial establishment. But, as Bourdieu points out,[3] it is not possible to combat adversaries without consecrat-ing them, and the alternative space has not only contributed to the growth of the art-world's symbolic economy, but also to a more complex art world dynamic. Old and new avant-gardes are thus separated by "differences in the degree of con-secration",[4] and the official institution and the alternative space have increasingly found themselves in competition for the authority to define the contemporary. While the alternative space must be thought of alongside the modernist avant-

garde dynamic, which sought to escape the commercialization of art, the fangs of capitalism are, nonetheless, reproduced in the perpetual pursuit of 'the next generation' which the alternative space also embodies.

More recently, the 'alternative' concept has started to afford broader, and not always grassroots/activist-oriented connotations. The term may now be used in reference to any commercial or public space—say, cafés or banks—willing to lend aspiring artists their walls, but not invested with the counter hegemonic ethos of the original alternative space. Conversely, a number of spaces that started as 'alternative' have evolved into commercial galleries specializing in cutting-edge art. According to Julie Ault, the alternative concept itself may be in the process of dissolution—a development, she contends, which may not so much indicate failure, as the arrival of a new generation with less radical notions of 'change': "This generation has grown up fully cognizant that there is not, and never has been, an outside. For many, constructing a different model to 'the system' or 'the center' was a problematic idea both in theory and in practice".[5]

The Museum in Crisis

From Habermas to Foucault

It goes without saying that the alternative space responded to an environment, where cultural institutions were perceived to be powerful and conservative. Yet, the energies, which led to the formation of such spaces also produced interventions in the institutional citadels themselves. In the aftermath of the historical avant-garde (and attempts by the likes of Marcel Duchamp and SI to undermine the very concept of art), the 1960s and 1970s thus experienced a second wave of institutional boundary testing. In addition to the introduction of alternative spaces, this was manifested in art forms, which either ignored, embarrassed or appeared to make the institution redundant: through happenings, performances, installations and large-scale outdoor projects, artists sought to challenge or expose the art institution's tolerance-level, yet often managed only to demonstrate its self-preserving elasticity. Ironically, this development propagated a tendency for art institutions not only to accept such challenges, but also to initiate them in the form of institutional residencies, sponsored extra-mural events or more permanent alliances with alternative spaces. The introduction of alternative spaces may thus have contributed to the pressure which, from the 1960s, triggered a phase of museological self-revision. Since then, the museum has "engaged in a lot of breast-beating and group-therapy", "performed a public purge of its past"[6] and attempted

to rewrite narratives, which "privileged men over women and white Europeans over black and colonized peoples".[7]

These developments must also be related to a broader theoretical turn. Under the growing impact of poststructuralism, the Habermasian perception of the museum as an important democratic institution and a cornerstone of the public sphere, has increasingly been displaced by Foucauldian perspectives. On this understanding, the art museum—through its accumulation, production and 'ownership' of knowledge—comes to be seen as an expression of the 'disciplinary society'. As one of the its most rigorous critics, Bourdieu is, however, less interested in Foucault's body-politics than in the social inequalities served by the museum's inherent elitism and the mystifying role of 'distinction' (here referred to as grace):

> If such is the function of culture and if it is love of art which really determines the choice that separates, as by an invisible and insuperable barrier, those who have from those who have not received this grace, it can be seen that museums betray, in the smallest details of their morphology and their organization, *their true function, which is to strengthen the feeling of belonging in some and the feeling of exclusion in others* (. . .). Being the keystone of a system which can function only by concealing it's true function, the charismatic representation of art experience never fulfills its function of mystifying so well as when it resorts to a "democratic" language: to claim that works of art have power to awaken the grace of aesthetic enlightenment in anyone (. . .) and therefore to treat inherited aptitudes as personal virtues which are both natural and meritorious.[8] (my emphasis)

Thus, without directly aligning himself with Foucault, Bourdieu challenges the Habermasian faith in the institution's democratizing role. Alongside this theoretical re-positioning, recent museum debates in the Western world have, however, reflected the neoliberal turn in cultural policy. Increasingly expected to generate their own mandate and revenue, the ethos of museums has thus gradually become less distinctive from those of the business and entertainment sectors. While controversial, this transition has arguably been eased by Foucault's critique of the autonomy concept: if the institution's ability to offer the art-work a freehold status (as prescribed by Adorno[9]) is illusory, there is no reason why it should not become more like the independent corporation! Drawing on the work of Pine and Gilmore, Martin Hall moreover suggests that, rather than representing a knowledge base, today's museum has entered into the 'experience economy'. The museum's role is therefore no longer primarily moral, educative or democratic, but the supply of opportunities for individual fulfillment. The 'experience-sector'

as such has no inherent objective or morality, but exists for citizens to identify those attractions or events that correspond with their intellectual or emotional needs and self-image. Museums are now (though the argument perhaps holds less relevance for the art museum) "offering to those who can afford to participate, the fantasy of a customized world, the opportunity to be who they want to be through the technologies of simulation".[10]

One of the most pointed creative responses to this development has come from the American artist Andrea Fraser. In a series of interventions at the Bilbao Guggenheim (one of the most spectacular manifestations of the museum's corporate evolution), she exposes the shallowness of a promotional rhetoric intent on convincing the visitor that the museum—commencing with its architectural articulation—represents a new era of freedom. The 'freedom' embodied by the Bilbao Guggenheim is merely that, which is "realized by the global mobility of capital, production, and the transnational elites among whom cultural producers can be counted in growing numbers. And they are also freedoms increasingly sought and enjoyed not only by artists and the individual and corporate patrons of museums, but also by the corporate entities many major museums themselves have become". Like these corporations, the museum may then finally enjoy "the freedom from national, civic and communitarian order, cultural tradition and social determination, and political and economic regulation"—indeed, Fraser suggests, the freedom to no longer be "instruments of the state, institutions of confinement and constraint; architecturally and discursively closed structures following rigid organizational and conceptual models, that are as immobile and fossilized as their outdated displays of the past".[11]

With the drive for change being equally motivated (or forced) by a revisionary conceptual momentum and by neoliberal policies, the climate in contemporary museology is therefore most of all schizophrenic. The aspiration towards a less 'institutional' (i.e., patriarchal and Eurocentric) image has forged a tendency towards more inclusive and experimental exhibition-policies, but at the same time, the need to maximize revenues determines a focus on 'safe' and popular blockbuster events. If cultural institutions as a result have become less about defending canons than about mirroring a very diverse public, the question arises whether the margin once occupied by alternative spaces still exists, or whether the former division of roles has changed: notwithstanding their counter hegemonic, progressive 'grass-roots' connotations, alternative spaces (which may cultivate more experimental or 'difficult' art), have always been elitist in a Bourdieusian sense, but against art museums, which have recast themselves as anti-elitist, their 'exclusive' profile arguably becomes more pointed. With shrinking funding-

opportunities since the 1990s, however, many alternative spaces have also had to modify their policies to ensure survival (for example through the introduction of quasi-commercial activities), with the result that the philosophical differences between institutions and their 'opposites' have diminished, and at times seems merely a matter of image, style and scale.

Postcolonial Perspectives

While the Western museum at once finds itself entrenched in processes of self-revision and corporate expansion, it remains to be asked which of these debates may be relevant to the Caribbean and to the postcolonial world in general? In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson ascribes a crucial role to new world museums in generating awareness of "the local in the global" already in the waning days of colonialism and, more directly, in the era of dawning nationalism. New world museums have been underpinned by a "populist thrust" and a "policy-orientation", he writes, and further suggests that twentieth-century nationalisms were 'modular' and essentially duplicated throughout the new world.[12] Following this pattern, Caribbean cultural institutions have modeled themselves on both European and new world antecedents.

While never spared the Western museum's concomitant identity crisis and economic constraints, many postcolonial cultural institutions have also, as Wayne Modest points out, been challenged to integrate objects of anthropological interest into their collections, and indeed to reclaim such objects from metropolitan institutions.[13] They furthermore have to reflect a culturally heterogeneous environment, which requires difficult considerations of 'indigeneity': How long does it take for a population segment to become 'indigenous' and to what extent should cultural citizenship be extended to the diaspora?[14] In their introductory essay to *Museum Frictions,* Corinne Kratz and Ivan Karp rightly ask: "What would a Caribbean or South African idiom, or an 'Australian museum' look like? How would one recognize it? Does it have to do with topics or themes addressed? Are there signs of national culture or indigeneity in a formal or design sense? Would it be related to differences in social practice, organizational plan, or the particular economic circumstances in which it operates?".[15]

As I see it, postcolonial institutions can in principle adopt one of three theoretical positions. Reflecting Anderson's 'Eurocentric nationalism', the first, which was espoused by Caribbean museums inaugurated before Independence, embraces the idea of the museum as an inherently modern and educational institution, and invests it with a national agenda. In this 'national-elitist' framework, artistic and

cultural production is regarded as locally articulated parallels to Western anteced-ents, largely based on Matthew Arnold's notion of culture as 'the best that has been thought and said'. The second position, which can be considered 'globally subversive', would argue that although the museum-institution so far has served Western imperialism, it must remain intact for dominant narratives to be rewrit-ten. Gyan Prakash thus opens his essay "Museum Matters" by suggesting that, not-withstanding the existential crisis that underpins the Western museum's current self-admonishment, what is important now is to create exhibits, which bring out different histories and different premises:

> [T]he 'orders of the West' cannot be undone by turning away, but by revi-sioning the organization of cultural difference. This means the discordant presence of nonwestern objects to disclose incommensurable cultural differ-ence, to reveal the distance between cultures that has been mapped histori-cally to conquest, domination, interaction, and appropriation. It is then that the liminal and intertwined histories lodged in museum matters, and kept at bay by humanist and historicist appropriation, will realize their potential as aporetic material for rethinking history, for revising how museums matter.[16]

It may, however, be quite hard for *viewers* to distinguish the exhibition-practices Prakash envisages, from those of a third position, which seeks to under-mine binary relationships altogether. In *The Birth of the Museum*, Tony Bennett challenges the museum to "break free from the hierarchically organized forms of stigmatic othering that characterizes the exhibitionary complex and provide more (. . .) beneficial interfaces between different cultures". What is needed, he suggests, are hybrid practices, which avoid notions of purity and an invisible cen-tre, and which emphasize complex narratives, intercultural exchange and intertex-tuality.[17] The implications of such 'hybrid practices' are reflected in Karen Mary Davalos's essay "Exhibiting Mestizaje. The Poetics and Experience of the Mexican Fine Arts Museum". On her agenda is thus a complete departure from exhibition-ary practices, which end up as agents of nationalism through the suggestion of cultural uniformity. Denouncing all distinctions like 'art and culture' or 'us and them', Davalos instead argues for a comprehensive understanding of 'mestizaje' as openness towards "hybrid cultures, genders, sexuality, languages and voices". With such an approach, she argues, the "mixing of aesthetic styles and display tech-niques produces unanticipated results that rupture the message initially conveyed in the ethnographic or artistic approach to objects". Yet Davalos's discussion of specific exhibition-practices actually leaves the reader with a sense of diminishing, rather than widening possibilities, when she for example condemns the practice of

"isolating objects and presenting them as individual artistic achievements", which is said to undermine the museum's community orientation.[18] Notwithstanding the similarity in the terminology deployed by Prakash ('discordant presence', 'to disclose' and 'reveal' differences) and Davalos's effort to 'rupture the message', his globally subversive vision notably does not eliminate the role of national institutions, while her hybrid practice is radically deconstructive and post-nationalist. The three positions have, evidently, evolved in successive response to one another and, over time, specific institutions may well have been influenced by more than one of these paradigms. As noted above, it can, however, be difficult to deduce a subtle critical orientation from a cultural institution's (always contingent, always evolving) practices. As Annie Paul's critique of Jamaica's National Gallery suggests, nationalist narratives, which were intended to be globally subversive, have later been accused, not only of elitism, but of both Euro- and Afro-centricity—a predicament noted by Poupeye in her catalogue text for the National Gallery's 40th anniversary in 2014:

> The NGJ opened during a period when the arts were increasingly politicized, fuelled by new ideas about the role of culture in social change that were articulated locally and globally in the 1960s and 70s. How the NGJ was conceived was, however, more indebted to the ideas about art and culture that had emerged in the pre-independence nationalist movement and arguably also inherited its main contradiction, in that it ultimately reflected the views and interests of the local intellectual and professional elites, despite its stated concern with national identity-formation.[19]

It is, besides, even more difficult for an institution than for critics and artists to adopt and maintain a deconstructive policy. How would the 'post-institution' Paul calls for function? Would its national narrative be continually changing (reflecting a plurality of citizenries)—and, if so, who would write the brief? Do aesthetic considerations become redundant if the institution's mandate solely becomes that of reflecting pluralism and inclusivity? In addition to divergent perceptions of what should be subverted or deconstructed (and how these operations should be performed), cultural institutions are, moreover, hugely dependent on the viewer's ability to decode an implied statement. The same gesture may also register differently in different locations and to different viewers, including artists— indeed, the curatorial balancing act between different critical allegiances has occasionally created a gulf between curators and artists. As noted by Karp, some African American artists are, for example, "suspicious of the attempt to deconstruct the aesthetic canon. They want a place in the art museum, not a world in

which art museums no longer assert claims of excellence".[20] It may likewise be remembered from the introduction that Barbadian artists like Ras Ishi Butcher and Ras Akyem Ramsay—artists who in other ways have been regarded as radically 'anti-establishment'—explicitly called for a more discerning administrative approach to the visual arts. Yet, one of the most pernicious problems for national art galleries in regions with emerging art histories and no competing institutions is, according to Poupeye, that of being seen as 'gatekeepers'[21], which further complicates the competing demands for discernment and inclusivity.

More than any conceptual challenge, however, the one factor, which may inhibit the realization of revisionary and counter hegemonic strategies is, of course, a lack of resources and material limitations (works and funds available, spatial restrictions, etc.). In Peru, such conditions inspired Gustavo Buntinx to conceptualize the 'micromuseum' (or the 'tactical museum')—a small and flexible entity that seeks to work both with and against existing museums to supplement and challenge official canons. Sharing Davalos's emphasis on community, but not the a priori denunciation of any particular aesthetic or curatorial approach, tactical museums are above all inclusive and committed to the restitution of civic agency and do not "seek to make prestigious a self-fashioned marginality (another form of elitism), but to actively engage in the (re)construction of the very idea of community, no matter how prospective or even utopian it might in some cases seem to be".[22] The micromuseum should therefore not neglect the popular, but seek to facilitate the meeting between "the intellectual community and the new urban population". It must furthermore be "ductile and mobile, willing to sustain its autonomy on an elementary, but sufficient economy" (an economy that might be compared to that of the urban microbus). Buntinx moreover submits that radicality "can only be assumed and projected by an entity that is independent of the powers that be, of Power itself". Yet, the micromuseum cannot be misconstrued as anti-ideological. Indeed, Buntinx' declaration that the micromuseum in a globalized world, aims at being "rabidly specific with the hope of thus becoming a living and pertinent institution"[23] suggests that independence from "the powers that be" not the least is leveled at metropolitan cultural domination. The micromuseum is thus envisioned as both supplementary and 'alternative'. It does not attempt to satisfy "globalized desires and effects", but to redirect them, and it does so by undoing the hierarchic and static character of the conventional institution, and by being inclusive and aesthetically diverse. While the micromuseum may be counter-canonical, it is therefore neither anti-canonical, nor anti-institutional or cosmopolitanist.

Whereas new museological developments (in addition to the poststructuralist

turn) at once have increased the need for and undermined the profile of alternative spaces in a Western context, the alternative space may, in a postcolonial setting, primarily set itself up against the absence or inadequacy of institutions (and other cultural infrastructures), and only secondly against the canons and priorities of those that do exist. Against the complex museo-political scenario I have drawn up, it is moreover difficult to envisage a position by which a 'postcolonial alternativity' can develop a wholly independent profile.[24] Meanwhile, though the rhetoric, which surrounds these venues in the Caribbean, often resonates with the counter-cultural connotations of the original alternative space, I contend that their oppositional inflection in many cases relates to *cultural policy*, rather than to the dominance of established canons or monolithic institutions. What follows now is an outline (much indebted to Suzanne Burke's pioneering study) of the region's post-Independence policy trajectory, as well as a look at the regional cultural festival, Carifesta, through which the problems of conflicting policy-interests, and a consistently *instrumental* approach to culture, comes into focus.

Cultural Policy in the Anglophone Caribbean

Towards the end of his lecture "The Artist in the Caribbean" (1959), C. L. R. James makes the following statement about Caribbean artists: "If I emphasize what seems to me heights, which today they cannot reach, it is because of my conviction that it is only when we are able to give them the conditions, such as I have described, that we shall get from them what at this stage of our existence we so much need (…)".[25] Highlighting the importance, at the moment of decolonization, of developing a national consciousness and traditions to which future artists can critically respond, James argues that the transformative power of art only can be released within a dynamic between tradition and innovation.[26] We may assume that his plea, among other things, was for governments to establish cultural institutions, which might anchor and facilitate such a dynamic. In the Anglophone Caribbean, demands for cultural infrastructure have issued from practically every central figure of the anti-colonial movement, including Kamau Brathwaite, Martin Carter, Denis Williams, Rex Nettleford and Derek Walcott.

In *Policing the Transnational. Cultural Policy Development in the Anglophone Caribbean 1962–2008* Suzanne Burke outlines the region's cultural policy trajectory and identifies some of its inherent challenges and contradictions. These include the always ambivalent relationship between culture and policy, cultural protection(ism) and instrumentality, local and global agendas, all of which reflect the often disparate priorities of governments and creative practitioners. *Phase one*

thus began in the anti-colonial climate of the 1950s, when many of the region's cultural institutions were founded. Informed by the 'Creole society' theory, it was characterized by the wish to unite and integrate diverse populations, but also by the cultivation of a Eurocentric elitism and the endorsement of 'high art'. Though culture in this period primarily was being made *for* the people, certain popular forms were also encouraged (such as intuitive painting, calypso, etc.), so long as they were not too politically subversive (like Rastafarianism).

In *phase two*, which began in the mid 1970s, the focus changed towards the representation of national *diversity* through cultural expressions. Even though the region's existing museums, according to Kevin Farmer, "were co-opted by post-colonial governments to become agents of identity construction",[27] there was also growing opposition to the region's new administrations. To counter this trend, policy-makers drew on the 'plural society' model to distribute opportunities to a wider range of people and social groups, who were encouraged to participate in the production of culture. In this period, many activities were therefore structured around community centers and aimed at mass participation and self-empowerment. The 1970s were, however, also marked by financial duress and structural adjustment programmes, which undermined such investments in culture and development, and, by the mid 1980s, "the cultural policy focus shifted from one of cultural democracy to one of conservative management".[28]

Phase three therefore marks a shift in emphasis from the "arts that cost, to the arts that pay". During this (ongoing) phase, policy has split into two streams, one of which maintains aspects of previous policies, such as the encouragement of cultural confidence and democracy, while the other employs culture "in the service of resolving the economic dilemma that continues to plague the region".[29] In the era of globalization, Burke notes, the region's cultural policy-makers have endeavored to retain the notion of 'local culture' and to regulate the new channels of cultural distribution, which tend to erode such markers and, with them, the prospects of reaping due returns.[30] Despite the apparent urgency of these measures, Burke observes that "the Anglophone Caribbean has acquired a poor record of cultural policy activation". She explains this partly by the fact that support for culture always has been yoked to other agendas (not to be confused with the *strategic* integration of the cultural and other sectors recommended by Nurse (see n. 34)), thereby underscoring the persistently instrumental approach to culture in the post-Independence Caribbean.

To compensate for the stalled development of cultural institutions and infrastructure, a large number of cultural festivals have emerged around the region. With its departure from the austere and paternalistic image of the museum and the concert-hall, the festival concept in many ways answers to the second policy

phase's demand for inclusivity and community outreach. Since the region boasts a long history of festivals[31] such events can also justifiably be regarded as a more 'indigenous' alternative to a European matrix. The launch (in 1972) of the region's largest cultural festival, Carifesta, thus reflected a pan-Caribbean grassroots-spirit. With a history that especially speaks to the latter two policy phases, it provides a useful angle on the problems surrounding Caribbean cultural policy.

From Carifesta to Galvanize

Conceived just a decade after Independence was won for Jamaica and Trinidad, Carifesta was established to strengthen regional ties and forge an autonomous cultural identity based on a shared history. Since then, it has been a recurring (albeit irregular) event, featuring a wide variety of art forms and held at alternating locations around the region. Its motto has typically played on the idea of cultural diversity as a resource (for example 'A rainbow of peoples under the Caribbean sun', 'The world's best cultural mix' and 'Many cultures: the essence of togetherness, the spirit of the Caribbean'). According to the CARICOM (the Caribbean Community and Common Market) website, the festival is thought of as "a tool to strengthen our Caribbeanness", and it is intended to be inspirational, educational and entertaining, to "depict the life of the people in the region" and to "create a supportive climate which will encourage artists to return to their homeland and stimulate a sense of regional identity". Meanwhile, due not only to the unspecific nature of these objectives, but also to the shortage of documentation (which may be ascribed to the absence of a continuous management system for the festival), it is difficult to assess how well it has accomplished these targets.

After its initial feats, the festival's successes have, however, been overshadowed by miserable failures and dwindling support. In his 1992-assessment of Carifesta, Trevor Marshall explains this development with the "economic slide throughout the region since the mid 1980's," which "rendered Carifesta unattractive to almost all of the CARICOM territories, all of which have slender economic resources, tiny budgets and several competing projects".[32] A decade later, Al Creighton observes that hosting the festival is overwhelmingly expensive, administratively challenging and under-appreciated, and that criticisms from participants and visitors alike have targeted the festival's ad hoc planning, short notices, inadequate venues and chaotic programming. He cites Derek Walcott (one of many prominent artists, who have turned their backs on Carifesta) for condemning the festival as "an expensive fete every few years after which the artists return home to poverty". The money, he argues, should instead be spent on development, such as "scholarships,

infrastructure and other support within each territory".[33] For the visual arts, which tend to require particular facilities (like uninterrupted wall- and floor-space and focused lighting), it has moreover been a recurring complaint that artists and artworks are treated without due care and respect, and that the selections for the festival either are too conservative or not professional enough. Altogether, the Carifesta-trajectory has thus reinforced an already negative rapport between the postcolonial Caribbean state and its cultural practitioners.

The diminishing support for Carifesta eventually prompted the Regional Cultural Committee to commission a strategic plan for its re-invention. The plan, which was prepared by Keith Nurse and published in 2004, takes a pragmatic and un-sentimental look at the festival by attempting to identify its potential assets and liabilities. Nurse's approach is based on a regular business-model, and, though not insensitive to the particular nature of Carifesta, introduces a concrete set of success-criteria: artistic excellence, stakeholder satisfaction and financial feasibility. The festival's central problem is thus identified as its un-competitiveness: excessive spending with little tangible return, poor marketing and media-coverage, repetitive programming, lack of consistency and records—in short: managerial rather than conceptual problems. If Carifesta rises to the challenge, Nurse argues, this "roving, regional, interdisciplinary mega arts event"[34] can offer international acclaim and opportunities for Caribbean artists, which in turn will achieve the original objective of bolstering cultural confidence. Central to Nurse's plan are, therefore, pragmatic (if inherently neoliberal) demands for efficient management, strategic marketing, attractive programming based on 'high artistic standards' as well as increased merchandizing and commercialization. Meanwhile, although the plan certainly offers the festival a much-needed sense of direction, it seems to me, that it also glosses over one of its core problems by leaving the concept of 'artistic excellence' un-examined. The aforementioned complaints of conservatism and un-professionalism are indeed reflective of previous policy-phases, which were either seen as 'too elitist' or 'too inclusive' and therefore always alienated one segment of the artistic community or the other. The stated connection between 'artistic excellence' and 'financial feasibility' does, however, suggest that the question of aesthetics is avoided, because it is expected to resolve itself through a process of natural selection by popular demand. Solving the problem of 'feasibility' thus jeopardizes the other criteria of 'stakeholder satisfaction', if by 'stakeholder' is meant the entire creative (rather than merely the participating) community. In a reference to Caribbean heritage-policy (which could as well be applied to Nurse's Carifesta-plan) Philip Scher, however, draws attention to the constrictive effect of fashioning culture according to 'consumer expectations':

The structuring force of neoliberalism produces an emphasis on culture (a non-competitive market niche), yet also provides the hegemonic model of what counts as culture; that which is remembered and recalled by consumers as appropriate and legitimate to a region, is shaped by both global factors and local history or tradition. Cultural products then need to be recognizable to the target consumer: the foreign visitor. The result is a greater investment in managing cultural products and practices in order to preserve their economic potential and serve the expectations of consumers.[35]

While I agree with Scher's observation, my broader argument (especially as developed in section 3) also suggests that a contemporary art, which seeks to *escape* such managerial and utilitarian maneuvers, and to avoid being commodified as 'local culture', may still comply with global market-demands at a different level.

Curiously, given the neoliberal policy climate of the moment, Nurse's plan for restructuring the festival was never activated—a peculiarity, which Andrea Wells (then acting CEO of the Barbados National Cultural Foundation) in a 2009-paper explained with equal reluctance on the part of artists, who were skeptical of its intended commercialization, and on the part of governments, who were unwilling to surrender their direct control over budgets and submissions. The failure to renew Carifesta, she argues, must be ascribed to a lack of both political and artistic will to compromise, as well as to domestic priorities overriding regional aspirations. It is therefore not just the management or prospects of the festival itself, which must be re-examined, but the commitment to regional integration in principle.

Altogether, I submit that the Carifesta-trajectory concretizes the multiple gaps that exist between national and regional agendas, artists and governments, culture and politics. Indeed, the festival has continually put a spotlight on the weakness or absence of permanent or viable infrastructures for the arts in the Anglophone Caribbean. In addition to Ministries of Culture (with various subsidiary agencies), designated national galleries exist in Jamaica, Guyana, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas. Trinidad has a National Museum and Art Gallery, while Barbados still awaits the implementation of the National Gallery Act, which was passed in 2010.[36] In chapter 5, these galleries (or their absence) are treated as part of the broader environment to which Caribbean alternative spaces respond.

Before transitioning the focus of the discussion from Caribbean cultural policy to such spaces, it may be instructive to also take a brief look at a project, which took place in Trinidad in 2006 alongside Carifesta IX. While the nation was preparing to host the festival, a group of artists (led by Mario Lewis, who had

partnered with the Contemporary Arts Centre CCA7) prepared an alternative event titled *Galvanize*. The intention was to demonstrate the 'visible absence' of contemporary art from the national media and discourse and, over the course of six weeks, *Galvanize* managed to produce twenty-one events. By staging a series of public talks and interviews with visual artists, writers, musicians and journalists, it sought to "engage with unconventional audiences in unconventional ways" and to promote the principle of 'conversation' with a strong emphasis on audience-participation. Apart from drawing attention to emerging and experimental art, *Galvanize* also, according to Wainwright, "set out to provoke thought on the strategies of racial and ethnic pluralism that have shaped anti-colonial nationalisms in the Caribbean and which persist through representations such as Carifesta, Trinidad's annual carnival celebrations, and the island's local infrastructure for the arts and education".[37] Philip Sander suggests that the organizers (somewhat implausibly) denied that *Galvanize* attempted to "steal the picture" from Carifesta, but, unlike the latter, which was publicly criticized from beginning to end, the event was a huge media- and participant-success.[38] Wainwright thus notes that "A glowing editorial in The Trinidad Guardian praised the resourcefulness and slick organization of *Galvanize*, drawing a sharp contrast with Carifesta and the debacle caused by its poor execution".[39] With its low-budget accomplishment, *Galvanize* showed that collaborative efforts could be efficient, flexible and satisfying and thus presented a hard-to-ignore case for 'stakeholder-management' of culture rather than governmental administration.

Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter has sought to provide a historical and political background and context for the emergence of alternative spaces in the Anglophone Caribbean, which, ironically, has coincided with their metropolitan decline. It has also sought to identify some of the strategies available to the postcolonial institution, and to explain that their application may be hampered by limited resources, conflicting agendas, and by the difficulty of conveying a subtle and complex message to the general public. Finally, the chapter has outlined a policy trajectory, which reveals the region's consistently instrumental approach to culture. From once working in relative (if never perfect) unison with cultural practitioners towards the development of cultural identity, Caribbean policy-makers have now largely adopted a neoliberal model, which is pragmatic, multiculturalist and economistic. The recurring clashes between official policy objectives and Caribbean artists' demand for creative independence and acknowledgment are well reflected in the history

of Carifesta. It has been argued that the failures and gradual demise of the festival has been one of several incitements, both on the part of governments and (some) practitioners, towards the privatization of cultural enterprise (other practitioners remain strongly committed to the creation or improvement of national institutions). Against this background, chapter 5 offers case studies of three alternative spaces in the Anglophone Caribbean, which will serve to concretize some of the challenges and contradictions currently governing the field of cultural administration in this region.

Three Spaces in Context

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OVER THE LAST TWENTY-FIVE years, spaces, which are generally referred to as 'alternative', 'artist-led' or 'informal', and which sometimes double as artists' residencies, have sprung up across (and beyond) the Anglophone Caribbean. While some are focused solely on the visual arts, many facilitate a wider range of creative activities, but altogether, they represent a new, privately mobilized effort to connect the region's artists across borders and disciplines outside of events like Carifesta. With the advantages of electronic networks and instant communications unavailable to previous generations, they have energized the art scene and generated a new sense of possibility, especially among younger artists. Towards the wider world, they project a new 'grass-roots' image, which is nimble, restless and entrepreneurial.

A blog-entry by the young Puerto Rican artist Sofia Maldonado, which appeared in the *Huffington Post's* 'Arts and Culture' section in 2013, conveys the excitement such spaces often spark in their community of participants. Reflecting on a residency at Ateliers '89 in Aruba, Maldonado speaks of the "colonial past and post-colonial present", which unites Caribbean artists, of their common desire for "establishing links (…) exchanging ideas and sharing their creative process", and of the "economic and artistic limitations", which "often compel young contemporary artists to turn their heads towards the booming capitals in the United States or Europe that have larger art budgets and art markets". In response to all of this, she notes, "important creative networks have been on the rise in the Caribbean". She mentions Ateliers '89 in Aruba (opened 1989), Instituto Buena Bista in Curacao (opened 2006), Alice Yard in Trinidad (opened 2006/7), Beta Local in Puerto Rico (opened 2009), the Fresh Milk Art Platform in Barbados (opened 2011), and NLS (New Local Space) in Jamaica (opened 2012), but to this list can be added CCA7 (Caribbean Contemporary Arts) in Trinidad (1997–2007), Popopstudios (International Center for the Visual Arts) in the Bahamas (opened 1999), Tembe Art Studio in Surinam (opened 2009), the Groundation Grenada Collective

(founded 2009) as well as a number of more short-lived spaces. Sometimes the aforementioned *Galvanize*-project and the arts journal *ARC Magazine* (launched 2011)[1] are also listed as informal spaces. This chapter takes a closer look at three such spaces in the Anglophone Caribbean: Alice Yard in Trinidad, Fresh Milk in Barbados and Popopstudios in the Bahamas. The three are chosen, partly because of their prominence in the informal network constituted by the totality of these spaces, partly because their national institutional contexts range from weak to relatively strong.

Before undertaking this discussion, I feel compelled to underscore my awareness of the enormous (and often unpaid) labor that goes into the establishment and maintenance of such spaces. If my reflections here, as in the previous section, at times are critical, they are so alongside my recognition of the frustrations, as well as the enthusiasm that motivate them and, especially, their indisputable benefit to numerous artists. My occasional reservations notwithstanding, I am of the firm opinion, that the Caribbean cultural scene is enriched by such spaces.

Alice Yard

In the spring of 2007, I participated in the first round of regional consultations for the preparation of the *Caribbean Crossroads of the World* exhibition, which eventually took place in New York in 2012. The event was hosted by CCA7 in Trinidad—arguably the region's premier 'alternative space' from its opening in 1997 to its closure a few months after the said event. Apart from minor stakeholders like myself, the participants were influential curators, sponsors and museum-directors from the region and the United States. As part of the programming, the group embarked on a tour that led from the National Museum and Art Gallery near Port-of-Spain's savannah to the recently opened 'Alice Yard' in Woodbrook. In the museum's foyer we were received by an official, who conveyed the director's regrets. The latter had been expected to receive and guide the group through the collections, but, we were told, had been called away on urgent business. It was, however, scarcely a sense of urgency that emanated from the place.[2] The art displays (confined to the building's second floor) were presently being re-arranged and only a few works were visible, standing on the floor. A dripping air-condition unit broke the quietness of a smaller, climate-controlled room, and the overall impression matched the old cliché of the 'dusty museum' only too well. Nonetheless, the visiting curators responded to all of this with remarkable patience and looked at what was available with great interest.

Meanwhile, the organizers' effort to contrast what they may have predicted

to be an impression of un-professionalism and institutional failure with a visit to the newly opened alternative space Alice Yard, was—at least as I gauged it—not entirely effective. The guests were first taken to the offices of the architect Sean Leonard, who, along with Christopher Cozier, the writer Nicholas Laughlin and the musician Sheldon Holder, founded and continues to manage the space. In this cool and elegant environment, Cozier spoke appreciatively about the Leonard-family's gesture of making a downtown house available to the arts and, if the guests still couldn't quite imagine the space, they at least got an impression of the founders' enthusiasm. Upon our subsequent arrival to Alice Yard, however, several guests struggled to contain their confusion about the smallness and character of the space, which in no way resembled even a modest exhibition venue. For the most part, there was no roof cover, no significant wall- or floor-space, and no art on display. Skeptical glances were exchanged, for, to the point of audacity, this looked like any other backyard. If I left, that day, with the slightly embarrassed feeling of having witnessed a clash between vastly incongruous measures of success, Alice Yard has more than vindicated itself in the intervening years. When I visited again in October 2013, it was to attend a talk offered by the noted, UK-based art historian Kobena Mercer, who stated that it had been a long-standing wish of his to visit the space. If anyone was in doubt, it rang home the point that Alice Yard, by a long shot, had become the most renowned and influential contemporary visual arts space in the Caribbean.

Once a residential neighborhood lined with gingerbread houses, Woodbrook has become a largely commercial district. It is easy to miss the entrance to Alice Yard at 80 Robert Street (plate 16). There is no gate, and no other gesture than a small sign with the words 'Alice Yard' on the bias, and the short driveway itself, which motions the visitor past the grey-painted house towards the irregular yard at the back. At the end of the driveway, the caller faces a small multi-purpose space known as the 'studio annex', where refreshments are available on the basis of a pay-what-you-can system. A cement-wall, half-hidden by a patch of Heliconias, connects the studio annex to a low unpainted structure identified as the 'band room' on an online map of the yard. Adjacent to this is another small space fronted by two wide glass-doors with red-painted frames, lending a modernist touch. The tiny, well-lit room behind these doors (measuring no more than about 7′ x 9′) is the space envisaged by Cozier in the following rough note: "something that looks like a show window or an illuminated box? in the night but could also be a kind of stage for action & band 'objects' in the yard. One may not always have to enter".[3] On the other side of the 'light-box' is the original house, which contains a small apartment for visiting artists. In addition to the space in Robert Street, Alice

Yard has opened the 'Granderson Lab' in the Belmont district to accommodate works and operations that cannot fit into the original space. A former printery, the Granderson Lab lends space, free of charge, to designers and creatives of every discipline, who might in turn make financial contributions when able.[4]

Modeled on the Trinidadian 'mascamp', Alice Yard is marketed as a "conceptual enterprise", as a platform for "creative practice and critical dialogue" and as a "space for creative experiment, collaboration and improvisation".[5] There seems to be a deliberate effort, not only to reject the formality of a conventional gallery, but also to marry the impression of a public space with that of a domestic one. When the Alice Yard-concept was featured in the *Global Africa*-exhibition at the Museum of Art and Design in New York in 2010, a blogger mused over the space as "A grassroots contemporary art center-cum-backyard that's located in a Port-of-Spain suburb in Trinidad, W. I., complete with its own outside sink that's fitted with a 'jukking' board for scrubbing clothes".[6] A small pamphlet likewise reminds us of the rootedness of the space in ordinary Trinidadian life: "Four generations of children played and imagined in this yard, and now we continue this tradition".[7]

In the Caribbean, and perhaps especially in Trinidad, the concept of culture has above all been associated with popular forms like carnival, calypso and steelpan-traditions. Visual art, as has been discussed, has struggled with a rather more difficult image given its material character and associations of exchange-value and ownership, elite traditions and individualist character. The discipline has, in the context of cultural policy, been regarded as an art form for the privileged few.[8] It is, however, not only particular art forms, which have come to see themselves as continually marginalized in Trinidadian cultural policy, but also non-black ethnicities.[9] This is reflected in the 'Draft National Policy Framework for Multiculturalism and the Draft National Cultural Policy' of 2013, which announces the introduction of a new cultural policy and the renaming of the Ministry of Arts and Culture as the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism[10]—thus immediately giving away the instrumental use of culture alluded to in the previous chapter. The new policy, it is stated, aims at removing the Afrocentric bias from existing legislation and practices. It is admitted that, so far: "(1) The term 'Culture' signifies manifestations that are defined as Afrocentric, i.e., Calypso, Steelpan, and Limbo; and (2) The Ministry with responsibility for Culture traditionally concentrates resources (financial, training, productions, etc.) on these African expressions of culture." The overall objective of the policy-change is therefore to: "Create an environment that facilitates the development of the diverse forms of culture practiced by Trinidadians and Tobagonians within the ambit of a national culture of patriotism."[11]

The intention is thus to arrive at a more equitable representation of the nation's cultural diversity than the previously implied Afro-Creole norm, though with a common thrust implied by the word 'patriotism'. An appendix to the draft-policy moreover lists "Major civil society stake-holders in the cultural sector". It includes numerous educational and non-profit organizations with a cultural scope, including the Art Society of Trinidad and Tobago and the Studio 66 Art Support Community, but surprisingly not Alice Yard. Unless due to ministerial oversight, the absence suggests that no effort has been made on the part of Alice Yard to cultivate a relationship with a government that regards culture as an instrument of nationalism, patriotism and multiculturalism.[12]

The National Museum and Art Gallery, which answers to this ministry, was once the Royal Victoria Institute. Established in 1892 as part of a broader initiative by the British Crown to promote knowledge and education in the Commonwealth, the institute was renamed the National Museum and Art Gallery in 1965.[13] With its Dutch gables, curved pediments, volutes and fixed tropical louvers, the building is a fine example of Port-of-Spain's eclectic Victorian architecture (plate 17). Dedicated to history, natural science *and* art, however, even this magnificent building seems too small. There is no permanent display of the national collection, but an upper level gallery is used for changing exhibitions. Though the room is grand and spacious, a succession of niches, windows and other architectural 'events' perpetually interrupt its walls, and the gallery arguably presents a curatorial challenge in itself. The exhibition mounted at the time of my most recent visit featured a wide range of Trinidad's past and present artists, and offered what I thought was an interesting, if cursory, survey of the nation's art history. Contrary to the 2007-fiasco, the impression one got was of a concerted effort to make the best of the available resources. The limitations of these were, however, quite evident in the exhibition, where most artists were represented by what might be considered 'lesser' works: though Trinidad has a lively secondary art-market, the museum is clearly not a contender, when important works come up for sale.

During my visit, I had an informal talk with a senior museum official, who volunteered that the difficulty in acquiring new works never relates to their possibly controversial nature, but invariably to its price. However, what really inhibits the renewal of the museum's practices, she openly declared, is the 'age' (presumably meaning 'ways') and lack of specific training of the civil servants available to the museum. Asked about the 'competition' from alternative spaces like Alice Yard, she promptly exclaimed "I wish we could afford to bring in people of that caliber!" It seems fair to infer that such a museum is unlikely to be able to perform more than the most elementary duties of managing, cataloging and, to a limited degree,

expanding its collection, and even these tasks may be hampered by a lack of human and financial resources. Apart from wall-texts, no written information was available on the collections, or any part thereof. Since Trinidad has no published art history, the intrepid researcher is thus left to piece together a loose narrative on her own. Neither the government, nor any of its cultural or educational institutions, it seems, has taken any initiative to develop a historical or discursive context for the visual arts.[14]

This institutional vacuum has, however, not hindered the circulation of art among middle class Trinidadians. Since the 1960s, the local business-community and professional elite has offered considerable support to visual artists, though with a heavy concentration on those working around inoffensive themes in traditional media. Such support has ranged from private and corporate purchases to commissions for calendar-projects, competitions and annual awards. While well-known artists like Boscoe Holder and Leroy Clarke have made a comfortable living by selling works from their home, an extended sector of galleries and framing-companies has thus thrived on a considerable (albeit fluctuating) demand from the financially empowered. A history of galleries in the greater Port-of-Spain area would include the Icon Gallery (closed), Aquarela Galleries (closed), Gallery 1234 (closed), the Kiskadee Cultural Laboratory (closed), Art Creators (closed), Horizons Art Gallery, the 101 Gallery, Y Art and Framing, Medulla Art Gallery and Softbox Studios. Among these galleries, some have had a strictly commercial objective, while others—for example Aquarela (which has re-opened as the Medulla Art Gallery)—attempted to distinguish between "superficial art and art with depth".[15] Aquarela founder Geoffrey MacLean, however, concedes that his effort to support artists "who made strong socio-political statements"[16] proved detrimental to the gallery's survival. Suggesting a maturation of the market, the Medulla Gallery has, according to co-director Martin Mouttet, so far been more successful in not only showing, but also selling works by avant-garde artists from Trinidad and the wider region.[17] In addition to these galleries, and of particular interest here, the history of this sector would also include 'alternative' spaces, such as the 'Visual Arts Environment' (VAE) set up by Edward Bowen and Steve Ouditt in 1986 (in Bowen's studio), to offer workshops and facilitate debate on the visual arts,[18] as well as the Studio 66 Art Support Community, CCA7 and the *Galvanize* event of 2006. During an informal conversation about Alice Yard, one Trinidadian artist (who did not wish to be named) suggested to me, that, despite its open-gate policy, 'the Yard' could be somewhat intimidating—it ought, he said, "to be more like Studio 66".

Studio 66 Art Support Community was founded in 1994 with the intention to "provide adequate forums for artists to express themselves and demonstrate their talents, so that they can play a greater role in the Spiritual, Social and Cultural life of our people. Studio 66 also seeks to promote Art as a major thrust in National Development and the development of national consciousness".[19] It is located at the home of founder, Makemba Kunle, in the village of Barataria on the outskirts of Port-of-Spain, and its events have ranged from exhibitions to Christmas-sales and meetings by the Philosophical Society of Trinidad and Tobago. The grassroots-image is quite literally evoked by the semi-enclosed architecture with wooden rafters and bamboo posts, imaginative makeshift screens and greenery peeping in here and there. Pictures on the studio's Facebook page suggests a predominantly (though not exclusively) Rastafarian and Afro-oriented following, but the list of past exhibitors is long and diverse. Flipping through artists' bios and pictures one notes a strong emphasis on celebrating small and big achievements, honoring elders and cultural icons. The unmistakable focus of Studio 66 is, as also explicitly stated, national development through culture. It therefore sees itself as operating in concert with, rather than opposition to, official policy.

If Studio 66's location was a given, CCA7 may have had a variety of reasons for setting up in an industrial complex in the poor district of Laventille. CCA7, which was the initiative of Charlotte Elias, opened in 1997 and operated for the following decade, for the major part as an NGO with partial funding from overseas partners (including the Ford Foundation, the Prince Claus Fund, and the Carnegie Mellon Foundation[20]). It was, besides, part of the transnational artists' organization the 'Triangle Network' with affiliates across the globe. On the Triangle Network's web-page, one can read that the purpose of CCA7 was "to host community and international workshops and residency programmes, along with extensive outreach activities." Within its 18,000 square feet of compartmentalized industrial space, CCA7 had two exhibition-spaces and eleven studios as well as meeting- and administrative facilities. After its introduction of eight-week residencies, the space attracted artists from the Caribbean and further afield (including famous artists like Chris Ofili and Peter Doig, who now reside in Trinidad). The press release, which announced the closure of the space in 2007, announced that CCA7, by the end of its ten-year lifespan, had hosted more than seventy exhibitions, eighty-four residencies and six regional workshops.[21] In the last four years of its existence, it also lent its premises to a free weekly film screening, and it was an obvious venue for events like the *Caribbean Crossroads*-consultation. Though perhaps riding on a wave of cosmopolitanist goodwill initiatives from

the metropole (translated into funding for satellite platforms and NGOs around the world), CCA7 certainly stimulated the perception of the contemporary Trinidadian art-scene as energetic and ambitious.

While the Laventille-location above all was affordable, it also projected a community-oriented image, which for many reasons would be difficult to satisfy. A confluence of local, international, social and aesthetic demands would be challenging for any cultural institution, and even more so in a society where institutional support is scarce and opportunity often a reflection of personal resources. Here, brokers of favors and exposure are always under scrutiny, and demand will inevitably exceed supply. The inability for CCA7 to serve all agendas and communities equally well eventually became a problem. Criticisms did not issue from the Laventille-inhabitants (who may largely have been unaware of providing a backdrop for the region's most sophisticated contemporary art-centre), but mainly from segments of the Trinidadian arts community, who felt that the space was too elitist, too international in orientation and not sufficiently transparent. The writer and journalist Raymond Ramcharitar offered a number of searing critiques of CCA7, commencing with an assessment of the dismal circumstances and lack of state provisions for the arts, which encourage initiatives such as that of Charlotte Elias[22]:

> This neglect leaves a space for the phenomenon of artistic arbitrage, where an agency or agent is able to represent the neglected formal art of the country/ Third World as socio-culturally equivalent to metropolitan art, and hawk it to metropolitan agencies for a healthy commission. This means grants, status and authority over the direction of Caribbean art—and this final point is of particular importance because of the lack of artistic policy or organizations for the development of art (. . .) in Trinidad, and in a lesser way, the Anglophone Caribbean.[23]

While Ramcharitar's critique often gets personal and his suggestion of "healthy commissions" may be inaccurate (as it would preclude an NGO status), it also expresses a legitimate frustration. The mission-statement of CCA7, he points out, suggests that "culture is our most underutilized developmental tool"[24] but since the organization neither defines culture, nor development, it eschews any form of accountability. CCA7, he asserts, is part of a small, private (and comparatively privileged) network, which effectively has taken charge of the visual arts. When CCA7 eventually closed down, blogger Attilah Springer offered these final reflections in the Trinidad Guardian:

But the problem with CCA7 is the problem of Trinidad, in a way. It never seemed that CCA7 understood who or what it really was. And maybe it was lack of real funding or maybe it was lack of real vision (…). Every time I went to CCA7, I wondered how an art space survives without engaging the surrounding community. Not just of artists. Plenty nights watching films inside of that warehouse and the stench of my own filth filtering into my consciousness. Plenty nights watching art and listening to police cars scream past and helicopter searchlights looking and looking. Plenty nights watching art that reflected what was going on just outside and none of the people there to actually see it. But I suppose there is community and there is community. But even the artist community is fragmented, for a place so small.[25]

Another harsh critique, surprisingly, issued from Chris Cozier, one of the founding members: "In the long term, CCA7 simply provided an entry-point for foreign artists with solid connections to the international art market but did little to develop the visibility, critical understanding, and access to that international art world economy for the local artists in whose name it was developed".[26] It is uncertain whether such perceptions eventually conspired to dry up local co-funding for the continuation of the space. In a final press release, the management of CCA7 stated that "Despite increased international funding for our core endeavors, we continue to lack operational funding or much in the way of communal national support".[27]

While far too small to take over the role of CCA7, Alice Yard has inherited some of its functions. Since its inception in 2006, the yard has lent its premises to visual artists, designers, residencies, literary and musical events, film-screenings, debates and public lectures. With no paid staff, it has been managed by its founders and funded on an ad-hoc basis by themselves and small donations. While its more recent NGO-incorporation in principle allows for grant-applications, Laughlin volunteers: "We've never applied for a grant or received one, and never had to pursue anyone's agenda but our own. We've never been anxious about the resources we don't have. Instead we've imagined the biggest things we can make happen with what we do have".[28] Long-term planning, in other words, does not seem to be part of its operative mode: Alice Yard prides itself of being an organic, ever-evolving idea and a *concept*, rather than a place. If any one text were to be considered a manifesto for Alice Yard, it might well be Charles Campbell's short 2012-essay "Failure at the Yard", which reflects on his experience as artist-in-residence. The beauty of the space, he suggests, is that "it really has very little of what would normally be considered essential for most studios. You won't find an

easel or drawing board, an editing suite or tools for making, well anything (. . .).
Instead of a closed studio and access to equipment, you get an open courtyard
and access to people".[29]

Interviewed by Claire Tancons, Cozier explains the yard's evolution into a
space, which encourages "experimental, investigative contemporary art" and which
supports projects in their start-up phase. The interview (and my own casual
conversations with Cozier), supports the impression of a space operating in a
largely impromptu manner with prospective artists inquiring about residencies
or events, conditions negotiated (when possible, a small stipend may be offered,
but resident artists are responsible for getting their own funding together) and
things unfolding in an unscripted manner from there. According to Cozier "our
flexibility, and our openness (. . .) allows us to respond to how creative people
would like to use the space and collaborate in diverse ways".[30] He dismissed my
question about particular eligibility criteria or preferred aesthetic directions, but
with its open space and limited display facilities, Alice Yard is particularly con-
ducive to performances, outdoor installations and digital or video-works, which
can be projected onto any plain surface, or to the construction of works, which
later can be transferred into public settings (though other types of work can be
accommodated in the Granderson Lab). To Tancons's question: "Do you and
Alice Yard proceed according to what could be called group affinities?" Cozier
responds "We are simply proceeding. We are trying to build relationships with
groups of artists and thinkers who are faced with similar challenges and are seek-
ing creative solutions".[31] The nature of these challenges is left unsaid, but the 'visi-
bly absent' premise for the *Galvanize*-event suggests a main problem to be that of
persuading the surrounding society, that making art is a worthwhile and serious
activity.[32] When the image and conceptual dimension of Alice Yard continues to
grow, it is therefore primarily through an expanding network of participants and
likeminded spaces, which Cozier extends to written venues like *ARC Magazine*,
SX Space (an online branch of *Small Axe*) and *Artzpub/Draconian Switch*, which
is co-published by Alice Yard. To what extent it also enters into conversations and
exchanges with other *local* spaces, is less clear. I found it curious that Cozier, di-
rectly asked by Tancons about predecessors for Alice Yard, speaks at length about
CCA7, but never mentions Studio 66.

Unlike Studio 66 and (albeit to a lesser extent) CCA7, Alice Yard does not
state its aim as 'national development' (as established in section 1, Cozier is dis-
missive of both 'nation' and 'state'). Yet, there is some assumption of a particular
national culture in his contention, that Alice Yard cannot be considered an 'alter-
native' space, because it continues a long local tradition of "creating in the yard"

(what we are doing, he says, is what steel-bands and 'mas-camps' have done for decades). Cozier's reason for refusing the 'alternative' label (because it belongs to the "cool, urban, romantic language" of New York in the 1980s) and other imported terms of reference is, however, contradicted by the irrefutable reliance on a poststructuralist discourse in the writing (by him and others) that has accompanied the rise of the Caribbean postmodern. The disregard for finished statements, grand narratives and binary terms like 'us and them', 'here and there' are virtually drawn out of a textbook in postcolonial theory, and so is the aesthetic valorization of process, experiment and transience. The claim of simply 'being', 'doing' or 'proceeding' without the burden of an over-determined historical or conceptual context is, in other words, misleading.

Though Alice Yard, according to Cozier, mainly serves younger artists (born after the late 1970s), it has also hosted more established ones, including Hew Locke, Charles Campbell and Ebony Patterson. In such situations, younger local artists often assist in executing projects, and it must be assumed that a certain intellectual osmosis is envisaged. It is therefore not inappropriate to regard Alice Yard as an 'incubator' (as well as a creative laboratory and conceptual enterprise): as was the case with Studio 66, this is where likeminded artists come together to discuss and execute their ideas. In the process, a shared, though always evolving, set of references and aesthetic codes develop. Unlike that of Studio 66, however, the aesthetic spectrum cultivated at Alice Yard largely corresponds with the Caribbean postmodern portrayed in section 1. The post-nationalist inflection is nonetheless oblique, for though the ethos at Alice Yard is distinctly cosmopolitan, it has all the trappings of the 'local'—indeed, it is virtually (if inadvertently) modeled on Brathwaite's vision of the 1970s 'yard theatre' in *The Love Axe (I)*:

> Yard was revolutionary in that everything about it not simply rejected/ ignored the notions of traditional/colonial Euro-American theatre, *it provided a viable and creative alternative*. There was no house, no building. The theatre was as its name said: a yard (. . .). There was therefore no 'fixity', no 'audience', for one thing in the traditional sense; no gate, no entrance fee (…). Instead, there was simply those who came: invitation, rumour and, most important, those of the neighborhood, the street/community; those passing by who could see with the knowledge of ears: as in their own yards.[33] (Emphasis in original)

Having set itself up against a generation of anti-colonial nationalists on the grounds of their lack of criticality and gradual estrangement from original goals and social realities, the post-nationalist avant-garde, which is deeply connected

with the region's alternative scene, has arguably imposed a social and counter hegemonic mandate on itself. If, however, Alice Yard does not aim at 'nation building', but at developing communities of participants and sympathizers, it seems necessary to ask to what extent the exchange of ideas aims beyond this network, where works and artists inevitably operate in a closed circuit. Removing the work from the realm of ownership and prestige associated with conventional (or national) galleries and replacing the narrative expression with the conceptual language and interventions of a new avant-garde has, on that note, not solved the problem of estrangement, but arguably exacerbated it. The possibility that the artists of Alice Yard, despite the best of intentions, do not, after all, manage to engage its neighbors in meaningful conversation was not only hinted at by my interlocutor, who saw Alice Yard as slightly intimidating, but by Tancons herself, who observes that its audience consists mainly of artists and intellectuals.[34] Indeed, the popular 'yard' connotations of the space with its inconspicuous location and open gate-policy, inadvertently draws out contemporary Caribbean art's crisis of direction and legitimization (that it shares with the Caribbean left), which seems all the more profound, the more it is concealed by the excitement of activity, mass-mobilization and apparent success.

At the end of my discussion of the 1990s avant-garde in section 1, I concluded that, despite its 'performance' of social and political concerns, there is no apparent desire to convert these concerns into ideological commitment. In the case of alternative spaces, following through with the neighborhood orientation in a more sustained and deliberate manner would likewise imply a compliance with an already denounced nation-building project. All the same, one would have to be completely insensitive not to be moved by Laughlin's Sunday-thoughts on the wonder and deep satisfaction of the collective endeavor, which does take place in 'the yard': "Thinking about last night's Douen Islands event—and all the people who made it possible by sharing time, expertise, equipment, and labour—I was struck again by the generosity of our network and its immeasurable value",[35] or by Charles Campbell's reflection on his residency at Alice Yard: "Informal open networks are one thing we do well in the Caribbean. While the impoverished state of our infrastructure, suffocating hierarchies of our institutions and Byzantine structure of our bureaucracies conspire to frustrate us it's the informal networks which we turn to when we need to get things done. They are more resilient and efficient and the bonds of trust and responsibility that they create humanize us. They demand we share not only our talents but also our vulnerability".[36]

Fresh Milk

In 2013, the National Cultural Foundation (NCF) of Barbados invited a group of Brazilian curators to visit the island with the prospect of brokering future opportunities for the nation's artists. For the occasion, the NCF arranged an exhibition (titled *E-create*)that was meant to provide an overview of Barbadian art history and identify some contemporary masters. Every effort was made towards inclusivity and diversity, but, in the absence of a more adequate space, the exhibition was installed at the Sherbourne Conference Centre. Paintings and sculptures were mounted on walls, screens and plinths in halls, foyers, corridors and meeting-rooms, and the result was virtually chaotic. There was something for every taste, but with no clear sense of direction or indication of significant historical dynamics, viewers were bound to be both overwhelmed and confused. During their visit to Barbados, the Brazilian curators did, however, also pay a visit to 'Fresh Milk'—a 'platform' for contemporary art founded by Annalee Davis—where a small selection of experimental works by younger artists had been compiled for the visitors. The outcome of the Brazilian visit was an invitation to Annalee Davis (and, subsequently, two artists of her choice) to take up a residency in Sao Paulo, and a standing invitation for future collaborations.

Fresh Milk is the first space in Barbados to explicitly designate itself as 'alternative' or (as preferred) 'informal'.[37] According to its mission statement "The idea for Fresh Milk developed over years of conversations around the need for artistic engagement among artists in Barbados, to strengthen regional and diasporic links and shape new relationships globally".[38] It is moreover described as "a non-profit, artist-led, inter-disciplinary organization, that supports creatives and promotes wise social, economic, and environmental stewardship through creative engagement with society and by cultivating excellence in the arts".[39] Unlike the urban backyard that accommodates Alice Yard, Fresh Milk operates from Annalee Davis' studio in the rural district of Saint George. Reflecting the island's seasoned tourism-industry, signs are generously sprinkled across adjacent parishes, guiding the prospective visitor through the Barbadian countryside. The last stretch of the journey leads through the mahogany-canopied driveway to Davis' studio, which is located on a dairy farm and former plantation. Having parked in the shade of the massive old trees in the yard, visitors are directed past the 'manager's house' (where Davis lives) and via stepping-stones across the lawn to the verandah that connects the house with the studio—an unpainted greenheart-structure nestled into the hill and well padded by foliage and greenery (plate 18). Guests are greeted by wind chimes, cool breezes, a casual array of chairs and, oftentimes, a couple of

friendly dogs. The studio was originally built as a workshop and showroom for
Manipura, the furniture and home-accessory company, through which Davis for
a while sought to supplement her income as a visual artist and part-time teacher.
With its wall space interrupted by shutters allowing for light, ventilation and
pleasant views, the space is divided into three sections: the front room is used for
small exhibitions, and the middle section (known as 'The Colleen Lewis Reading
Room') has been converted into a small (but by local standards extensive) art-
library, which is open to art-teachers and students by appointment. At the very
back, there is a modest office and workspace used by Davis herself.

If Alice Yard sought to cultivate a no-frills 'back-yard' image, that of Fresh
Milk is, by contrast, rural, rustic and eco-conscious. Unlike the reserved and static
elegance of the plantation house, this looks like a 'green' and transparent space
with a light footprint, at once self-contained and open to the world. Apart from
its nutritional and maternal connotations, the name 'Fresh Milk', however, also
gestures towards the location itself—the dairy farm, the family business and the
conversion of a plantation (established in the seventeenth century) into a modern
enterprise—and signals an at once conciliatory, assertive and not entirely risk-free
re-branding effort.

Since its opening, Fresh Milk has (like Alice Yard) hosted innumerable res-
idencies, talks by local and visiting artists, writers and curators, in addition to
readings, musical events, workshops, small exhibitions, book-launches, film and
video screenings, and its visitors have ranged from researchers, painters, photog-
raphers, playwrights and puppeteers to animation, performance, installation,
digital, video and social practice artists. Most events begin (or end) with a brief
mission-statement, where a representative of the space speaks about its purpose
and, during their stay at Fresh Milk, artists-in-residence are asked to engage in
a community-outreach project and to write a blog that helps in promoting the
space.

As at Alice Yard, the emphasis is on process, rather than product, on ideas and
individual development, rather than finished statements. Events are efficiently
managed by Davis and her assistants with occasional help from residents or stu-
dents at the local community college where Davis also teaches. In an interview
with the London-based researcher Mariam Zulfiqar, Davis explains one of the
motivations for Fresh Milk as that of providing a support-mechanism for recent
graduates of the Visual Arts programme at the college. Its educational and pro-
motional initiatives have thus included a young artists/readers programme, and
a series of privately sponsored public benches and 'art boards' designed by Fresh
Milk-artists (plate 19). Another incentive was the desire to expand the critical

arena in Barbados through interaction with contemporary artists from the region and further afield. Davis herself submits: "I often think of Fresh Milk as both a nurturing environment and an act of resistance. Offering a space that is safe for people to experiment and innovate, and to gather, talk, think and make, is an act of resistance".[40] She also explains that funding for the space, which (like Alice Yard) is a registered NGO, has come in the form of small private and public grants.[41] While such donations have allowed her to take on a paid assistant, Fresh Milk at one point hoped to establish permanent links with the University of the West Indies, the Ministry of Culture and/or other governmental organizations, including the NCF (not least on the strength of Fresh Milk's 'Brazilian feat', where the desired outcome was secured by the private entity, rather than the governmental body).

The construction of the studio itself was made possible by the start-up capital awarded to Davis for the development of Manipura. Such grants were issued by a public/private venture-capital fund (BIM Ventures[42]), which was established in the context of the DLP-government's effort to develop the creative industries. Within a couple of years, the project was shut down for undisclosed reasons, sometimes leaving the prospective entrepreneurs midways through their projects and in situations of serious financial embarrassment. Davis, however, had used the funds to construct the studio/showroom, which now houses Fresh Milk. The BIM-ventures travesty is but one example of the conflicting policy-gestures to which Barbadian artists have found themselves subjected for decades.[43] Indeed, their dissatisfaction with cultural policy only seems to have increased with changing governments' attempts to capitalize on the cultural sector by making it more self-reliant, perhaps because this effort has been cloaked in an encouraging rhetoric of stimulation, facilitation and loosely defined notions of 'sustainability', which, in practical terms, have turned out to mean that there still is practically no support for the experimental segment of the sector, which needs it the most.

While plans for a West Indian Gallery of Art can be traced to the 1950s,[44] preparations for the establishment of a Barbados National Gallery commenced under the government of the Barbados Labour Party in 1998 with the appointment of a National Art Gallery Committee (the NAGC). In her opening remarks to a 2004 NAGC workshop, chairperson Alissandra Cummins confidently declared that: "Cabinet, by a decision reached in September 2004, approved the recommendation that Barbados should provide for the establishment of a National Art Gallery. These proposals contain provisions not only for the creation of the Barbados National Gallery with its own programming and permanent collection (. . .). It is anticipated that 2005–2006 will be the period during which this activity will

move from a project phase under the National Gallery Committee to an estab-
lished entity".[45] To date, however, that promise has yet to be fulfilled and, since
the replacement of the NAGC Committee with the National Gallery Board in
2012, the slowly advancing project ironically seems to have come to a complete
halt.[46] Plans for a national gallery still figures in the 2010 National Cultural Policy
for Barbados,[47] which continues to be centered on the promotion of Barbadian
culture and the pursuit of "a greater sense of national unity, confidence and self-
sufficiency", "national pride" and "the development of cultural institutions and
museums". The objectives to be acted on most immediately are, however, listed
towards the end: "(h) To establish an infrastructure which will facilitate the devel-
opment of *the economic potential of the culture sector*, promoting cultural industries
and entrepreneurship and emphasizing the importance of Intellectual Property",
"(i) To strengthen the existing bonds between public and private sectors to cre-
ate and sustain a durable and dynamic partnership in the promotion of positive
cultural development" and (k) To identify strategies for the funding of cultural
activities" (my emphasis).

   In addition to its National Cultural Policy, the Democratic Labour Party gov-
ernment approved a 'Cultural Industries Development Act' in 2013.[48] "Cultural
industries", it is stated, "include those enterprises which provide the general public
with *commercially viable cultural goods* and services that are developed for repro-
duction and distribution to mass audiences (...)" (my emphasis). In a language far
more specific and business-like than that of the National Cultural Policy, the Cul-
tural Industries Development Act details the government's idea of public-private
relationships. What the government offers creative practitioners thus boils down
to tax exemptions as well as flex-loans for cultural entrepreneurs, whose projects
are deemed viable by the ministry. Non-repayable grants may also be awarded for
the purposes of training and development of the sector.[49] Whereas Manipura
might have been an obvious contender for such provisions, it is therefore unlikely
that Fresh Milk, which does not have a commercial aim, would be eligible. The
'Cultural Industries Development Act' thus exemplifies what Burke describes as
a transition from 'the arts that cost, to the arts that pay'.

   Unlike Alice Yard, which ostensibly seeks to maintain the greatest possible
autonomy from government and a cultural policy attempting to enlist the arts in
a multiculturalist agenda of 'managing difference', it will be noted that Fresh Milk
has been keen to establish relationships with agencies of the state. In this case,
however, the reluctance seems to issue from the latter, for which the platform may
not be self-evidently viable in economic terms, nor inclusive enough to warrant
public funding.

In the context of Barbados, the perception of the visual arts as a prospective and significant source of revenue is a relatively new one. It is no coincidence that Fresh Milk continues a long and almost exclusively *female* pioneering tradition, for, in the island's culturally conservative climate, painting and sculpture rarely qualified as a reliably income-generating, male occupation. Starting with the Barbados Arts and Crafts Society set up by Golde White in 1943, the running of galleries and educational efforts have typically been left to the initiative of middle class women artists (see also chapter 9), who did not need to make a living from such ventures. The Arts and Crafts Society later evolved into the Barbados Arts Council, which continues to operate a small gallery at the Pelican Village in Bridgetown. In the 1970s, the female stewardship was briefly interrupted by the efforts of 'The People's Art Movement' (DePAM). At the initiative of the painter Omowale Stewart, this movement emerged out of Yoruba Yard—a cultural centre dedicated to the development of a national culture, which was explicitly envisaged as Afro-Caribbean. According to Kamau Brathwaite, Yoruba Yard was "the most dynamic, self-contained and challenging cultural organization in Barbados"[50] and it could arguably be regarded as Barbados first 'alternative space'. Alongside Yoruba Yard's effort at historical and cultural recuperation, DePAM was thus (like Studio 66) deeply invested in the nation-building project. Its stated objective was to bring art to 'the man on the street',[51] but also to provide a professional forum, where artists could exchange ideas and experience. (It was in this (at least initially) supportive and idealistic environment[52] that the careers of artists like Ras Akyem Ramsay and Ras Ishi Butcher began). Later galleries have often been studio- or home-based (for example those of William Bertalan and Norma Talma) and many have operated in conjunction with hotels, restaurants, cafés and tourist attractions—from the Hilton-Banks Gallery in the 1960s (closed), the Coffee and Cream Gallery (closed), the Art Gallery at the Tides Restaurant, and On the Wall with outlets at the Earthworks Pottery, Champers Restaurant and the Limegrove Lifestyle Center. Independent galleries with varying degrees of aesthetic discernment have generally depended on the personal resources of their owners. These have included the Dayrells Gallery, which was run by the artist Denyse Menard-Greenidge, and which focused exclusively on abstract art (closed), the Women's Self Help Gallery (closed), the Gallery of Caribbean Art, the Kirby Gallery (closed), the artist Joscelyn Gardner's Art Foundry, which endeavored to show and sell cutting-edge art (closed), my own Zemicon Gallery (closed), the Old Pharmacy in Speightstown (closed), the Aweipo Gallery run by the ceramicist Julianna Inniss (closed), and the Bridgetown Gallery (closed).

The Barbados Museum and Historical Society (BMHS), which occupies the premises of the old military prison at the Garrison Savannah south of Bridgetown, was founded in 1933. Under the directorship of Neville Connell (from 1949), it took an active role in promoting the visual arts by lending its facilities to occasional exhibitions. Many years later, the BMHS undertook the writing and publishing of a national art history (Cummins, Thompson and Whittle's *Art in Barbados: What Kind of Mirror Image?*), and its current director, Alissandra Cummins chaired the National Art Gallery Committee and subsequently the National Gallery Board. The museum does not, however, have the facilities to display more than a fraction of its art collection, nor the resources to meet the needs for documentation and restoration. In 1996, the Art Collection Foundation (ACF), a philanthropic organization with local and expatriate subscription founded in 1984, set up the Barbados Gallery of Art (BGA) near the museum at the Garrison Savannah as a private effort to compensate for the lack of a national gallery. Already after a few years, however, the BGA ran into difficulties[53] and eventually shut its doors and surrendered its collection to the Barbados Museum.

Since 1984, the NCF has managed the Queens Park Gallery in Bridgetown, which has hosted more exhibitions than any other space in Barbados (plate 20). Given the NCF's focus on broadly popular art forms, its involvement in the visual arts has been centered on the annual *Crop Over* and *NIFCA* exhibitions, which aim at inclusivity, encouragement and community-representation. As was the case with Carifesta, many established artists have ceased to participate in these exhibitions because of what is perceived to be inadequate display facilities and low aesthetic standards, all of which has been interpreted as contempt for the discipline and its practitioners. This perception was further fuelled by the scandalous neglect of the Queens Park Gallery itself, which by 2011 had reached such an advanced stage of disrepair that the gallery had to relocate to a diminutive space at the Pelican Craft Centre for six years. Following the gallery's reopening in 2017 (when Barbados hosted Carifesta), there has, however, been a palpable effort to develop a more ambitious programme. Apart from the Queens Park Gallery, the largest and most dynamic public exhibition space in Barbados today is the Punch Creative Arena at the Community College, which hosts intermittent exhibitions by students and established artists.

In view of this history, it seems evident that Fresh Milk not so much challenges an established art institution as it follows in the footsteps of those who have challenged the absence of one. That absence, it is widely agreed, is partly to blame for the difficulties Barbadian artists have experienced in attaining regional and international recognition, or even commanding prices for their work, which would

approximate a living wage. The problem with Barbadian cultural policy and the cultural industries concept is notably *not* that artists are averse to becoming 'economically viable', but that they (as Davis contends) are denied the institutional support and endorsement, which necessarily precedes the maturation and growth of the local art market (the difference between Barbadian artists and their government over the matter of 'sustainability' is, in other words, a matter of *sequence*).

Though both Fresh Milk and Alice Yard see themselves as part of an extended creative network, their motivation and 'alternative' status are slightly different. While the emphasis at both venues is on informed critique and individual growth in a collaborative environment, there is, to begin with, a notable difference between Fresh Milk's bucolic surroundings and ecological ethos and Alice Yard's open-gate, urban pan-yard image. While Alice Yard has developed a sharp and independent profile, Fresh Milk has been keen to establish public/private partnerships and less worried about institutionalization, and is also more direct in its promotional and marketing efforts (with books, journals, mugs and gift items on sale). Whereas Alice Yard thus insists on a high degree of autonomy and independence, Fresh Milk's educational and nurturing efforts are in principle sympathetic towards a nation-building scheme (Davis herself has occasionally expressed the wish that a national gallery would soon relieve Fresh Milk of its self-imposed duties), but also more in sync with a small business ethos. Indeed, Fresh Milk is arguably more concerned with *shedding* an autonomy, which its critics see as chosen, and *it* sees as imposed. Echoing the critique leveled at CCA7, the response to a talk I gave about Fresh Milk in the early stages of my research was almost solely focused on the historical connotations of the plantation-environment (and the elitism of a location best reached by car) and Fresh Milk's perceived lack of effort to reach a wider audience.[54] Davis, however, saw these allegations as a reiteration of the 'white stigma', which has framed much of her oeuvre, and which she precisely feels she has redressed by opening up her personal space to the public (Fresh Milk thus approaches Yoruba Yard's project of historical reconciliation from the opposite end of the social spectrum).

Like its Port-of-Spain counterpart, however, Fresh Milk orients itself towards new and experimental media and its aim is "to encourage resident artists to step outside of their comfort zone and not be pressured to have a final product at the end, to really challenge their practice".[55] Both spaces have moreover profiled themselves in opposition to mainstream art (as well as that of an older generation), both function as incubators for younger artists and both are invested in the promotion of new media and the aesthetic I have described as the Caribbean postmodern.

Popopstudios

Nowhere in the Caribbean is tourism more immediately visible than when you arrive in the Bahamian capital, Nassau. Rental-villas, time-share developments, resorts and hotels—some of them veritably futuristic in scale and character—compete for space in manicured grounds behind walls and gates along the coast road leading into the city. Disembarking cruise-ship passengers enter almost directly onto Nassau's main shopping-street, where offers of duty-free watches, diamonds, designer-bags, beachwear, t-shirts and 'Bahamian straw' scream for attention and quick sales. Owners of pastel-colored buildings (stylistically suspended between Caribbean vernacular, American colonial and Disney) leave their doors open, hoping that puffs of air-conditioned coolness may draw customers in.

This façade is, however, only skin-deep, and venturing down the avenues perpendicular to the coast is almost like peeling the city's make-up off, layer by layer. In a quiet district southwest of the city-centre is Dunmore Avenue. Until 2017, when the building was severely damaged by hurricane Matthew, this is where the determined visitor would find 'Popopstudios ICVA'.[56] Nothing about the area, or the place itself, seems an obvious match for the 'international centre for the visual arts' announced by the acronym. The slightly disheveled compound, which was once a guest-house, comprises a couple of buildings withdrawn from the main road and surrounded by a large garden, which, with its profusion of palms, cacti, bromeliads, heliconias and potted ferns, largely appears to take care of itself. A picket fence wraps around the property and, from the parking lot, a series of large concrete slabs leads past a fishpond and a casual arrangement of wicker-chairs towards the main building—a café-au-lait colored two-storey villa. In contrast to the linear detailing upstairs, the front-porch is framed by orientalizing concrete-arches. Painted bright pink on the inside, it contained lanterns in every shape and size, a paint-stained folding-table and a funky, half-melted pink plastic-chair, when I visited in September 2014. Above the entrance-door, a slender sign identified the place as 'Center for Visual Art Popopstudios. Gallery, professional studios, public programming' (plate 21).

The place looked closed, when I arrived, but behind the main building I discovered an annex with an open door. An old man peeked out from an upstairs window and willingly emerged with a key, when asked if it was possible to have a look at the gallery. This, it turned out, was Kendal Hanna—the Bahamas' first abstract artist and now Popopstudios' artist-in-residence. He led me through the backdoor, past a kitchen and dining-area, to an exhibition-space, which must once have been two adjacent living rooms. Spotlights were installed in the ceiling,

the walls were painted white and whatever windows there may once have been, were blocked out. *Arc Magazine* once suggested that Popopstudios "bills itself as a place for the advancement of alternative Bahamian visual culture, and it manages to do just that with an always-cutting-edge philosophy".[57] The works on display were, however, extremely diverse. Though some did match the postmodern tendencies described in section 1, not all of them aspired to be cutting-edge. It was a congenial mix of photography, painterly abstraction (in the paintings by Kendal Hanna), naturalism (in the portrait of Hanna by a temporary international resident) and conceptual art—including some large three-dimensional pieces by the founder of Popopstudios, John Cox, and a 'broken horizon-line' by Heino Schmid. The displays were clearly not meant to convey anything, but a snapshot of ongoing activities in the space at this time. Hanna told me that he found the interaction with the younger artists inspiring.

Like Alice Yard and Fresh Milk, Popopstudios has functioned as an NGO, and its main purpose has not been that of showing or selling work, but of hosting artists' residencies. Against a stipulated fee, each artist is thus offered a room and studio-space as well as access to a kitchen and the support of a collaborative and critical community. When one of the managers, Lisa Wells, showed up, she explained that residents are international or drawn from the most promising or eager students at the visual arts programme at the College of the Bahamas. The duration of the residency may be anywhere between one and three months. There have occasionally been exhibitions from which works were sold, and from time to time Popopstudios has offered art classes to the wider community. Its founder, John Cox, explains the origins and character of the space, which opened in 1999 (a few years after his return from art-school in the United States) as follows: "At the beginning (...) we wanted to create a community of artists who shared the same philosophical stance. It was about having similar intentions with our work—kind of bucking the system and its nostalgic view of the landscape, and challenging presentation (...). My work and work of close friends were not seen as part of the mainstream (...). The older generation had done their thing, but I felt like there was such a generation gap. I felt like we could cultivate something that took that momentum they started for Bahamian art and take it even further.[58]

My intermittent scrutiny of Popopstudios's website and brief experience of its physical premises in Dunmore Avenue has suggested an entity far less concerned with projecting a specific image, or giving 'the progressive' a particular inflection, than Alice Yard and Fresh Milk. Instead of user-reviews (in the form of blogs or testimonials), the website has offered brief profiles of past and current residents in addition to advertisements for art-related events in the wider community. There

was, in fact, nothing about this low-key, unassuming space—with its bohemian
hints of 1960s counter culture—that immediately explained why it appears to
rank as a 'first among equals' on the contemporary Bahamian scene. However,
with heartwarming unanimity, literally every member of the Bahamian arts com-
munity I spoke with credited Cox for the inclusive policy of the space and for
his consistent endeavors to reach out (and across generations) to the wider arts
community.

In scrutinizing the national cultural policy for the Bahamas (drafted in 2006)[59]
in preparation for my visit, I was struck by its well-informed and nuanced tenor,
its extensive discussion of Bahamian history, as well as its suggestion that research
and institutions may aid in the development of different sectors—not merely to
achieve "a strong national identity and economic empowerment", but also "cul-
tural literacy". The draft policy lists the actual and potential strengths of Baha-
mian culture, but also concedes current weaknesses, which range from its proxim-
ity to the United States and "strong Caribbean cultures", a lack of self-confidence,
geographical fragmentation, poor training and infrastructure, to the high-brow/
low-brow stigma pertaining to different types of culture.[60] Though there is talk
of developing culture industries and inviting corporate partnerships and philan-
thropy, the instrumental approach seems significantly less pronounced than in its
Trinidadian or Barbadian counterparts. It was astonishing, then, to find that un-
der paragraph 4.1.1.12 dedicated to 'Visual Art', there are literally no entries ('fash-
ion' however, which follows right after, has sub-headings for both fabric, clothing
styles and body art). When the draft policy was written, the National Gallery of
the Bahamas had existed for three years. It is possible, that the policy omission
resulted from this institution's quasi-autonomous status, but —as what could
only be considered one of the nation's most tangible cultural achievements—
its complete absence from the document, with not a single mention, is nonethe-
less bizarre.

The National Gallery of the Bahamas, which was briefly preceded by the pri-
vately established, but short-lived Bahamian Museum and Art Gallery,[61] is located
in a well-preserved historical district of Nassau. In close proximity to Govern-
ment House and the Graycliff Hotel, it is slightly elevated above the bustling port
and tourist traps around Bay Street. It is housed in Villa Doyle, a mansion from
the 1860s, which, over the years, has been occupied by Bahamian statesmen and
notables. A small brochure about the building identifies it as "one of a relatively
few examples of Palladian architecture in the Caribbean", and Villa Doyle is in-
deed remarkably elegant with its symmetric articulation, timber balconies, col-
umns, balustrades, louvers and almost 'floating' roof (plate 22).

Immediately upon entry into the gallery-wing, the visitor confronts a small semi-enclosed space. This is the 'project-room'—a space, which the gallery lends to smaller or experimental projects that do not fit into its general programming. A walk through the exhibition *40 Years of Bahamian Art*, however, gave me the cursory, but instructive art historical overview I had been unable to establish prior to my visit,[62] as well as an impression of both diversity, ruptures and continuity in Bahamian art. There were works by old and young artists in painting, sculpture, photography and installation. Individual pieces were meticulously labeled and intermittent wall-texts characterized each decade in general terms. I was told that such survey-exhibitions are mounted for a year at a time, while temporary shows rotate in the project-room and the galleries upstairs. At the time, there was a retrospective for Eddie Minnis, whose work can be described as nostalgic celebrations of Bahamian life.

The National Gallery of the Bahamas was established in the nation's thirtieth year of independence. Though its first director, Erica James, opens her catalogue-text for the inaugural exhibition in 2003 by noting that the "ill-fitting concept of 'nation' that emerged out of the Enlightenment is dissolving and transforming" and the quest for identity as a "stable essence" is now, by many Caribbean theorists, seen as passé, she closes it by stressing that "It is the responsibility of Bahamian artists, art institutions, historians and critics to direct the Bahamian artistic in the global sphere. Otherwise they risk being defined and culturally deformed from the outside".[63] She thus identifies the institution's role as that of offering works by Bahamian artists the sufficient context to be understood on their own terms, neither isolated from trends in the international world, nor without a particular situatedness, which necessarily impacts their scope and meaning. The gallery must "ensure that the Bahamas does not become peripheral in its own discourse", by working towards publishing and education, and by cultivating national and international relationships and transnational networks. Towards the end of her 2013-paper "Dreams of Utopia", which reflects on her experience as National Gallery curator, James indeed encourages other Caribbean arts communities to keep pressuring governments to play their part in the development of the visual arts. She can do so with a certain entitlement, for the National Gallery of the Bahamas was itself established as a result of continued pressure from the arts community.

Asked what *she* saw as the particular challenges of a postcolonial National Gallery, the current director, Amanda Coulson, mentioned the absurdly small operating budget (which remained the same in 2014 as it was in 2003)[64] only as a second contender. The greatest challenge, she said, is that of constantly having to justify the gallery's existence to both the government, the government-appointed

board by which it is managed, and to the general public. Several of the gallery's international outreach efforts have thus been met with rigorous questioning, if not staunch opposition (for example, when it sought exposure for Bahamian art at the Venice Biennale in 2013). Apart from standing up to such scrutiny and having to negotiate the very different aesthetic preferences of its various constituencies, Coulson cited another unusual challenge as that of handling works by artists, who are not already well established (thus echoing Poupeye's observation that the postcolonial gallery typically has to make decisions, which are not already legitimized by an art historical canon or record[65]). In fact, Coulson noted, she occasionally finds herself in the wholly unconventional role (for a national gallery director) of acting as 'broker' between artists and commercial galleries.[66] Meanwhile, the National Gallery aims at establishing a healthy balance between community-oriented and international endeavors and changing the image of the Bahamas both externally and internally (by showing that "national art can also be critical"), and ultimately to engage in a kind of "national group-therapy". The institution, moreover, seeks to cultivate new collectors among young professionals and is keen to explore different types of partnerships.

Among the gallery's past and present partners, Coulson mentioned Popopstudios, Hillside House and the Doongalik Gallery, but particularly drew attention to the efforts of John Cox, who for a period also served as the gallery's curator. She spoke of Popopstudios as a path-breaking initiative, which more than any other entity has contributed to the development of a contemporary scene in Nassau, but which nonetheless falls in line with the tradition for mentorships, collaborations and patronage of younger artists, that has continued from pioneer-artists like the late Brent Malone (frequently acknowledged as the 'father' of Bahamian art), Maxwell Taylor, Antonius Roberts, the brothers Stanley and (the late) Jackson Burnside, to contemporary artists like John Beadle, John Cox and Heino Schmid. From the days of the Chelsea Pottery (the famous British establishment, which, during its temporary relocation from London to the Bahamas from 1957 to 1962 became a center point for the artists of Nassau and New Providence[67]), this community has ostensibly been unusually close-knit and supportive.[68] During the 1960s and 1970s, Brent Malone had a succession of galleries (the Loft Art Gallery, the Temple Art Gallery, the Matinee Gallery and Marlborough Antiques)—all of which served to display and encourage works by younger artists as well as his own. Other past and present galleries in Nassau include the Jumbey Village Cultural Complex established by the Bahamian government (closed), Toogood's Studio and Lyford Cay (both closed), the Doongalik Gallery (founded by Pam and Jackson Burnside, and in operation at various locations since the 1970s), which has

endeavored to "give Bahamians an identity, neither British, African or American, but uniquely Bahamian, to be proud of",[69] the Jonkonnu Gallery (closed), Stingrae Studio, the artist Antonius Roberts' Hillside House, New Providence Art and Antiques and the experimental space Liquid Courage (closed). In addition, the Central Bank of the Bahamas offers an exhibition-space, as does the College of the Bahamas (the Pro Gallery), and the d'Aguilar Foundation has an extensive collection, which can be viewed by appointment.

The Bahamian arts community thus appears to have focused its collective energies on reaching common goals, rather than nourishing internal divisions. As a united front, it has accomplished at least three (tangible and intangible) things: putting enough pressure on the government to secure the opening of the National Gallery (which in turn sees itself as an integral part of the community), established a tradition for the encouragement and facilitation of younger artists, and instituted an annual event known as 'Transforming Spaces'. The latter involves a round-robin visual arts tour of Nassau, where several galleries and institutions come together for a few days to showcase a wide range of works by local and regional artists, thereby actively foregrounding the visual arts in the public awareness.

It has been suggested to me that what is most significant about the Bahamian arts community is the *desire to project* an image of unity (actual or not).[70] Even if Popopstudios, as the nation's first explicitly counter hegemonic space, has been widely and singularly acknowledged as the 'midwife' of a new artistic generation, it is equally credited for its inclusiveness and efforts to reach across generations and for its frequent interaction with other galleries and spaces, including the National Gallery. The only directly acknowledged oppositional dynamic today was between the arts community and the Bahamian government, which —despite the establishment of the National Gallery— remains skeptical of the discipline and its enthusiastic practitioners. Together, artists, galleries and the national institution thus appear committed to expanding and improving the awareness of and conditions for visual art in the national and international arena. The emphasis is, in other words, on maintaining a sense of community and preserving the inherent diversity of the discipline, rather than on promoting any particular aesthetic direction. Meanwhile, it seems likely that this apparent unity, at least in part, can be ascribed to the youth of its national institution. With no significant institutional memory or deeply entrenched practices, this has allowed for its ethos and practices to be shaped in close consultation with the current needs of the community it serves. Erica James precisely underscores how important it is for the institution to be policy-driven, in order to avoid political hi-jacking.[71]

In reflecting on how Bahamian artists (like their colleagues across the Anglo-phone Caribbean) have had to negotiate a confluence of local and external influences and demands. John Cox suggests that, until the 1990s:

> many definitions of Bahamian post-independence were tied up in old nego-tiations of ideas of landscape and identity with very little commentary. The shared instinct of ambitious young artists was to revisit past ideas and begin breaking the molds of tradition. This came with the price of being labeled too avant-garde, not Bahamian enough or, by extension, too 'foreign.' It reignited an ongoing process of defining what Bahamian is in a changing world. This question of identity often presents itself to Caribbean art. Art-ists either seem to address it directly or are determined to avoid it—both of which accentuate the enormity of the issue.[72]

The paradoxical relationship between an aesthetic conservatism, which at once manifests itself in an aversion for what is perceived as 'foreign', and in the prefer-ence for a conventional idiom, which yet has the greatest appeal to the foreigner,[73] is deeply suggestive of a dependence on tourism, which is nothing short of exis-tential. The distinctive, but open-minded 'national identity' evoked by three gen-erations of Bahamian artists has arguably been posited both within and against this absolute condition.

In 2014, it was announced that Cox had relinquished his curatorial position at the National Gallery to take up the role as creative arts director at 'Baha Mar'—a gigantic resort-project, which was planning to undertake an extensive visual arts programme. Since many contemporary Bahamian artists have come to the fore partly because of their efforts to expose the nation's many and various problems, including the mixed blessings of tourism, this move could only surprise. An opti-mistic entry at the Popopstudies' website on July 6, 2014, however, read as follows: "For John Cox, creative arts director at Baha Mar, giving young Bahamian artists a leg up has always been high on the agenda. For five years, Cox's Popopstudios has been offering summer residencies to up-and-coming Bahamian artists. Now head of the art department at the country's soon-coming second mega resort, he's extending the same opportunity to those interested in contributing to Baha Mar's cultural agenda".[74]

In her extensive discussion of the Baha Mar project as a new model for Ca-ribbean cultural development, Angelique Nixon suggests that the partnership between Popopstudios and Baha Mar, though by no means an ideal model, rep-resents a "possible site of resistance".[75] Seconding Cox, she avers that in an entirely tourism-dependent economy, this opportunity for artistic self-representation and

exposure of works to guests and hotel workers alike can be "a platform to em-power ourselves and create a paradigm shift of identity".[76] Whereas Baha Mar thus may translate Popopstudios's genuine community-orientation into exposure and sales for many artists (opportunities which a space like Popopstudios may not be well-positioned to generate), Cox's consecutive leaps from managing an alternative space intent on "bucking the system", to curating the national collec-tion, and then onto managing a gallery (now known as The Current) and an arts programme at a multi-million dollar resort, nevertheless forces the question of what 'alternative' or counter hegemonic now means, and corroborates the per-ception that contemporary 'counter culture', whether by circumstance or, as here, by *choice*, has become an ally of neoliberal policy.[77]

Summary of Chapter 5

In reflecting on the region's contemporary scene Charles Campbell suggests that "Spaces such as Alice Yard in Trinidad, Popopstudios in the Bahamas and Fresh Milk in Barbados, as well as the pages of *ARC magazine* have become import-ant incubators for the Jamaican artists now asserting their spaces in a global net-work".[78] This chapter has sought to describe how each of these spaces emerged out of particular national histories and institutional contexts. What the three spaces have in common is an emphasis on experiment, new media, community and collaboration, and, in a general sense, I submit that the regions' alternative spaces perceive their own establishment and operations as a form of 'activism'.

Whereas the oppositional character of these spaces more clearly has been di-rected towards government policy than towards monolithic institutions, their affirmative or counter hegemonic, nationalist or post-nationalist inflection varies with the overall character of their surrounding 'cultural fields'. I have, however, deliberately meant to provide a background for arguing that alternative spaces depend on the presence of public (and relatively strong) institutions to assume a counter hegemonic function: only a combination of public and private spaces can provide a comprehensive representation of any nation's visual arts spectrum, bridge generational gaps and help establish a productive dynamic between mar-gins and centre. Disregarding the unknowable personal dynamics, which often determine the success or failure of partnerships and collaborations, it is interest-ing (though not necessarily a generality), that the most harmonious relationship between an alternative space, a surrounding community and a national institu-tion was noted in the Bahamas, where the National Gallery is both young and comparatively resourceful. It is therefore only where such institutions exist, that

the function of alternative spaces can be both 'oppositional and supplementary' (like the micromuseum discussed in chapter 4) rather than the present—and odd—combination of 'exclusive and compensatory'. In institutionally weak territories (like Barbados and Trinidad), alternative spaces thus tend to alienate certain factions of the arts community, while serving others extremely well: members of such communities indeed tend to become one another's 'publics'. The relationship between these spaces, the public sphere and neoliberal cultural policy is the subject of chapter 6.

Stronger Together:
The Creative Network

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W ITHOUT ATTEMPTING TO DEFINITIVELY take stock of their complex and always evolving function, this chapter looks at the region's alternative spaces as part of a creative network, that extends far beyond each venue's national confines. They are here related to questions about art and the public sphere, about the role of civil society under neoliberalism, and about the current direction of Caribbean radicalism.

The Contemporary Salon,
the 'Network' and the Public Sphere

It can be no coincidence that every one of the three spaces discussed in the previous chapter—Alice Yard, Fresh Milk and Popopstudios—are situated on premises that once were (or continue to be) domestic. I would like to propose that the obvious limitations of such locations in a certain sense *enhance*, rather than diminish their connotations of freedom and creative opportunity. In combination with the contemporary 'grassroots' profile each venue has crafted for itself, their semi-domestic character strongly opposes the image of the monolithic, alienating and bureaucratic (or altogether absent) institution, and is therefore not only a matter of necessity, but also of strategy and, it is tempting to suggest, *virtue*.

Notwithstanding their informal appearance (pan-yard, eco-conscious, bohemian, etc.), these spaces, moreover, have a compelling affinity with the eighteenth-century salon to which Habermas traces the origin of the public sphere. The typical salon was housed in rooms adjacent to (but separate from) the bourgeois family home—thus precisely, as in the present scenario, physically and symbolically lodged in the zone between private and non-private domains. The function

of the salon was to create an ideologically independent space outside the strictures of state and capital in which citizens could come together and engage in debate and self-expression. The eighteenth-century salon thus preceded the cultural institutions that subsequently became important elements of the public sphere and modern democracies.[1] Supplementing Habermas, Negt and Kluge have, however, argued that there is not one, but *several* public spheres (particularly also a proletarian one), and Nancy Fraser contends that this plurality at any rate is preferable, since a singular public sphere would require a normative language of communication:

> (P)ublic life in egalitarian, multicultural societies cannot consist exclusively in a single, comprehensive public sphere. That would be tantamount to filtering diverse rhetorical and stylistic norms through a single, overarching lens. (. . .). (I)t would effectively privilege the expressive norms of one cultural group over others and thereby make discursive assimilation a condition for participation in public debate (. . .). (W)e can conclude that the idea of an egalitarian, multicultural society only makes sense if we suppose a plurality of public arenas in which groups with diverse values and rhetoric participate. By definition, such a society must contain a multiplicity of publics.[2]

Jodi Dean, on the other hand, dismisses the idea of multiple public spheres as nonsensical: there never was a public debate in which every citizen took part, and a discourse with a limited number of participants does not constitute a separate public sphere. It is, she argues, the totality of all societal discourses, which make up 'the' public sphere.[3] Dean's argument does not end here, but before tracing it further, a few more words about the nature of the Caribbean creative network are in place.

If one wants to get an impression of this network, a good starting-place would be the link labeled 'Caribbean Art Map' at the Fresh Milk website. Here one finds a map of informal spaces as well as art-societies, art schools and cultural institutions across the region. This may be the most concrete visualization of the transient network and its institutional counterparts in its actualized and latent form, but the network in principle expands in rhizomatic fashion with each visiting artist and its actual extent is always quite fluid and elusive. The 'Caribbean Art Map', and indeed the conception of the network itself is, needless to say, enabled by the Internet. Though interchangeably seen as liberating and democratizing, as an impoverished substitute for 'real' discourse, or as so chaotic and unregulated as to inhibit rather than further the enlightenment-process, the Internet has perhaps

most consistently been regarded as the most significant (and actively engaged) aspect of the contemporary public sphere. Due to the geographical dispersion of Caribbean nations, their history of failed integration and the low profile of culture on national agendas, the possibility of virtual connectivity holds particular promise for the region's marginalized, feedback-starved cultural practitioners. To many, the Internet has, in other words, come to be seen as that public sphere, which many Caribbean artists feel they do not have at a national level.[4] Dean, however, argues that the Internet cannot be considered a new public sphere in the Habermasian sense (or a 'commons' as in the work of Hardt and Negri). Rather than a rational, transparent, consensus-seeking forum for political debate, "the expansion and intensification of communication and entertainment networks yields not democracy but something else entirely—communicative capitalism".[5] She nonetheless concludes that there is no way to fight that system than through the system itself. While the Internet therefore cannot be regarded as a public sphere in the historical sense, it is a site of conflict, where matters of concern can be fought over by informal or transient groups and networks. It is, she concludes, a 'neo-democratic' arena without the inherent telos of a stronger and better nation (or world).

In extension of the public sphere debate, it may be possible to argue that the alternative spaces, which were discussed in the previous chapter, have three distinctive and slightly incongruous inflections—one that is national/democratic (educative), one that is national/professional (guild-like) and one that is transnational/professional (export-oriented). In their local context, each space thus establishes a physical frame around a particular cultural activity. They deliberately project a locally grounded, progressive, sustainable and inclusive image, which may be interpreted as an attempt to promote, demystify and educate about the visual arts. By being (in principle) open to all, by offering a forum for aesthetic and quasi-political discourse, and by contributing to social intercourse and public enlightenment, they seem committed to the core principles of maintaining a conventional public sphere as defined by Habermas: "The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public".[6] They thereby assume a function, which either supplements or (effectively) replaces that of public institutions. In that sense, their inflection is *national/democratic*. From another perspective, their open and inclusive image notwithstanding (or rather, because of it), these spaces may, however, also be seen to divert attention from the elitist nature of their activity. It will be remembered that some artists and audiences felt, if not directly unwelcome, then neither strongly encouraged, nor quite entitled to participate in events hosted by some of these

spaces. On that note, I cannot help but dwell for a moment on the fact that I, practically every day, receive notifications about art-related events across the Caribbean and beyond—but that the majority of my family-members, neighbors and non-professional acquaintances will never know about these events. The region's alternative spaces generally advertise their events online and through their extended network, and invitations may be circulated widely indeed, yet still remain within a particular target-group loosely defined by shared interests, habits and connections.[7] As *national/professional* entities, they therefore function more like 'guilds' with their own attendant social codes and discourse and thus exemplify the just discussed compartmentalization (if not necessarily multiplication) of the public sphere. When these professional networks—to compensate for their relatively limited local impact—expand to diasporic (and other) counterparts overseas with both physical and virtual exchanges, the inflection, however, becomes increasingly *transnational/professional* and 'export-oriented'. On this basis, it is difficult to determine to what extent this network is inclusive, and whether or not the proliferation of artist-driven spaces is indicative of a strengthening or a weakening democracy.[8]

Meanwhile, as transnational/professional entities, the alternative spaces may also be examined collectively as a loosely structured, fluctuating and flexible and yet quite specifically designated forum run *by* artists *for* artists. Such a network assumes a more self-sufficient character—its main purpose being the creation of a circuit in which production and reception takes place in an atmosphere of mutual congeniality, and where the apparent criticality or political inflection of the works by and large remains within the aesthetic sphere and the network itself.[9] Reflecting on the evolution of Alice Yard, Nicholas Laughlin suggests that "the collective is also a central node in a growing network of artists' blogs, small magazines, and online galleries and screening-rooms. In the past two or three years, these have shifted the Trinidad contemporary art world's centre of gravity towards a virtual, hyperlinked and inherently international space. Alice Yard is now a portal for artists in Trinidad and their contemporaries elsewhere to work and imagine collaboratively, and to extend their particular Caribbean-inflected ways of seeing into a global economy of attention".[10] Such stakeholder-networks seem to make a moot point of making the region's conventional public sphere more inclusive (say, through the development of cultural institutions, or by stimulating debates on visual art in the news media), and raise the question of what ideological inscription the network now attains.

Empowerment or Co-Optation:
Civil Society and the Neoliberal State

The 'Empire' invoked by Hardt and Negri in their book of that name, bears no resemblance to colonial empires, but is a vision of global capitalism as a diffuse, but ubiquitous power structure, that transcends national borders. In this scenario, it is argued, the authority and relevance of the nation-state has deteriorated to the point of irrelevance. While acknowledging that their perception of 'Empire' owes something to Guy Debord's concept of 'spectacular domination', under which "what was once imagined as the public sphere, the open terrain of political exchange and participation, completely evaporates", the two writers confidently assert that there is no need to despair: "As the old sites and forms of struggle decline, new and more powerful ones arise. The spectacle of imperial order is not an iron-clad world, but actually opens up the real possibility of its overturning and new potentials for revolution".[11] The instrument of this revolution is the multitude—the vast, mutating, global network of working people, which stands in opposition to 'Empire'. The multitude, notably, does not merely refer to the conventional blue-collar working classes, but effectively eliminates the class-concept, for, in the postmodern informatics-era, labor and production have become immaterial and de-territorialized. The 'revolutionary' multitude is therefore not connected by a shared language, cultural traditions, legislative frameworks, unions, income-brackets or particular struggles, but, ostensibly, by needs and desires that generally differ from those of 'Empire'.[12] It is, moreover, horizontally and globally connected through an electronic network that is seen as the new 'commons'. Because this network is non-hierarchical, rhizomatic and impossible to regulate, it provides the "potential for a kind of spontaneous and elementary communism",[13] and the multitude is merely waiting to release the oppositional power that lies embedded in its revolutionary nature: "the multitude is bio-political self-organization".[14]

The vision advanced in *Empire* is thus consistent with tendencies, on the new left (after the absorption of Gramsci, Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe) to re-think the Marxian dichotomy of 'proletariat versus bourgeoisie' as 'the people versus the power bloc'. Hardt and Negri's (admittedly rather more complex) claims have been controversial for a host of different reasons, though not least due to the conspicuous gap between the authors' stridently revolutionary language and their astounding proposition that 'the change' has already happened. That contention has, unsurprisingly, unleashed a cascade of objections—perhaps most memorably Timothy Brennan's wry observation that this sort of 'communism' serves 'Empire' extremely well: "The genius of capitalism, one might well conjecture, is that it

can create such allies in this costume. Anti-capitalist in impulse, but theoretically inoculated against the war of maneuver in all its forms (. . .)".[15] Exactly how, or to what specific ends, the multitude will begin (or indeed, has begun) to operate as a common front is neither clear, nor as relevant to the present discussion as the current optimism—both on the new left and in the post-nationalist movement I am attempting to portray—about informal and transnational networks, the idea of 'globalization from below',[16] and of civil society, enabled by new technologies, as the nemesis of 'power'. The latter may be conceptualized as governmentality, Empire, global capitalism, spectacular domination or, simply, the state.

Notwithstanding the centrality of the state in traditional Marxism, its legitimacy and relevance has come under pressure from both poststructuralism and globalization-theory, and even though its critics traditionally have been right-leaning, the state has thus become a divisive issue on the left. Whereas Hardt and Negri (ironically in the name of a new communism) now propose a complete departure from the concept of the state, Jameson, among others, insists on improving it. After a public event at which both Hardt and Jameson were feature-speakers, one attendee summarized their differences as follows:

> Against Hardt's call for abolishing the state, Jameson offered a call for universal inclusion in the state. Against Hardt's endorsement of the direct democratic self-management of the commons—and of a new love—Jameson called (at least implicitly) for embracing and engaging hierarchical structures of command and leadership—for imposed discipline and the use of force. Against Hardt's focus on the flowering of new and autonomous common spaces, Jameson insisted on the question of duration, on persistence in time.[17]

While Jameson thus remains committed to dismantling capitalism, and maintains the utopian vision of a transparent and accountable state, Hardt and Negri's resistance is not only posited against global capitalism (which they also see as an ally, arguing, like Dean, that there is no other way to combat the system, than through it), but also against a state which, as a matter of course, is vilified as either impotent, inherently corrupt, or both. In an effort to arrest this trend, Brennan, however, argues that "It is time for intellectual history systematically to take up the demonization of the always 'criminal' state in cultural theory—a state that is usually posed as an ontological category rather than a locally varied, or contradictory structure—leading to immense confusion between left and right variants of anti-capitalist positions".[18]

In a Caribbean context, a similar tendency to demonize the state (and na-

tion) almost by default was reflected in the discussion of post-nationalism and diaspora-theory in section 1. Though state and nation, of course, are different concepts, I submit that they converge in the national cultural institution, and that the post-nationalist sentiment in the region's criticism has aimed equally at the Caribbean state's *active* (i.e., opportunistic and instrumental) and *in*active role vis-à-vis culture. The movement towards transnational creative networks and the growing investment and expectations in civil society agencies (such as alternative spaces) may therefore at once be seen as a genuine 'uprising from below' (though 'below' in this context may not exactly designate the lowest strata of society, but a fluid aggregation of well educated artists from former colonies and their diaspora), and as a departure from the pursuit of a Habermasian democracy, anchored in a dialectic between civil society and the institutions of the state. In a recent interview, Annalee Davis indeed proposes, that "It might be that an absence of infrastructure can generate new models, rather than mimic first-world infrastructures ill-suited to Caribbean needs, goals and circumstances."[19] It is relevant here to return to David Scott's *Refashioning Futures,* in which he argues for a Caribbean criticism that "distances itself from the Enlightenment project of both Marxism and liberalism and constructs a problematized relation to the claims and the categories of our political modernity".[20] Drawing on Laclau and Mouffe, the radical democracy he wishes to put in place of the representative democracy pursued by the Caribbean nationalist movement, thus consists of a plurality of public spheres: "a diverse field composed of multiple public realms, constituencies, or ensembles that constitute in effect different ways of being-in-common, different ways of being citizens or women or black or whatever, and in which, therefore, different but mutually recognized modalities of collective identity are voiced and practiced".[21] The objective of this permanent pluralism is notably not that of generating consensus, but of protecting 'difference'. Given Scott's centrality to the direction of Caribbean critical discourse, and his stake in the post-nationalist movement, this declaration does, I think, support the interpretation of the creative network's aim as that of being one among several cultural spheres and public realms. From this perspective, its function is to create and maintain a designated, but arguably also self-serving space for *a particular segment of* the arts community. While its objective may be dialogue, and while this dialogue may continue to expand and reach further audiences, it is therefore implicitly accepted that it will remain, not a broadly inclusive disciplinary discourse as much as that of, to paraphrase Brennan, the internal dialogue of a particular 'community of belief': in addition to invitations for special events, a steady, but within this 'progressive' circuit largely *un-divisive*, stream of news-items and articles related to art or

broader social or political concerns, tend to emanate from the creative network on
social media like Facebook. The sharing of such material is clearly not intended
to win anyone over, but to indicate and reaffirm a group identity. (As discussed
in chapter 2, the entrapment of the artwork in the semi-autonomous circuit of
art producers and viewers has, nevertheless, incited a movement towards 'partic-
ipatory' art, which often attempts to break into a wider public sphere). Unlike
each alternative space on its own (which undeniably belongs to a national public
sphere), the network on the whole can thus be seen as that informal, transient
formation, which, according to Dean, fights for particular matters of concern—in
this case, the continued visibility and 'market-share' of a particular contempo-
rary formation with an attendant ethos and aesthetic direction. Whilst there is
nothing odious about such (in fact quite impressive) initiatives, the point made
here is that the consolidation and success of the 1990s avant-garde not only has
been enabled by its postmodern and cosmopolitan aesthetic (as will be argued in
chapter 7), but also by its organization into alternative spaces and a transnational
creative network, which overrides its internal differences and particularities and
creates a highly visible, dynamic, virtual and post-national(ist) presence in Dean's
'neo-democratic' arena.

Though many theorists presently are invested in the hope that popular forces
and transnational networks will arise outside of traditional party structures to
challenge current hegemonies, perceptions of civil society agencies differ consid-
erably. Hardt and Negri themselves argue that the activities of certain NGOs in
fact "coincide with the workings of Empire"[22], and, in *The Expediency of Culture,*
George Yudice offers a similarly critical assessment. His starting-point is a Fou-
cauldian perception of culture as a resource for the neoliberal state, and therefore
as a domain for which real autonomy is not possible. Irrespective of its forms,
thematic preoccupations and political inflection, governments thus perceive of
culture as a social, political and economic expedient, which can be applied to
managing difference and alleviating social despair. Since artists today are little
more than "content providers", Yudice argues, "the content of culture recedes in
importance as the usefulness of the claim to difference as a warrant gains legiti-
macy".[23] A peculiar pact has thus evolved between politics and culture (includ-
ing civil society agencies in the form of alternative spaces), where the latter is at
once co-opted and committed to relieving the social pressures that the neoliberal
state cannot (or will not) address. In return, culture attains purpose and legiti-
macy, while also replacing a utopian ethos with more immediate goals (it may,
for example, be remembered that both Fresh Milk and Popopstudios serve as
'channels' for visual arts students from local colleges).[24] This notably happens,

not *despite* cutbacks in funding for culture, but *because* of them. According to Yudice, however, the upshot is that "civil society increasingly looks like an alibi for neoliberalism".[25]

Whereas the convergence between cultural and economic policy in the Caribbean has taken a rather more obvious direction in efforts to develop the cultural industries,[26] I therefore contend that it extends to the civil society agencies that make up for the shortfalls of the state in respect of narrow experimental art-forms (doubly marginalized by neoliberal cut-backs in general, and by a policy focus on the culture industries). While alternative spaces in principle may be opposed to the state and its neoliberal policies, they do therefore, ironically, owe them their extraordinary success. On that note it is not irrelevant, that Caribbean culture, as Scher argues (see p. 98), increasingly is considered a vehicle for economic development, where the diversification and specialization, which is embodied in the alternative space, is seen as desirable.

Meanwhile, a Foucauldian approach to culture (i.e., its enlistment in identity-politics and the management of 'difference') may, according to Jim McGuigan,[27] not only force it into a form of collusion with power, it eliminates the aesthetic dimension from cultural policy altogether: neoliberalism has forced a business-ethos onto entities that are not themselves businesses, to the effect that the only guideline presently available to policy makers is a managerial brief.[28] On this background, I propose that even though Caribbean alternative spaces limit their commercial activity to a minimum, they too have a small enterprise affinity through their ethos of private initiative, efficiency, flexibility, high professional standards, 'best practice' solutions and stakeholder investment. But since such spaces are *not* McGuigan's policy makers (and in principle strive to maintain a high degree of autonomy from official policy), they can and do indeed fashion their practices according to aesthetic criteria. That the aesthetic pursued at these venues generally rests on Foucauldian perspectives *anyhow* (so that governments and counter-culture come towards 'difference' and pluralism from different ends) merely substantiates Yudice's suggestion of a complete political and cultural convergence. Whereas Caribbean alternative spaces may see their practice as counter hegemonic, they make an appreciable and welcome contribution to the diversification of each nation's cultural spectrum, which amounts to more than a compensation for the deficiencies in public support for the visual arts. Not only do alternative spaces do the neoliberal nation proud (if only by doing what they do so well), they also inadvertently justify its withdrawal from cultural programming. In a situation where alternative spaces are products of and inadvertent alibis for neoliberal policy, I furthermore submit, that they cannot assume a truly 'alternative' role.

Indeed, as was implied in chapter 5, where public institutions are weak or absent (as in Trinidad and Barbados), the tendency has been for alternative spaces to become 'mini-institutions' themselves. By volunteering to do the job of representation and documentation, by archiving and publicizing works and events, they become cultural custodians, as well as reference-points and consulting agencies for international curators. With few other (and often less efficient) institutions in place to represent artists, who, for personal or ideological reasons, do not 'fit in' here, these spaces and their practices are, moreover, destined to become increasingly mainstream and dominant. Even though they may be critical of the state and its institutions, they therefore effectively take on and execute its functions with a high degree of proficiency. Where institutions conversely are relatively strong (as in the Bahamas—and, though it has not been discussed here, in Jamaica), the tendency has arguably been for these to assimilate the ethos of alternative spaces in reverse. They do so by opening up to young and experimental art and by cultivating a more open and flexible profile (hence initiatives like the 'project room' at the Bahamian National Gallery, and the *Young Talent* exhibitions at the National Gallery of Jamaica)—and indeed by adopting a networking strategy themselves.[29] What has evolved is therefore a scenario where both alternative spaces and institutions strive for legitimacy by reaching for the supposed margins. But while former margins are being drawn to the centre, new ones emerge with practices that have less traction in this cosmopolitan network. In fact, the current invisibility of such practices makes it hard to determine whether they merely fly under the radar or have all but ceased to exist.

It was argued in section 1 that, while the post-nationalist avant-garde rarely declares itself unequivocally *for* anything, it knows well what it is positioned *against* (i.e., the concept of 'nation', the postcolonial state, collective representation, essentialist identity claims, the picturesque, and the anti-colonial legacy as it found expression in Creole modernism). This section, ironically, suggests that since the alternative network has a very clear purpose, namely that of maintaining its symbolic market-share,[30] its supportive role within a neoliberal policy climate makes it difficult to determine what—at the level of cultural policy—it is *against*. In this context, the post-political expressions of 'concern' so typical of the 1990s avant-garde, becomes a cosmetic distraction from the uncomfortable fact of the challenger's dependence on the incumbent. In circumstances, where the alternative space becomes an alibi for the neoliberal state, however, it is no longer possible to maintain a counter hegemonic profile. As the political autonomy desired by one faction of the Caribbean postmodern thus at once becomes an enforced and a

false autonomy, the result is therefore a foreclosure on a productively contestatory dynamic between centre and margins, between institutions, policy-makers and their self-proclaimed opponents.

Summary of Chapter 6

This chapter has drawn the alternative spaces portrayed in chapter 5 into a discussion of the public sphere and the role of civil society under neoliberalism. It has been argued that each space must be considered in a national as well as in a professional context, and as an element in a fluid transnational network. In their national capacity, the spaces appear to be invested in the broadening and diversification of the public sphere. Upon closer examination, however, it is possible that each space is more attuned to a professional, transnational or diasporic 'network' than to a surrounding community. While the alternative spaces vary in their alignment with or distancing from ongoing 'nation-building' efforts and official policy, and while they seem determined to project a socially progressive and locally grounded image, it does, however, appear that their actual function depends on external factors, especially the presence and relative strength of official institutions. Where such institutions are weak, these spaces—despite their (legitimately) idiosyncratic character—tend to become 'institutions' themselves, thus confirming Yudice's view that culture not only has become an 'expedient', but that civil society initiatives implicitly justify a cultural policy based on stakeholder investment and privatization. I therefore conclude that, largely for reasons outside their own control, and notwithstanding the incontrovertibly important role these spaces play in encouraging professional discourse and individual development, they are unable to produce or engage in an altogether 'healthy' dynamic between public and private agencies and between the centers and margins of Caribbean arts communities.

Conclusion to Section 2

Section 2 has attempted to contextualize the rise of alternative spaces in the Anglophone Caribbean, and to describe them as vehicles for the consolidation of the Caribbean postmodern described in section 1. The region's first 'alternative' spaces, which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s with such grassroots venues as DePAM and Studio 66, were unequivocally committed to the development of a distinctive Caribbean culture and can be described as proto-institutional. The

subsequent trajectory of shallow policy declarations, political hi-jacking and disillusionment, and the neoliberal transition from 'arts that cost to arts that pay', has, however, engendered an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and resentment between artists and governments. To compensate for the absence of cultural infrastructure, a later artistic generation has thus established its own 'infrastructure' in the form of artist-led spaces, residencies and transnational networks. Due to their extraordinary success, these artist-led spaces have arguably (unlike their predecessors) become 'proxy-institutions'.

Many of these spaces are intrinsically tied to the Caribbean postmodernism described in section one (some are indeed founded by its pioneers), and entirely resonant with that movement's principles of process, activism, transient collectivities, suspended authorship and ideas-in-perpetual-development. Whereas such art forms may defy instant commodification, it was argued that they may yet be 'system preserving' in other ways. How *consciously* the spaces produced by this movement position themselves vis-à-vis a neoliberal cultural policy is, however, difficult to determine. While the purposely 'localized' physical features of the venues I have discussed (Alice Yard and Fresh Milk in particular) may signal a locally grounded pan-Caribbean orientation, their cosmopolitan aesthetic, the increasingly diasporic scope of their activities, and their effective privatization of cultural management, is perfectly compatible with a neoliberal agenda. Indeed, the once so unlikely alliance between an alternative space and a large corporation, which occurred in the Bahamas, lends some force to the uncomfortable point that the former polarization between cultural radicalism and neoliberal pragmatism has been eroded. Altogether, these issues raise tough questions about the current possibilities and pitfalls of the alternative movement, and I contend that the function of the region's alternative spaces is far less counter hegemonic and resistive than appearances seem calculated to suggest.

The overwhelming success of these enterprises may nevertheless have been largely determined by government policy and by the prevalent tendency (not least by visiting curators) to assume that civil society agents and artist-led spaces are inherently more progressive than Caribbean institutions. However, while the region's alternative scene undeniably has created exposure and opportunities for many of the region's artists, where governments and institutions have fallen short, such spaces are neither able, nor inclined, to fulfil a broadly representative democratic function. This is a particularly insidious problem for artists, who do not have the prerequisite networking-skills or compatible aesthetic orientation, and who are left with few other vehicles for becoming visible as contemporary Carib-

bean artists. I therefore wish to end this section by reiterating Erica James's appeal (p. 123) to the region's artists to keep putting pressure on their governments. It will take formalized and skillful local institutions to produce a healthy center-margin dynamic, both locally and globally. The rapport between the Caribbean art-world and the metropolitan curatoriat is the focal point of section 3.

Plate 1. Edna Manley: Negro Aroused. Mahogany. 1935. Photo credit:
National Gallery of Jamaica

Plate 2. Albert Huie: Crop Time. Oil on canvas. 1955.
Photo credit: National Gallery of Jamaica

Plate 3. Hartley Alleyne: Untitled (The Eleven Plus). Oil on hardboard. 1973.
Photo credit: Dan Christaldi

Plate 4. Leroy Clarke: Towards the Apotheosis of El Tucuche. Oil on canvas. 1989.
Photo credit: Arnaldo James

Plate 5. Stanley Greaves: The Annunciation. Oil on hardboard. 1993. Barbados
National Collection. Photo credit: Eric Belgrave

Plate 6. Ras Akyem Ramsay: Migration. Oil on canvas. 1996. Photo credit: Dan Christaldi

Plate 7. Versia Harris: Fantasy Land: Separation. 2013. Drawings and digital collage.
Photo credit: The artist

Plate 8. Blue Curry: Like Taking Sand to the Beach. Installation. 2006.
Photo credit: The artist

Plate 9. Christopher Cozier: Tropical Night Series. Graphite, ink, rubber-stamps. 2006-ongoing. Photo credit: The Brooklyn Museum

Plate 10. Annalee Davis: Still from Migrant Discourse. Video. 2009. Photo credit:
Omar Estrada

Plate 11. Charles Campbell: Actor Boy/Transporter. Performance. 2010.
Photo credit: The artist

Plate 12. Charles Campbell: Actor Boy/Fractal Engagement. Performance. 2014.
Photo credit: Marvin Bartley

Plate 13. Ewan Atkinson: Creative Listening. Digital. 2014. Photo credit: The artist
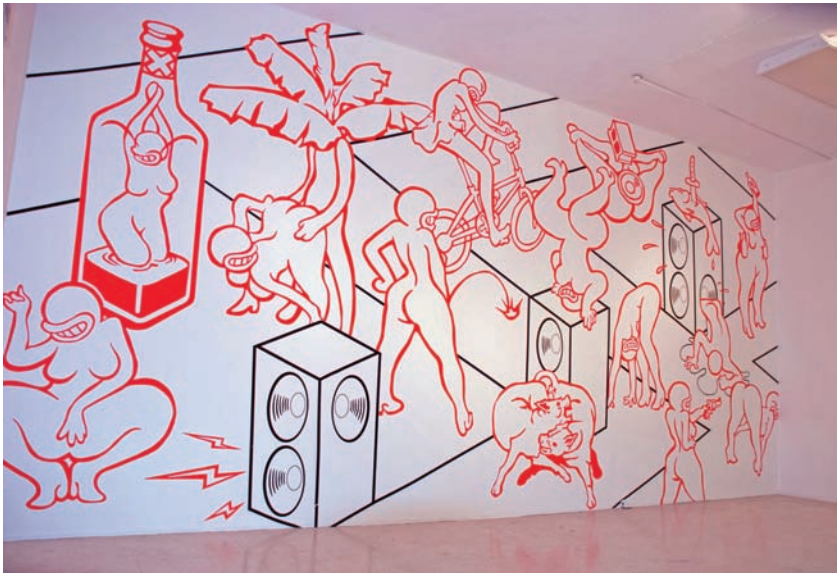
Plate 14. Leasho Johnson: Back-a-Road. The Session. Mural. 2013. Photo credit: The artist

Plate 15. Leasho Johnson: Back-fi-a-Bend. Yeast paste on Kingston-wall. 2015. Photo credit: The artist

Plate 16. Alice Yard, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. Photo credit: Arnaldo James

Plate 17. National Museum and Art Gallery, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. Photo credit: The author

Plate 18. Fresh Milk, Walkers Dairy, Barbados. Photo credit: Charles Phillips

Plate 19. Versia Harris: At the Side of Something. Public bench with digital design. 2014. Photo credit: Dondre Trotman

Plate 20. Queens Park Gallery, Bridgetown, Barbados. Photo credit: William Cummins

Plate 21. Popopstudios, Nassau, Bahamas. Photo credit: Nadia Huggins

Plate 22. National Gallery of the Bahamas, Nassau. National Photo credit:
National Gallery of the Bahamas

Plate 23. Ras Ishi Butcher: 400 Years New World Order. Oil on canvas. 1994. Photo credit: Dan Christaldi

Plate 24. Annalee Davis: Across all Boundaries (one panel of triptych). Mixed media. 1994. Photo credit: Steve Cohn

Plate 25. Ewan Atkinson: The Olde Palmetto Royale. Mixed media. 2011. Photo credit:
Dan Christaldi

Plate 26. Sheena Rose and Adrian Richards: Sweet Gossip. Performance. 2012. Photo credit: Adrian Richards
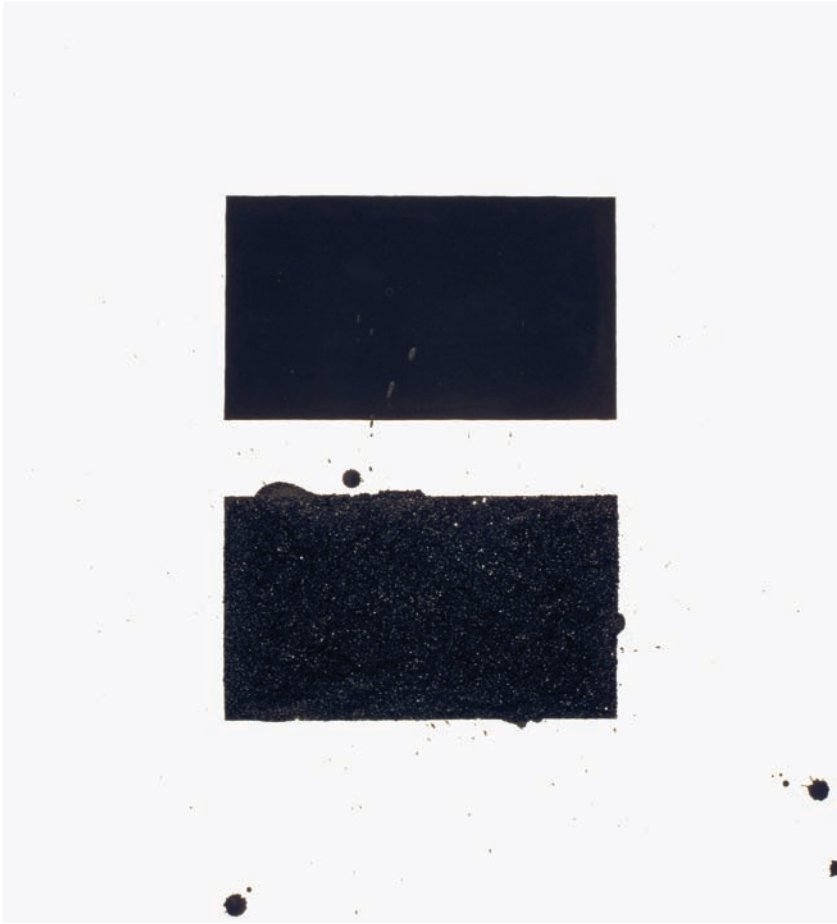
Plate 27. Alicia Alleyne. Untitled. Mixed media on paper. 2009. Photo credit: The artist

Plate 28. Christopher Cozier: Laoccon sequence. Mixed media on paper. 2012.
Photo credit: The artist

Encounters

CHAPTER 7

Through the Eye of the Needle

❧

S ECTION I OF THIS book described the rise of a 'post-nationalist post-modernism' in Anglophone Caribbean art and criticism. In particular, it was noted that the 1990s avant-garde profiled itself in strong opposition to previous artistic expressions, including those spawned by the anti-colonial movement, and that this avant-garde generally has distanced itself from identity perceptions anchored in historical trajectories, unless theorized under the fluid, politically unspecific and inherently *cultural* concept of 'diaspora'. In section 2, it was moreover proposed that the promotion of this aesthetic as *the* Caribbean contemporary has been galvanized by the establishment of alternative spaces and creative networks that precisely reach out of the region towards (and beyond) the Caribbean diaspora. It was also argued that the proliferation of such spaces, among other things, represents an inadvertent privatization of the cultural arena, and that the relationship between the alternative scene and neoliberal policy is extremely ambiguous. The present section suggests that the post-nationalist and diasporic turn in Caribbean art *also* has been augmented by those metropolitan climates of reception commonly referred to as multiculturalism and cosmopoli-tanism. A brief outline of broader debates about 'the contemporary' as it affects cultural encounters between metropole and margin is followed by an exam-ination of gradual changes in the selection for and presentation of Caribbean art metropolitan survey shows since the mid-1990s. While acknowledging the overwhelming difficulty of drawing out particular contexts in an era of global pluralism (though this pluralism, as I will argue, may be quite shallow), I end the section by pointing to the 'critical cost' of disavowing national or regional perspectives in the name of transnationalism and cultural hybridity through a discussion of how three Barbadian artists have been received at home and abroad.

Becoming Sustainable By Going Global

In the summer of 2007, the *New York Times* published Holland Cotter's review of *Infinite Island*, the large exhibition of Caribbean contemporary art that had just opened in Brooklyn. Alternating between gruff approbation and scathing dismissal, Cotter, it first seemed to me, was demonstratively unwilling to consider the works and artists on their own terms. The more I looked at the exhibition-catalogue, however, the clearer it became that nothing had been done to establish such terms: instead, every effort had been made to match the perceived demands of a jaded New York art establishment. What the show presented was not only (as might be expected) a severely amputated, but a purposely *constructed* and indeed also strikingly *homogenous* version of the Caribbean contemporary.

It may have been no coincidence that 2005 to 2008 also was the period in which Barbadian visual artists really started to feel the effects of an unmistakably economic turn in cultural policy.[1] This primarily meant a change in administrative focus from creating infrastructure to securing 'sustainability', though the latter turned out to be a conveniently supple concept. In the visual arts arena, the National Art Gallery Committee started to forge links with prominent metropolitan artists, scholars and curators (many of Caribbean descent), who were introduced as potential brokers for overseas exhibition (or other) opportunities. The tone was set with the 'Curating in the Caribbean' workshop in 2005, which offered panel-presentations by noted black American curators like Leslie King-Hammond and Lowery Stokes Sims. By 2008, the committee had entered into a strategic partnership titled Black Diaspora Visual Art (BDVA) with the UK-based Caribbean diasporic artist David A. Bailey (see also chapter 3), who was charged with introducing Barbadian art to the international curatoriat. As part of a ten-year development plan, Bailey and his local partners set about hosting a number of symposia in rapid succession (including the 'Black Moving Cube' in 2008, the BDVA-symposium of 2009, 'Caribbean Curatorship and National Identity' also in 2009, and a few more under the auspices of the *International Curators Forum* headed by Bailey). Common for these events was not only the presence of high-profile presenters from the international art-world (including Okwui Enwezor, Kara Walker and Alfredo Jaar), but also a tone which implied that local artists had a lot to gain from these encounters (the declared objective was to secure a Barbadian presence at the 2017 Venice Biennale[2]). Reflecting on the evolution of the project in his introductory remarks to the catalogue for the exhibition that accompanied the 2009-symposium, Bailey thus points to its educative potential: "The first outcome of these discussions was to invite Sonia Boyce

to come to Barbados to deliver a series of master classes with local Barbadian artists and to also explore the possibilities of commissioning a new piece of work in Barbados. *This was the beginning of cultivating and mentoring local Barbadian artists* but also bringing an international artist to develop a major project in Barbados" (my emphasis).

The 2009-symposium was accompanied by an exhibition featuring works in public spaces by both local and diasporic artists. Given the near absence of opportunities for creating public art in Barbados, this presented a bit of a problem with respect to identifying relevant works and artists, and local applicants were put through a rigorous selection-process (unlike the visiting artists, who were personally invited). Even though the partnership explicitly rested on the premise of 'black diaspora', it also became clear that the aesthetic focus would be on works in new media, which clearly registered as 'contemporary', rather than on those centered on blackness or diaspora in more traditional ways (for instance works by Rastafarian artists). Eventually many local artists opted out, sensing that the very premise for the event had made them redundant. In the end, the local component consisted of three works by Barbados-based artists (a collaborative multi-media work by Ewan Atkinson and Ingrid Persaud, a series of resin sculptures by the little known wax-sculptor Arthur Edwards and an animation by the newly graduated artist Sheena Rose), and three by artists of the Barbadian diaspora (installations by Indrani Gall and Joscelyn Gardner and ceramic works by Caroline Holder). Here too (as in *Infinite Island*), it felt as if the image of local art was being cropped to fit a metropolitan matrix, and that many of the nation's own established artists, in Wainwright's terminology, had registered as anachronistic. The 'rebellious conservatism' and subtle defiance embedded in works by artists, who hold on to a notion of cultural nationalism as, in the very least, the freedom to refuse the fashions of an international art-world, had apparently been found irrelevant or gone unnoticed. To young and aspiring artists, the entire event thus offered a clear message about how to conduct themselves in order to enter the big league: embrace new media, center your message on subjectivities, hybridity, difference, institutional critique and learn to network! The remainder of this chapter dwells on the particular intellectual climates in the metropole that produce exhibitions and projects like *Infinite Island* and BDVA. But first it may be useful to posit some general perspectives on 'the contemporary'.

The Role of the Contemporary: Making History

In the confusing totality of any given moment of modernity, attempting to define the contemporary seems a risky endeavor. The concept's function has, nevertheless, been that of keeping the wheels of art history turning: 'the contemporary' implies something that stands in a privileged relation to the present and that has identified and relegated a previous moment to the past, and it is therefore deeply implicated in the maintenance of tradition. The disproportionate weight of the metropolis in identifying the contemporary is first and foremost that which comes with old and powerful institutions. Here, the authority to recognize, interpret and rank artistic expressions is not left to public galleries and museums alone, but reinforced through education, academia, media and well-established art-markets—all of which, according to both Danto and Bourdieu (in a rare moment of agreement) make up the 'art institution' (or 'art world') in its widest sense. Metropolitan arts communities are, in other words, backed by a complex apparatus of vetting, validation and, conversely, exclusion. As Bourdieu suggests, items offered up to this 'institution', may at first be rejected. Among the rejects, some will find favor with counter hegemonic agents, such as alternative spaces and, with the evolution of aesthetic criteria, a few of these may eventually be vindicated as 'pioneers' and enter the official canon after all. In all such negotiations, however, *time* is a crucial factor: "the specific achievements inscribed in past and recorded works, codified and canonized by a whole corpus of professionals of conservation and celebration—historians of art and literature, analysts, critics—is part of the condition of entry into the field of production. From this it follows (. . .) that 'time' in the history of art is really irreversible, and that it presents a form of *cumulativity*".[3]

Meanwhile, when new items originate outside the metropole, these internalized codes of distinction may break down and give way to other criteria for inclusion, such as 'ethnographic', 'primitive', 'naïve' or 'intuitive'—or, just as likely, lead to rejection, as has often been the experience of Caribbean artists, who, given their limited, hostile or indifferent reception within the region, have hoped to find audiences and markets overseas. This perennial dilemma has not only induced widespread objections to the traditionally Northern locus of the contemporary, but also the question of whether art history should be one or several things. In the last few decades, the idea of 'vernacular' and 'cosmopolitan' modernisms has been extended with concepts like 'alter-modern' and 'Afro-modern', and some artists and curators have sought to replace the centre-periphery or North-South relationships with margin-to-margin or South-South partnerships. Michael Hanchard

thus seeks to historicize black diasporic solidarity-movements under the *oppositional* banner of 'Afro-modernity' and, against Gilroy's perception of black and white modernisms as interdependent, argues for their fundamental difference.[4] Okwui Enwezor, on the other hand, endorses the *pluralism* of Nicholas Bourriaud's 'altermodern' project, which "manifests a rebellion against the systematization of artistic production based on a singular, universalized conception of artistic paradigms. If there is anything that marks the path of the altermodern, it would be the provincialities of contemporary art practice today—that is, the degree to which these practices, however globalized they may appear, are also informed by specific epistemological models and aesthetic conditions (. . .)".[5] Bourriaud thus speaks of global contemporary practices as "off-shore", and Enwezor invokes a "multifocal, multilocal, hetero-temporal contemporary" with multiple dispersed 'centers'. Some proponents of a diaspora-aesthetic have similarly argued against the notion of a centre/margin polarity on the grounds that the 'centre' (though by no means an egalitarian space) now includes the margins.[6]

From a metropolitan perspective, the picture is arguably a little simpler, if only in the sense that the pluralism of the contemporary scene may appear to be self-regulating. In response to the postmodern erasure of those criteria of 're-markability', which have sustained the concept of art since the early Renaissance (the arrival, in other words, of a moment, when 'art' can be anything), Danto declared in the 1990s that we have reached 'the end of art' as we have come to know it: "Nothing is more right than anything else. There is no single direction. There are indeed no directions".[7] Though quite unsentimental, Danto's remarks should not be read in support of Fukuyama's proclamation of Western liberal democracy as the end-point of man's struggle for freedom.[8] Terry Smith's upbeat reflections on contemporaneity do, however, have an eerie resonance with Fukuyama's triumphalism (though presumably rooted in the opposite end of the political spectrum). In "Contemporary Art and Contemporaneity" (2006) he thus proposes two current contenders for the contemporary: on one hand, there is the 'official postmodernism', which simply has taken over the status previously held by modernism, and on the other hand, the diverse field of art, which more directly responds to the world (the two directions can perhaps be loosely described as 'ironic and self-conscious' and 'counter-cultural and activist'). Meanwhile, the *true* contemporary, according to Smith, cuts across both groups. This heterogeneous formation is not framed by obvious commonalities, but by its attention to "the antinomies of the world", to "the workings of globality and locality" and to "ways of living ethically within them". The contemporary, he says, is marked by multiplicitous complexity, alter-temporality, presentness and instantaneity:

"It is the pregnant present of the original meaning of modern, but without its subsequent contract with the future (. . .). No longer does it feel like 'our time' because 'our' cannot stretch to encompass its contrariness. Nor, indeed, is it 'a time' because if the modern were inclined above all to define itself as a period, and sort the past into periods, in contemporaneity periodization is impossible. This suggests that the only potentially permanent thing about this state of affairs is that its impermanence may last forever".[9] Though this post-postmodern present also is post-ideological (once more merely said to engender "slight gestures, feral strategies, mild subversion, small steps"), Smith optimistically contends that many of the divisions, which previously characterized the global art world have been erased by instantaneous communication and creative networks: "Just over thirty years ago I described the international art system as still centered, however precariously and debilitatingly, on the New York art-world. It is inspiring, now, to be able to see that this system, however much it strives to concentrate its power, has been transformed by a larger network of widely dispersed and variously connected sources of creative coping".[10]

Smith's assessment nevertheless stands in glaring contrast to Olu Oguibe's contention that "For those who come to it from backgrounds outside Europe (. . .), the arena of mainstream cultural practice in the West, at least in the visual arts, is a doubly predictable space—first, because it is a game space and you have to know the rules of the game, and second, because unlike any other game, such aspirants have a limited chance of success, because it is predetermined that they should fail".[11] In the following section, I want to relate these arguments to many Caribbean artists' experience of metropolitan rejection. My focus is not on the predictable expectations of exoticism, which, according to Hucke, greeted early Caribbean modernists exhibiting in the metropole,[12] but on today's more subtle mechanisms of discernment and exclusion.

Art History's GMT

Even though major biennials are now held in places like Havana, Sao Paulo, Dakar and Sharjah, it is, of course, far from universally agreed, that the art-world now has multiple centers, nor that the distance between centre and periphery has become irrelevant. In direct response to Smith, Wainwright refutes the notion that the international art world now articulates a new and liberating 'horizontality', and his book *Timed Out* (2011) indeed seeks to extract a lesson for the production of art history itself, from the way Caribbean art has become a shadow of West-

ern art history. Building on Bloch, Kubler and Fabian, Wainwright structures his argument around 'the politics of time', which for centuries has been an instrument of metropolitan universalism and domination. He thus maintains that the metropole (apart from its own internal hierarchies) relegates all other regions to various stages of belatedness or provincialism and shows how this (quintessentially Bourdieusian) dynamic has worked to preclude artists of the Caribbean and its diaspora from entering the metropolitan mainstream. "It is temporality as much as location, which accentuates the distance between the canonical spaces of modern and contemporary art and artists of the transnational Caribbean", he argues.

It may be useful to draw out one of Wainwright's examples to more precisely show how this 'politics of time' has affected Caribbean art. Having left Guyana for Britain in the 1950s, the painter Aubrey Williams was in a peculiar predicament: at home, his 'revolutionary' abstraction was eclipsed by the populist cultural demands of a Caribbean nation on its way to Independence. But while it was seen as premature or culturally irrelevant in Guyana, abstraction was rapidly being displaced by British pop art at the time of Williams's arrival, to the effect that he registered as a *belated* and, due to his incorporation of form-elements with pre-Columbian and Amerindian connotations, rather *off-key* modernist. Those incorporations were, however, as Wainwright convincingly argues, a deliberate way of showing that "Greenbergian modernist values could be reworked through a vector to do with place, for instance by extolling the virtues of the 'local' as against the 'universal' and 'international'".[13] What was simply perceived as 'belatedness', thus represented a conscious response to his complex historical and cultural (re)location. Even more than those of his contemporaries, who remained in the Caribbean, Williams therefore found himself caught up in a conflict between critical and cultural autonomy:

> [T]he ambivalence demonstrated by artists such as Williams during the historical moment of decolonization: an interest in the autonomy of form enshrined in high modernism, and yet the competing pressures brought on art practice to relate to the specificity of time and place. Since the nationalist project is ongoing and incomplete, the fulfillment of this autonomy becomes ever more remote. There is an adverse result for anti-colonialism when the modernizing, decolonizing impulse moves into direct conflict with the yearnings for the artistic freedoms of modernism. A dilemma emerges for the artist, who is required to give up one sort of freedom for another.[14]

While the reception of an artist like Williams in the 1960s, according to Wainwright, was tinted by anxieties around the final collapse of the British Empire, the notion of non-metropolitan practices as 'belated' prevails (even quite explicitly, as in the suggestion that Barbadian artists are in need of mentorship (p. 147)) and has, I believe, been an important incitement towards the formation and proliferation of the Caribbean postmodern. A portion of *Timed Out* is thus dedicated to a discussion of the former empire's reconfiguration into today's multiculturalist Britain, where contestations between diasporic and mainstream art add another dimension to the center-periphery dynamic.

Multiculturalism and Diaspora Aesthetics

Being at once a demographic fact, a policy-objective and a pluralist ethos, it is not easy to pinpoint multiculturalism's moment of origin or principal inflection. Stuart Hall, however, argues that the multicultural condition brought about by post-war migration to the metropole has engendered a new (and infinitely varied) diasporic identity as well as new and potent forms of resistance: "This subaltern proliferation of difference cannot certainly frontally stem the tide of western late modernity but it represents the emergence of what we may call a new kind of local, indeed something which is related to, but is not fully subscribed, in the global and *this local still significantly inflects, deflects and translates western imperatives from below*"[15] (my emphasis). In the British arts community, however, multiculturalism has spawned two diasporic factions—one which *elects* a previously enforced separation,[16] and one, which seeks to penetrate and broaden the national mainstream. Echoing Hanchard, a 'separatist' like Keith Piper thus sees the European canon as "synonymous with a colonizing force that entrapped 'Black' artists into dependence"[17] and therefore something to be kept at arm's length. For 'inclusionists', however, a separatist diaspora aesthetic plays along with a state intent on slotting citizens into manageable identities in exchange for multiculturalist policy-concessions. Its outcome, Rasheed Araeen maintains, will be that "any art activity which does not conform to or defies this new definition is looked upon as inauthentic and is suppressed".[18] Araeen's grievance has indeed been the lack of recognition for *aesthetic* accomplishment, which has befallen non-white artists in Britain. What divides Piper and Araeen is therefore the question of ethnic reification (by the establishment as well as by members of the diaspora). Yet, even though Piper is in favor of identity-politics and Araeen against it, they will still agree that official British multiculturalism is more about the maintenance than about the redistribution of power.

Once attention was turned from singular conceptions of identity towards hybridity and difference, however, the diaspora-concept evolved into an ever-evolving notion of 'otherness', which may at once challenge and overlap with the mainstream. From the 1990s and onwards, this formation has come to include just about every form and combination of identity based on migration, displacement, race, ethnicity, religion, gender and sexuality. The result is a vast and alternating (yet paradoxically stable) pool of 'difference',[19] which secures a high degree of visibility for 'otherness' in the cultural life of the metropole, but is too heterogeneous to ever morph into a cohesive *political* formation. Araeen indeed argues that, while this mutating configuration of difference may "entice sympathy", it cannot be "a critical tool to disrupt the dominant system". And even though non-white art may now be recognized as contemporary, "the buck stops here", since the institutional power to exclude and include remains intact.[20]

The pursuit of identity-politics as well as a more recent (hybridity-oriented) diaspora-aesthetic can thus be added to the factors, which have divided the old left from the new. McGuigan (1996) is thus disparaging about the alliance between neoliberalism and identity-focused multiculturalists, who do "not view the political challenge as at all anti-capitalist",[21] and Jameson (2006) likewise argues that the new conception of multiculturalism—being wedded to the poststructuralist perception of 'representation and culture' (rather than 'labor and economy') as the appropriate site of struggle—does little to alter economic relationships. All it amounts to, he charges, is a set of "admirable liberal ideals calculated to sap the energies of any serious movement intent on radical reconstruction".[22] As debates about multiculturalism and diaspora-aesthetics continue, the latter's hold on under-resourced regions like the Caribbean is, however, unabated. While it is hoped to broker access to international markets and ultimately be a catalyst for global equality (in many more areas than the arts), more attention should, in my view, be paid to its political inflection and implications.[23] Wainwright's identification of a 'temporal hierarchy' alive and well both within and outside of a diaspora-aesthetic, certainly challenges Hall's vision of a "new local" posited to destabilize "the universal takeover of a hegemonic western culture".[24] It also provides a lens for understanding the continued demotion of Caribbean art to the second or third tier of contemporaneity.[25]

Cosmopolitanism

To complement Wainwright's argument with some perspectives on the cultural exchanges and inclusions that presently do occur, I now turn to the concept of

'cosmopolitanism'. Though traceable (through Gramsci, Simmel and Kant) to the eighteenth century,[26] cosmopolitanism has, in the context of globalization, been revived and promoted as a palatable ethos of tolerance and openness towards the world. Much like multiculturalism, but with a conversely *unifying* intent, it manifests itself in a spirit of inclusivity in editorial, educational and institutional outreach programmes, and has been widely embraced by postcolonial critics and progressive metropolitan intellectuals. Cosmopolitanism is, according to Amanda Anderson, an ethical position, marked by "a sophisticated attentiveness to geopolitical and multicultural complexities", and its inherent optimism is "often an acutely self-conscious departure from prevailing practices of negative critique".[27] Rather ironically, however, there are several versions of cosmopolitanism, from the 'vernacular' and 'subaltern' to the 'critical and creative', which aims at "acknowledging and interacting with other cosmopolitanisms"[28]. In common they have an anticipatory and congenial vision of a world in which every citizen is able to contribute to global culture through the use of his "own language and cultural symbols".[29] Byrne and Schoene go so far as to identify the specific markers of cosmopolitanism's creative practices as 'glocality', 'relationality' and 'inoperativity'. Glocality ensures that the cosmopolitan expression bears the imprint of cultural intersections, thus at once seeking to indicate and transcend a geo-politically determined perspective, while relationality emphasizes the always-evolving nature of human interactions and suspends the assertion of unequivocal or fundamental positions.[30] Meanwhile, the most significant feature is, of course, inoperativity, according to which the cosmopolitan imagination is "impartial, a-teleological and without any definite purpose other than perpetuating human conviviality".[31] As a matter of good faith, the cosmopolitan artist must, in other words, abstain from any manner of active opposition or advocacy.

Though perhaps unintentionally, John Cox's diptych *I Am Not Afraid to Fight a Perfect Stranger* (2009) lends itself quite well to an illustration of these principles. It shows two black, but semi-transparent male figures running towards each other, as if about to collide. The two figures are superimposed on a collage of seemingly unrelated images and symbols, including a large Buddha figure, two Soviet stars and various patterns with connotations of blue China and batik prints. Though the artist himself has related the piece to preconceptions of masculinity, coming of age and overcoming hardships, Nicholas Laughlin relates it to the entanglement between the 'self' and the various labels and expectations to which the Caribbean artist finds himself subjected.[32] Taking further license, I think it can also be related to Glissant's concept of the 'tout-monde'.[33] On such a reading, the

human 'self '(the black male figure) is shown as indivisible from the world's multifarious complexity, and the oncoming antagonist is not an external 'other', but our own mirror image: the individual is, in other words, always so implicated in the global totality, that outward aggression must be channeled inwards. With its many-layered cultural references and projection of universal contingency, the diptych therefore displays a perfect triad of glocality, relationality and inoperativity—aiming, in exemplary cosmopolitanist fashion, at preempting any conflict rooted in nationality, ideology, religion, culture or personal identity.

In an effort to temper these prematurely optimistic and celebratory perspectives, Timothy Brennan, however, unravels the stealthy and coercive character of contemporary cosmopolitanism. Deliberately concealing a specific set of political interests, he argues, this "cosmopolitanism is *local*, while denying its local character. This denial is an intrinsic feature of cosmopolitanism and part of its appeal".[34] Though once a noble ideal of mutual respect and tolerance, its purpose is now to preempt antagonism and disable opposition (indeed these are the stated *virtues* of the creative cosmopolitanism described above). Its alleged inclusivity depends on the foreigner's compliance with a set of values, which, though construed as universal, are inherently reflective of liberal US (or generally 'Western') interests. The cosmopolitan intelligentsia's favorable attention is thus predictably bestowed on writers and artists, who, against their own troubled national situation, seek shelter (physically or intellectually) in the more tolerant West. Alongside expressions of affection and nostalgia for a distant homeland, their writing typically also vents frustration and disappointment with its postcolonial failures: "Highly critical of imperialism, it has lost faith in Independence. Indeed, its interest is in realigning our thinking away from independence toward a notion of co-dependence in which the point is incessantly made that the first world has borrowed also from 'us'. It is an assimilationism with dignity".[35] Moreover, having absorbed poststructuralism's "deconstructive tropes of indeterminacy and hybridity", this cosmopolitanism, finds virtue in "complexity, subtlety, irony and understatement",[36] but "reviles modernist detachment, bitterly attacking it as naïve and parochial. On the other hand, also prevalent is the idea that artist and state are incompatible—a belief that places the writer today in a position of antagonism to one of the major tenets of the decolonization intellectual, whose involvement in a new state formation was central and defining".[37] The subliminal aim of this cosmopolitanism is thus "a stasis in which the unique expression of the non-Western is Western reflexively and automatically".[38] Though the unifying scope of this cosmopolitanism stands in contrast to a Machiavellian multiculturalism, it must also, Brennan

maintains, be distinguished from a more equitable internationalism, which "seeks to establish global relations of respect and cooperation, based on acceptance of differences in polity as well as culture".[39]

If, as Brennan predicts, the cosmopolitan curatoriat currently favors artworks that operate in a post-nationalist, hybridity oriented register, I contend that the Caribbean postmodern outlined in section 1 (irrespective of its internal variations) either actively or passively complies with this criterion. Understanding the 'culture game', according to Oguibe, implies an acute awareness of having to "create work of a different flavor [and] deal with a certain set of themes".[40] To draw any attention at all, the Caribbean contemporary work must therefore, following Byrne and Schoene's directive, register as culturally different, but not provincial. It will engage with the travesties of the postcolonial state, body-politics, gender, the gaze, subjectivity, performed identities or (now increasingly) simply focus on being, memory and perception. It may be preoccupied with difference, the politics of representation, and endeavor to shake off the over-determination of Caribbean history, but less likely with questions of present-day economic distribution, domination and inequality. It is, as Brennan suggests, both anti-imperialist and anti-nationalist, politically 'concerned', but ideologically uncommitted. It may be distinguished by remarkable innovation and sophisticated humor, but despite its proliferating economy of difference, the Caribbean postmodern has no time for its own constitutive 'other'—works, which maintain an oppositional, representational, modernist, nationalist, Marxist or otherwise 'belated' tenor. With its eyes trained on the present, the new dispensation, notably, also loses sight of what Jameson refers to as "persistence in time" (p. 134).

Meanwhile, in as much as both are structured on the premise of 'diversity' and yet have an unacknowledged normative and homogenizing premise, it will seem that Brennan's metropolitan cosmopolitanism (precisely described as a "new singularity born of a blending and merging of multiple local constituents"[41]) is strikingly similar to the nationalist creolization-concept,[42] which, as discussed in chapter 1, was accused of harboring several undeclared biases. As Jocelyne Guilbault observes (with specific reference to Trinidad and using the word 'hybrid' rather than 'Creole'): "even when the official rhetoric of the state after Independence was to avoid the division of people into categories and to promote cultural hybridity as the distinguishing feature of the new modern-state, *the cultural hybridity that emerged as synonymous with the nation-state was highly selective*"[43] (my emphasis). It is one of the most compelling ironies drawn out by the present study, that the post-nationalist avant-garde, having defined itself in distinct opposition to a coercive Afro-Creole nationalism, should embrace a similarly coercive cosmopolitanism.

Summary of Chapter 7

This chapter has outlined two principal positions regarding geo-political hierarchies in relation to 'the contemporary'. One holds that the international contemporary art scene has entered a state of 'permanent pluralism', and that the former margins are now incorporated into the centre (Smith). The other, with which I agree, maintains that considerable distance remains between centre and margins, even though they no longer can be considered polar opposites (Wainwright). To establish a framework for understanding what kind of Caribbean art is likely to draw international attention, I have drawn on Wainwright's 'politics of time' and the respective concepts of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, largely understood as rivaling (if in practice more diffuse and entangled) metropolitan climates of reception. The diaspora-concept is, by contrast, best understood as a strategy which, depending on inflection, can be related to either. An anti-essentialist, hybridity-oriented diaspora-aesthetic (including the Caribbean postmodern) is thus in sympathy with a contemporary cosmopolitanism, whereas a 'separatist' black diaspora formation can be accommodated under a pluralist and identity oriented multiculturalism.[44]

Chapter 8 examines curatorial approaches to exhibitions of Caribbean contemporary art (mainly intended for the United States) over the last two decades. My aim is to demonstrate that the international representation of the Caribbean contemporary has become increasingly homogenized and aligned with the cosmopolitan postmodernism described in section 1. I likewise argue that the face of the Caribbean contemporary has become progressively younger and reflective of the activities that take place in the region's alternative spaces. Altogether, it will serve to explain why Smith's proclamation of a 'horizontal contemporary' is as unconvincing as the vision of a cosmopolitanism to which each can contribute in his "own language and cultural symbols".

The Caribbean Contemporary in the United States

❦

I T MAY BE USEFUL to briefly examine the conceptual framework around *Documenta 11* of 2002 — arguably the most elaborate and concerted attempt ever to renegotiate the terms of exchange between the global peripheries and the metropolitan centres of the contemporary art world. As Anette van Niekerk observes, Okwui Enwezor's curatorial approach was rooted in "a politics of difference, rather than a politics of identity", and the exhibition was "set up as a space for engagement with hybridity" explicitly aligned with Bhabha's vision of "translating and trans-valuing cultural differences".[1] Under reference not only to Bhabha, but also Hall, Mouffe, Agamben, Hardt and Negri (and many others), *Documenta 11* thus sought to describe a plurality of agonistic relationships, and to "counteract global forces of homogenization and fragmentation affecting art production everywhere".[2] With four geographically dispersed platforms leading up to the final event in Kassel, and with a variety of exhibits outside the main gallery, the event was demonstratively 'extra-territorial' and rhizomatic (as emphasized by the many extra-mural exhibits and by the labyrinthine exhibition layout in the main gallery).

Held on the Caribbean island of Saint Lucia, platform 3 focused on 'Créolité and Creolization', and the compendium of texts collated after the event is an unmistakable testimony to the post-nationalist turn in Caribbean criticism. Gerardo Mosquera thus observes that new Caribbean art usually is "not bonded to nationalistic modernism or to traditional languages".[3] In the face of residual nationalisms, Stuart Hall argues for Glissant's more flexible concept of 'Créolité' as "a kind of difference that refuses to fall back into its binary elements, which cannot be fixed in terms of this or that pole, but *remains unsettled* along a spectrum".[4] In a second essay, he moreover envisages a globalization from below, which in the cultural domain identifies itself through expressions of rupture, dissemination, tensions between exile and return, traveling without determination, contradictory juxtapositions, troubled interstices, etc.[5] As it came to inform the curatorial

vision, this politics of difference implied a migration from *aesthetic* towards *ethical* criteria, therefore precluding works purely preoccupied with form, imagination, etc. Armed with postcolonialism's arsenal of ambiguity, hybridity, paradox and irony, the exhibition thus precisely embodied a cosmopolitanism centered on 'difference' (elevated to a universal principle)—to the effect that its perception of what could be regarded as "international advanced art"[6] was oddly homogenous after all. Though *Documenta 11* featured a wide range of works, which in both satirical and militant ways expressed postcolonial or 'third world' concerns, the exhibition therefore suggested that cultural resistance now presented—ostensibly *could only present*—as a heterogeneous and revolving display of 'difference' and concerns. If the exhibition was controversial, it was, however, not because of its demonstratively political themes, but because there was a feeling that, as Sylvester Ogbechie puts it, the "focus on non-Western art merely answers to global capitalism's persistent need for new commodities".[7] Objections were also leveled at the literal or activist character of many works, since "mere subject matter", according to Rasheed Araeen "does not provide any significant opposition to the hegemony of Western power"[8]. There was, in other words, a perception that the exhibition's panoply of protestations at some level also represented a concession. Perhaps the most troubling question brought out by *Documenta 11* was, therefore, *what form* significant opposition to a Western hegemony could now take? It seems relevant to interject, here, Wainwright's suggestion that artists of the '*Small Axe* Collective' (i.e., the 1990s avant-garde) "present the grounds for a refusal to be conscripted as much by local and national terms of historical explanation found within the Caribbean region, as the imposition of paradigms of modernity that would be imposed from without".[9] While the passage undoubtedly reflects the group's self-perception as neither nationalist, nor metropolitan, it is unclear how the refusal of "imposed paradigms" is expressed. While I concede that its cosmopolitanism may not always represent a conscious appeal to the metropolitan curatoriat, the 1990s avant-garde has incontrovertibly embraced a set of aesthetic values and strategies, which are, if not directly *imposed*, every bit as *imported* as those adopted by the Creole modernists.[10] Yet, in the final analysis, the central question ought not be whether ideas are indigenous or imported, but what possibilities they open and close. On that note, Cozier's one-time suggestion that the "enemy of the nationalist has shifted from the colonizer to the perpetual 'next generation'" invites some consideration of how successfully the latter has charted a path beyond *both* nationalist and colonizer.

Despite the criticisms, *Documenta 11* was generally considered a success, and to a large extent set the agenda for the next decade's exhibitions of postcolonial art.

In the discussions that follow below, I intend to show the journey towards (and past) the quintessentially cosmopolitan *Documenta* matrix in North American exhibitions of the Caribbean contemporary. To this end, I undertake a discussion of five exhibitions that have been held in the United States between 1995 and 2019 (with a detour towards one held in Europe). Due to its temporally and spatially disseminated character, *The Global Caribbean* (2009–2013) is not included, nor is *Caribbean Crossroads* (2012), which had a historical, rather than a contemporary focus.

We Know We Won't Get It Right

The first obstacle for international curators preparing a Caribbean survey-exhibition is the scarcity of institutional support, national art-histories, documentation and critical writing in the region. Such curators have always had to patch together a conceptual framework of their own and subsequently find suitable works to fit the script. In so doing, they have typically turned to creolization-theory, to Caribbean literature, ethnography, cultural heritage and black history.[11] In the process, they are frequently guided by local critics, curators and artists, who may themselves have vested interests in such events: as Poupeye points out, there is a high degree of desirability attached to inclusion in overseas survey-exhibitions, not least because the accompanying catalogues have a long shelf life as a 'who's who' in Caribbean art.[12] Such a curatorial assignment can easily become a journey between Scylla and Charybdis, and, for a long time, a remark made by the then director of the Museo el Barrio during the *Caribbean Crossroads* consultation (see p. 102) echoed in my ears: "No museum wants to 'do' the Caribbean anymore. For a U.S. curator, a Caribbean show is considered a rite of passage: we know we won't get it right." On that note, its feels appropriate to recognize that curatorial efforts usually are made in good faith and with tremendous effort. As has been the case with Carifesta, 'getting it right' by all parties concerned is never a realistic prospect. It is likewise necessary (if prosaic) to acknowledge that the shape of such events above all reflects institutional mandates, resources, facilities and timing. Because of such variables, it is an admittedly precarious undertaking to use exhibition-catalogues (and reviews) as indicators of shifts in intellectual hegemonies in the Caribbean and the United States. Meanwhile, even though their evidence is both tenuous and indirect, the empirical data they contain (who curated the exhibition, what was shown and how it was conceptualized) are the only available 'cold facts' pertaining to this trajectory. The purpose of the following discussion is to show correspondences between the critical re-directions

described in section 1, and the trajectory of the curatorial conceptualization of the Caribbean contemporary in an *international* context (I acknowledge that exhibitionary dynamics at the national level tend to be more random). It must also be stressed that not every individual work can be taken in evidence of an exhibition's overall inflection: large survey shows often co-opt the particular art work into a conceptual framework, which did not inform its making.

Caribbean Visions, 1995

The traveling exhibition *Caribbean Visions* toured the United States in 1995. It was curated by Samella Lewis and Mary Jane Hewitt of Art Services International, whose mission was "to bring the fine arts of the world to American audiences".[13] The intention with *Caribbean Visions* was to present "a comprehensive view of contemporary painting and sculpture in the region by featuring works created by artists who well reflect, and are inspired by, a Caribbean consciousness".[14] Readers of the catalogue are informed that, despite the region's geographical and cultural spread, "Caribbean artists have found unity in diversity", and that "the uniqueness of contemporary Caribbean art lies within the artists' sense of space, their perceptions of light and color and the geographic identification with the Caribbean, despite the location of their ancestral homeland or their current residence".[15]

The front-cover of the exhibition-catalogue, which is graced by a segment of a semi-abstract painting by Dudley Charles, contains a somewhat disjointed collection of texts by prominent writers and artists of the region (Derek Walcott, Rex Nettleford and Peter Minshall) and by various North America-based scholars specializing in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and Haiti, or in 'festival arts'. When I describe the collection as disjointed, it is because the majority of essays seem quite disconnected from the exhibition itself (despite two out of eight essays focusing on carnival, the selected works did not contain many references to festival arts[16]). There was, in other words, no attempt to explain, through the texts, what "unity in diversity" might mean, or how this is expressed in the exhibited works. Meanwhile, if the theoretical frame was less than coherent, it can be taken as an indication of the near absence, at the time, of dedicated literature on visual art from most Caribbean territories.

The catalogue grouped the fifty-six participating artists into national sections. At least three-quarters of these had trained in the United States, and almost half were listed as residing outside the region, mainly in North America. Some nations (for example Grenada) were not included at all, while others (i.e., Guyana, Cuba, Saint Thomas and Saint Vincent) were represented by non-resident artists only

(in the case of Cuba, according to Poupeye, "an obvious concession to Cuban-American politics"[17]). The stated aim of reflecting the "essence of the Caribbean people"[18] was obviously problematic, and so was the complete lack of artists from French and Dutch territories, as well as the omission of intuitive works from an exhibition seeking to expose works inspired by a "Caribbean consciousness". In my opinion, *Caribbean Visions* did, nevertheless, present a sufficient range of stylistic positions and thematic preoccupations to indicate the presence of generational, political and aesthetic contestations in the region. Consistent with the nationalist ethos, which certainly would have influenced many older artists, numerous works were in the celebratory, affirmative and sometimes essentialist vein: portrayals of Caribbean people, folklore, spirituality and celebrations of 'blackness' (Moody, Watson, Bedia, Gonzalez). Other works implicitly or explicitly arrested such postulations of national unity, but maintained the use of traditional media (Davis, Butcher, Esson). Several artists could be described as Creole modernists, who combined form-experiment with the narration of Caribbean stories (Clarke, Charles, Greaves), others as abstract modernists (Bowling, Cadien), and others yet (though new media was scarce, given the curatorial focus on painting and sculpture) as fledgling Caribbean postmodernists—i.e., 'conceptualists' veering away from traditional media, critical of the postcolonial nation and unwilling to posit an essential Caribbean identity (Cozier, Campos-Pons). In different ways, many also spoke to the concepts of diaspora (Clarke, Chen) and hybridity (Nanan, Chong). To anyone looking for it, there was evidence of a continued subscription to, as well as departures from the nationalist paradigm and the Creole modernism, which accompanied the early phase of the nation-building project.

Poupeye critiques *Caribbean Visions* for its conservative reproduction of the region's internal hierarchies (through the inclusion of "local and international 'heavy-weights' such as Wifredo Lam, Edna Manley, Ronald Moody, Karl Broodhagen and Leroy Clarke, along with younger and emerging artists").[19] I am, however, of the converse opinion, that it is only through such juxtapositions, that generational ruptures become visible and meaningful (especially in a traveling exhibition). I likewise disagree with Poupeye's suggestion that the identification of artists by nation should necessarily have "reinforced the notion that Caribbean art consists of a cluster of cohesive national schools". The national identification merely (but importantly) connects the works with particular historical, political and institutional structures (consistent with Jameson's 'national situation') and precisely helps illuminate which trends transcend national borders and therefore may be considered significant for the region at large. If *Caribbean Visions* could be faulted for preserving existing hegemonies, those to worry about do not, in my

view, pertain to the region's aesthetic hierarchies, but to the relationship between the United States and the Caribbean: it is in *this* context, that the exhibition's oversights and omissions become significant. For by invoking, but never really *using* national frames to draw out potentially controversial political issues (for instance regarding Cuba, Grenada, Puerto Rico or Guyana), the exhibition arguably denied the national perspectives on which it seemed to insist. Similarly, by showing works, which generally employed a language that to a metropolitan eye in 1995 may have registered as 'belated', but neglecting to theorize this oddity as a possibly deliberate measure of resistance, the exhibition ultimately preserved the notion of a region still catching up with modernity. It did not, in other words, expose Caribbean artists' particular challenge to reflect the complicated relationship between modernity, modernism and postcoloniality. The closest the curators came to a discussion of what Wainwright calls a 'politics of time' is the passing suggestion (albeit in the literary context of Wilson Harris and Kamau Brathwaite) that "Caribbean uniqueness" lies in its liberation "from the constrictions of historical convention".[20]

Towards the end of their introduction, the curators offer the following summary of the exhibition's thematic diversity: "nationalism/indigenism, romantic love, mysticism, religious practices, respect for nature in all its forms, the excitement brought by Carnival throughout the Caribbean, the folk roots of culture and visual narrative language".[21] Meanwhile, one highly significant feature that could have been drawn out, but that passes without mention, is the *collective* scope (visualizations of ancestral roots, cultural practices, spirituality, political challenges, migration), which suffuses many of the works. Despite Walcott's and Nettleford's fervent regionalism, the resistive and political gestures embedded (both aesthetically and thematically) in the works are therefore neutralized under general reference to diversity, creolization processes and the carnivalesque. There is no contextualizing effort to infer an *aesthetic* principle from Walcott's idea of creolization, and no attempt to integrate different characteristics into collective (and potentially politicized) regional claims. Ironically, and almost in conflict with his earlier and prescient statement that "Despite persistent colonial attachments to a Eurocentric ideal among many, there are enough Caribbean artists and others of vision who are seized by the fact that universality, as Herman Melville once said, is a 'culturally specific concept, used to maintain a hierarchy and a dominance over other cultures'",[22] Nettleford's final paragraph thus attains an inadvertently conservative inflection, which, to a North American audience, should put to rest any concerns about the region's stability: "Herein lies a celebration of heterogeneity, of unity in diversity, and of the method that underlies

all that appears to be madness! Against the background of such differences, such contradictions, such contrariness, even such chaos, is a unifying space in which an identity that defies stasis, while it promotes *order and stability* is now being forged" (my emphasis).

In conclusion, it can therefore be argued that *Caribbean Visions'* portrayal of the region indeed was one of cultural and aesthetic diversity. The exhibition moreover provided a lot of *raw material* for an apprehension of Caribbean resistance and critique, but either failed to bring these characteristics into focus, or actively diffused them. All the same: even if the curatorial team left viewers to detect a political, aesthetic and generational dynamic for themselves, there was no direct effort to conceal the thematic and political diversity of the region's art by projecting aesthetic conformity (within the limited field of painting and sculpture). To my mind, the exhibition therefore exemplified how a portrayal of the Caribbean as carnivalesque, given to a high degree of cultural narcissism, and alternating between self-affirmation and self–critique, served a broader multiculturalist agenda intent on paying homage to the diversity of the world, while taking the edge out of its more radical and collective potential.

A Cursory Look at *Caribe Insular*, 1998

Though it says nothing about the Caribbean-American trajectory, which is the focus of my discussion, the catalogue for the large-scale Spanish exhibition of Caribbean art, *Caribe Insular* (1998) (jointly commissioned by Casa de America and the Museo Extremeno y Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporaneo in Madrid) curated by Antonio Zaya and Maria Lluisa Borras, testifies to the gradual transition from the curatorial suggestion of Caribbean multicultural diversity to the cosmopolitan projection of relative thematic and aesthetic conformity.

The catalogue, which features a Peter Minshall 'mas'-production on its cover, tones down the 'national claim' on the forty-three participating artists (from all four language-areas of the Caribbean), by listing them in alphabetical order with country of birth, residence or practice indicated in small font underneath the name. Apart from the two curators' own contributions, the accompanying texts (this time no less than sixteen) are, however, decidedly national in origin and approach, and also specifically focused on the visual arts. They offer an unprecedented and valuable compendium of writing and perspectives on the region's art histories and dynamics, which the exhibition thus attempted to fuse into a directed, if not univocal portrayal of contemporary Caribbean art. On this occasion, the curators are also more forthright about their overarching agenda.

The Caribbean, they suggest, offers helpful insights into processes, to which the West is currently trying to adapt: hybridization, racial intermixing, transculturation, syncretism, multiculturalism, large-scale immigration, dissemination etc.[23] Though the exhibition necessarily seeks to exempt a number of Caribbean artists and works from art historical "exclusion and fragmentation", it is thus primarily occasioned by the need for Europe to come to terms with its growing cultural and ethnic diversity. It is, moreover, explicitly conceded that globalization is driven by Western interests: "globalization must be understood as homogenization and occidentialization, and hence the equivalent of monopolization, occidental imperialism of the media, and re-colonization".[24] The exhibition therefore at once reflected Western self-interest and self-scrutiny, and the curators openly acknowledge, that matters between the Caribbean and the West remain unsettled. They are moreover refreshingly specific about their findings and the features of Caribbean art are listed as follows (irrelevant details omitted). It is:

— free from prejudice
— in search of its own roots
— not provincial (but) fully belongs to cosmopolitan postmodernism
— integrates popular, Creole and traditional elements with ancestral, African and native Indian cults, tending towards demystification
— does not reject any form of artistic expression
— returns to the subjects of islands, migrations and crossings
— (infused with) resistance, defiance and knows how to use kitsch as an implacable critical weapon.

Rather than common characteristics of an ideal category of 'Caribbean art', this list should perhaps have been described as a multiplicity of aspirations, which often come into conflict with one another (certain forms of Creole resistance and traditional elements may, for example, breed a bias *against* cosmopolitan postmodernism).

However, even though the exhibition's objectives were portrayed as mutually beneficial to Spain and the Caribbean, I contend that the need to make it fit a domestic agenda (which may be as narrow as the reputation and future career of its curators) manifested itself in the selection of the works. The curators' claim to have included all media "as long as none exercises a hegemonic dominance over the others" is thus tempered by the allusion to a certain preference for installations, which "continue opening new paths of exploration and synthesis, of intimacy and expression, of investigation and celebration", and by the remarkably provocative declaration, that most of the "excellent painters from the islands who

are often chosen to represent their homelands in international exhibitions" were omitted as a matter of policy, because "we felt that their work was intended to fit into art world trends and occidental interests".[25] Notwithstanding the promise of a balanced selection, the vast majority of works were thus 'conceptual' and more than half of those shown in the catalogue were installations. The remainder was made up of painting, performance, photography, mixed media and sculptural objects. Whereas *Caribbean Visions* excluded intuitive artists but had a strong representation of what I have termed 'Creole modernists', *Caribe Insular* included a couple of intuitives (Moore, Daley, Jolimeau), but few artists working in the narrative or celebratory vein of Creole modernism, or otherwise opposing art world fashions. The emphasis was on works that exuded a general air of ambiguity and were relatively indirect in their representation of the Caribbean, though several referenced its spiritual and popular traditions (the inclusion of a few intuitive artists may indeed have been an attempt to contextualize an emergent cosmopolitanism). The claim that the omission of many painters rested on concerns about 'Western' or commercial interests, however, raises the converse question, whether the extreme overrepresentation of installation did not itself reflect a concern with art world trends and *more current* occidental interests. Indeed, those who aligned themselves with a cosmopolitan postmodernism were held up as full members of an (inherently progressive) international avant-garde. Like *Caribbean Visions*, *Caribe Insular* failed to pick up on the concerted efforts on the part of many artists in the region to resist, at their peril, the contemporary 'culture game'.

Caribe Insular therefore anticipated Poupeye's (chronologically speaking, later) contention that visiting curators should avoid reproducing local canons. This time, they clearly sought to show the region where its priorities *ought* to be, for it to be taken seriously in an international context. While *Caribe Insular* warmly acknowledges 'Caribbean resistance', such resistance (i.e., gestures towards neo-imperialism, contested identities, migration, diaspora, the loss of cultural traditions etc.) was therefore primarily expressed through thematic rather than formal dispositions. The maneuvers of Creole modernism, which to foreign eyes might register as anachronistic (works by the likes of Greaves, Clarke, Charles and other artists foregrounded in *Caribbean Visions*), were discarded under reference to an alleged compliance with a foreign gaze. That the cosmopolitan expression may be similarly charged is never acknowledged. Meanwhile, *Caribe Insular* was also indicative of another trend: the average age of the artists in *Caribbean Visions* was fifty; in *Caribe Insular*, it was forty-three; and in the next big Caribbean exhibition, *Infinite Island*, it had dropped to forty.

Infinite Island, 2007

Infinite Island was organized by the Brooklyn Museum in New York in 2007 and put together by the museum's in-house assistant curator for contemporary art and exhibitions, Tumelo Mosaka. It was, according to the foreword by the museum's director, especially intended for the large Caribbean constituency served by the museum. *Infinite Island* featured forty-five artists from the Caribbean and its diaspora with approximately 35 percent residing outside the region, which may be one reason why Mosaka opens his introductory essay by valorizing the idea of the region as a 'space' rather than a 'place'.[26] The front-cover of the catalogue shows Hew Locke's sensational piece 'El Dorado', and the artists are introduced in alphabetical order with no reference to their nationality (which is only revealed in the accompanying blurbs). Apart from the opening citation of Derek Walcott's Nobel lecture, which also was reprinted in the *Caribbean Visions* catalogue, the difference in curatorial approach to the two exhibitions could hardly have been greater. Mosaka is, for example, far more overt than Lewis and Hewitt about the region's political and economic challenges and the shadow of colonization. The marketing of the Caribbean as a 'Paradise', he notes, "conceals social conditions burdened by poverty, crime and the lack of education and health care. These conditions engender fragile governments that are vulnerable to outside manipulation".[27] He proceeds to observe the problematic use of the term 'hybridity' (meaning creolization) as a nationalist ideal, which leads to a false notion of homogeneity, rather than genuine pluralism: "Approaching nationalism through the lens of hybridity, however, can also reduce the cultural complexity of the Caribbean to a homogenous entity in the service of political interests. Such nationalisms presuppose that cultural hybridity produces equality among its component parts, when in fact the historical particularities of the region have resulted in the privileging of certain groups within the various groups that make up the Caribbean (. . .). It is the cultural mixture and tension of differences that give the Caribbean its dynamism".[28]

The curator's attention to the region's internal challenges is, however, not matched by equal attention to its external challenges and continued dependency, which perhaps follows naturally from the definition of the Caribbean as a 'space' (a de-territorialized approach in fact necessitates the treatment of the region as a *cultural*, rather than a *political* entity), but rather with an emphasis on Caribbean artists' longing to escape their insular tedium: Defying the strictures of limiting categories associated with physical boundaries, national desires, and market-driven images, the contemporary artists in *Infinite Island: Contemporary Carib-*

bean Art reimagine the Caribbean as a place where both infinite and delimited conditions apply.[29]

On this background, one would surely expect Mosaka's selection to reflect a great deal of diversity, 'composite hybridity' and a pronounced awareness of the politics of aesthetics—indeed, a US-based curator, who dedicates a long paragraph to the power of 'naming' and gestures towards previous tendencies to "reduce the cultural complexity of the Caribbean to a homogenous entity in the service of political interests" might have exerted a high degree of self-scrutiny before defining the Caribbean contemporary. *Infinite Island* was, nonetheless, by a long shot the least *aesthetically* diverse Caribbean exhibition to date. Practically all works were thus in new or experimental media (installation, mixed media, performance and photography). There were no intuitive or naturalistic works and few that registered as modernist in either the Creole or the Western tradition. Echoing *Documenta 11* practically all the submissions now reflected post-colonial concerns and preoccupations: migration (Allora and Calzadilla), global and social inequality (Arrechea), the failures of de-colonization (Cozier, Denis), body and gender (Paiewonsky, Patterson, Atkinson), black history (Gardner, Campbell) and popular culture (Dzine, Diaz). The works come across as both issue-oriented, pointed and humorous, but also as ideologically ambivalent and politically disillusioned: Allora and Calzadilla's beach-footprints (with an image of the Statue of Liberty) may offer a simultaneous critique of Cuban socialism and US immigration-laws, but also suggest the failure of either system to bring about 'freedom' in any real sense. Hew Locke's 'El Dorado' may be a gigantic vodou-doll, and an apparent monument to anti-imperialism, but most of all comes across as a resigned postmodern joke: poking fun at the ultimate symbol of empire, but without projecting, in its *aesthetic spectrum*, any hint of postcolonial vision or agency beyond its momentary subversiveness. *Infinite Island* consisted entirely of sophisticated works, which exuded a worldly contemporaneity and resonated with cosmopolitanism's indication of 'locality' in a universal language. Conceptualized as a cultural space marked by infinite complexity and diversity, however, the region's cumulative political critiques could not be attached to a coherent position or agenda and therefore simply vaporized. The lasting impression was therefore *not* of political concerns, but of aesthetic sophistication and creative cleverness and of an exhibition eager to prove the postmodern prowess of its artists.

Infinite Island's demonstrative cosmopolitanism nevertheless had limited returns. Krista Thompson objected to its thematic sections, which "speak(s) less to the aesthetics of the work and more to their status as documents and reflections of 'Caribbeanness'" and therefore is deemed "anthropologizing".[30] Meanwhile, the

most memorable review was, as mentioned, by Holland Cotter, who lamented the exhibition's insipid provinciality. In a particularly stinging turn of events, it was indeed the curatorial effort to satisfy cosmopolitan expectations that got in the way of its claim to true contemporaneity: "Multiculturalist terms like identity, hybridity and diversity may sound like words from a dead language in Chelsea, but they are the lingua franca of the Brooklyn show. Once-hyped forms like installation art and the neo-conceptual object may be disdained by Manhattan tastemakers, but they are embraced here." On the whole, Cotter asserts, the show "does not have the sense of risk and discovery that a re-arguing of identity as a subject now needs, at least in a New York context". [31] Were the subtext of miscalculated efforts not so pitiful, it would have been tempting to commend Cotter for being so candid about the lack of horizontality in the global art world.

Before moving on, it is worth pausing for a moment over the catalogue's second (and last) essay by Annie Paul. Under reference to Thompson's *An Eye for the Tropics,* Paul opens by stating the importance, in a region dependent on tourism, of shaking off stereotypical images imposed from abroad (as will be discussed momentarily, this notion provided the conceptual framework for the 2011-exhibition *Wrestling with the Image*). Reflecting further on aesthetic dynamics between the Caribbean and the metropole, she observes:

> Throughout the Caribbean, there has been a sustained tension between traditionalist artists, who felt that their mandate was to give visual form to the local, the indigenous, and the native, and modernists, who considered themselves internationalist in orientation and favored a more cosmopolitan, less parochial outlook. The former tended toward national themes, and toward realism and illusionism as preferred techniques of image making; the latter preferred international styles such as Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism, and in more recent times have been experimenting with the new media of installation, site-specific work, performance and video. [32]

Notwithstanding the inconsistent use of terms in relation to Paul's earlier writing (the once reviled modernists are now described as 'cosmopolitanists' and held up as forerunners for the present-day avant-garde), the implicit suggestion is that there is a relationship between Caribbean artists' choice of language and their (perceived) prospects in the international art-world. It is surprising, therefore, that she does not attempt to draw out the *differences* between previous and current efforts at gaining international visibility or to show how this is reflected in the present exhibition. Such an inquiry might suggest that artists' choice of *medium* and *critical tenor* now tend to be more decisive factors than style and

subject-matter. Paul, however, ends her essay by switching from an analytical to a prescriptive mode and reiterates the hope, that the region's visual arts may soon be cross-fertilized with popular culture. Almost as if by cue, the next exhibition of contemporary Caribbean art in the United States was indeed centered on 'the popular'.

As may have been noticed, the curators of the three exhibitions discussed so far have been emissaries of the host-institution or organizing body. The evolution from a projection of multicultural diversity (but also of 'belatedness') in *Caribbean Visions*, to one of postcolonial cosmopolitanism in *Infinite Island*, may thus be indicative of changes in the way the cultural metropole approaches the cultural Caribbean. These exhibitions have in recent years been followed by another three curated by individuals with close personal ties to the Caribbean (whether in an effort to award the region more agency in its own representation, or to lessen the pressure on the host-institution to 'get it right'). As will become apparent, the conceptual frameworks for two of these exhibitions correspond exactly with the 'culturalist' and the 'conceptual' factions of the Caribbean postmodern described in section 1.

Rockstone and Bootheel, 2009

Rockstone and Bootheel was hosted by Real Art Ways in Connecticut and curated by Kristina Newman-Scott and Yona Backer (both of the Jamaican diaspora) in 2009. According to the accompanying catalogue (with a graphic pun on the exhibition-title on its cover), Real Art Ways is one of the earliest surviving alternative spaces in the United States. It was established in 1975 "in a rambling upstairs space on Asylum Street in downtown Hartford. The founding members created a bare bones salon in which they lived, worked and presented the work of others. The idea of alternativity to the mainstream is central to Real Art Ways—the organization arose at a moment when alternative ideas were being explored (. . .) and alternative institutions were being established".[33]

Rockstone and Bootheel differed from *Infinite Island* and *Caribbean Visions* in the reduction of scope from the entire region to contemporary West Indian Art (so often marginalized by the more populous and institutionally stronger Spanish-speaking areas). The exhibition thus displayed works by thirty-nine artists from the Anglophone Caribbean and its diaspora. Incidentally, the artists' average age was also thirty-nine, thus slightly lower than in *Infinite Island*, but with a drop of eleven years from *Caribbean Visions*. Artists are listed in alphabetical order with their country and year of birth indicated in small letters below. It

is, however, unclear whether it was the Caribbean (as a marginal region), or the 'popular' (as a supposedly marginal aesthetic category), or the combined notion of 'the marginal in the marginal', which was seen to connect with the 'alternative' scope of the space. Given the counter hegemonic claims of the host-venue, the overlaps between the artists in *Rockstone and Bootheel* and those featured in *Infinite Island* (in a decidedly mainstream institution like the Brooklyn Museum) was indeed surprising. Predictably, the majority of works were thus executed in new or mixed media and more than a third of the Anglophone Caribbean artists shown in *Infinite Island*, re-appeared here (Christopher Cozier has in fact been included in every exhibition discussed here, except *Wrestling with the Image*, which he co-curated).[34]

What clearly was meant to set the show apart was its explicit emphasis on the 'popular', starting with the dub-reference in the title of the show. This was stated as a conscious effort to renegotiate the (not further qualified) "basic structures and assumptions", which usually inform the selection of Caribbean art for metropolitan survey shows.[35] Popular culture was therefore a common theme for a majority of the catalogue-essays (especially those by Nicholas Laughlin, Donna Hope and Annie Paul), which offered a purposeful critical frame for the exhibition. Though it did not extend to intuitive, performative or participatory works,[36] the popular was widely defined, and its references included street-life (Rose and Todd), carnival (Ové, Griffith), gang-violence (Johnson, Morrison), dancehall culture (Patterson, Cozier), mass-media (Russell) and spirituality (Akuzuru, Dada). While the show thus argued for a high degree of cultural autonomy, there appeared to be some internal disparity on the question of critical autonomy. Some works sought to engage 'directly' with political issues (migration, labor-exploitation) in the form of video-documentaries (Davis, Fabri). Others tackled aspects of popular life by addressing reductive perceptions of the Caribbean (Loy, Russell, Curry) or the constructed nature of identity (Cox, Lawrence). In the overall argument for a Caribbean cultural subject, the deconstructive inflection and the tendency towards ironic distance was arguably less pronounced than in *Infinite Island*. A press-release suggested that the exhibition "evokes the feeling of a high-energy 'mash up.' The works are juxtaposed in conversation with one another to reveal complex, fragmented stories about contemporary Anglophone Caribbean culture, challenging common assumptions about West Indian artistic expression".[37] Meanwhile, even though the emphasis on 'the popular' may have been intended as a counter-point to *Infinite Island*'s sleek conceptualism, and was deployed to suggest an intentional and structurally 'deeper' expression of cultural identity and resistance, it's organizing principle of 'the mashup' would, had it been

employed by non-Caribbean curators, have been furiously rejected as pejorative and essentialist. If *Caribbean Visions'* portrayal of the region as 'carnivalesque' revealed an underlying prejudice, *Rockstone and Bootheel* thus made that prejudice its own. It is therefore questionable to what extent Backer and Newman-Scott challenged "common assumptions about West Indian expression". The engagement with the popular moreover prompts the 'Spivakian' question, whether the vernacular cosmopolitanism of an exhibition like *Rockstone and Bootheel* manages to engage the people for whom it supposedly speaks.

Whereas *Infinite Island* largely failed to excite the art-establishment, *Rockstone and Bootheel* was generally well received. Whether because of the show's relatively focused agenda, its humour or its self-imposed essentialism, critics were enthusiastic about the exhibition's diversity and 'contemporariness'. Hank Hoffmann, a Connecticut-based visual arts blogger, wrote "There is no overarching theme but there is an organizing principle: the *mashup*. Newman-Scott says the use of the mashup aesthetic for the exhibit appropriately reflects life on the islands. Culture in its various manifestations—visual arts, music—is woven into the fabric of daily existence." Despite the charming chaos, the show thus passed muster with this viewer and registered as "fully within the mainstream of contemporary art".[38] Even more significant, Benjamin Genocchio, writing for the *New York Times*, opens his review "Colorful, Witty, Noisy: A West Indian Mélange", with a declaration: "Every now and then a show comes along that takes you out of your comfort zone and into a strange new world. The ideas and imagery in that world can be difficult to appreciate at first, but the more you look, the more you begin to understand the local references and cultural concepts involved. Slowly and surely the beauty and sophistication of the art come into focus".[39] What Genocchio's statement accurately describes is the pleasurable rendezvous between the metropolitan critic and an exhibition, which exactly manages to project an aura of cultural 'otherness', and yet allows the determined and open-minded viewer to crack the codes. The 'comfort-zone' is, in other words, momentarily jeopardized, but quickly restored when the viewer locks eyes with the exotic artist in a moment of mutual—and cosmopolitan—recognition.

Wrestling with the Image, 2011

Cultural stereotypes and preconceptions, and ways of redressing them, were to become the theme of *Wrestling with the Image. Caribbean Interventions*. The exhibition was arranged for the World Bank in Washington, DC (partnering with the Inter-American Development Bank and the Organization of American States)

and curated by the US-based art historian Tatiana Flores and Christopher Cozier, thus marking the zenith of his ascent from newcomer in *Caribbean Visions*. Suggesting some common ground between the two, Flores's professional profile at Rutgers University indicates that her work is "deeply informed by theoretical approaches, such as feminism, post-structuralism, and postcolonialism".

Wrestling with the Image presented works by thirty-six artists from the Caribbean and its diaspora as part of the World Bank's *About Change* series. A statement on the jacket of the exhibition-catalogue states that "Works chosen during the open Call for Entries are by contemporary visual artists from all member states in the region. The exhibitions provide a comprehensive overview of current artistic spheres and specialties". The catalogue, once again, lists artists in alphabetical order with nationality indicated below. Given both curators' discussion, in their respective catalogue-essays, of the Caribbean as an ever-expanding space, less and less tied to national boundaries or geographical locations, it is at first surprising that even diasporic artists are identified with a particular Caribbean nation. Roshini Kempadoo and Hew Locke, both long-standing residents of the United Kingdom, are thus listed under Guyana/UK. While this of course reflects the exhibition's focus on the movements and 'routes' undertaken by Caribbean artists, it does, however, also protect the curators from having to include less cosmopolitan works created by artists actually living in a place like Guyana, notwithstanding the host institution's promise of a "comprehensive overview of current artistic spheres and specialties".

Whereas *Rockstone and Bootheel* could be linked to the 'culturalist' strand of the Caribbean postmodern, *Wrestling with the Image* corresponded with the 'deconstructive and conceptualist' direction. Though neither curator dwells at length on the concept and current shape of 'contemporary art', the exhibition oriented itself towards questions of visual representation by featuring works that 'wrestle with'—i.e., challenges or subverts—imposed identities (metaphorically captured in the front-cover's reproduction of John Cox's 'I Am Not Afraid to Fight a Perfect Stranger', which was discussed on p. 154). One of the exhibition's objectives was therefore to redress assumptions about Caribbeanness, tropicality and postcolonial identity,[40] whether reflected in tourist-brochures or nationalist cultural programming, and another was to dismantle notions of the Caribbean as tied to a particular location by demonstrating its dispersed and migratory character. The latter was argued through a curatorial emphasis on works made by Caribbean people born in one country, living in another and exhibiting in a third. In his catalogue-essay (presaging Laughlin as cited on p. 47), Cozier writes: "These artists display a defiance against being pinned down to a single location, and the

expectations ascribed to being here or there. Defying these territorial boundaries brings up questions of license and approval, and indeed images of passports, certificates, and associated coats of arms and official insignias move through many of the works, underscoring the way that bodies and land are constantly commodified and licensed".[41]

The region is thus (as in *Infinite Island*) re-conceptualized as a coherent, if infinitely differentiated, critical space in which "the dizzyingly dynamic visual production of contemporary Caribbean artists" nevertheless "is bound by 'common threads'".[42] Though Flores finds it encouraging that artists "choose to engage local subject matter—broadly understood—instead of retreating into a hermeticist visual language that would have them deny their surroundings and backgrounds altogether",[43] the exhibition primarily portrays the common threads as a widespread objection to cultural stereotypes (be they "hammocks, palm-trees and blue skies with smiling faces and available bodies" or "abject silhouettes cramped in sloops on a CNN report"[44]). What is evoked, therefore, is often a Caribbean identity 'under erasure', which entails a deferment of any *positive* claims about Caribbeanness, while nonetheless positing a generalized notion of external prejudice. On this premise, however, the contemporary Caribbean artist is placed in the role as perpetual defendant—at the same time against stereotypical assumptions on the part of naïve visitors from the north (from journalists and tourists to curators in search of 'Caribbeanness') and against essentialist identity-claims made by past generations—both 'running and dodging', to paraphrase Brennan once more. The underlying perception of this bundle of 'offenses' (so differently motivated) as being *of a kind* is nonetheless problematic. It is, moreover, hard not to feel a sense of consternation that this sort of artistic endeavor is argued as a novelty—it was, after all, not least to contest the projection of a picturesque or exotic Caribbean (in both colonial and early 'tourist' art), that many Caribbean *modernists* engaged in whole or partial abstraction: indeed, the effort to make us 'see things anew' through the wholesale turn to new media today, in some ways replicates the rejection of naturalism more than half a century ago.[45]

A themed exhibition with a deconstructive scope may, however, ultimately be an impossible brief. In the present case, this is reflected in the surprising inclusion of works which, given their unequivocal celebration of maroon culture seem to contradict the exhibition's fundamental premise of unsettling fixed notions of cultural identities. One artist is introduced in the catalogue as follows: "With his art Marcel Pinas aims to create a lasting record of the lifestyle and traditions of his maroon heritage and hopes to create a worldwide awareness and appreciation for the unique traditional communities in Suriname".[46] Such authenticity claims are

indeed conspicuous and contradictory for an exhibition, which specifically sets out to challenge cultural commodification, and prompt the question, whether the inclusion of these artists may be explained by something other than the practical difficulty of staying true to a deconstructive vision. This is where section 2's discussion of the region's alternative spaces and creative network becomes doubly relevant. A scrutiny of the participating artists in *Wrestling with the Image*—artists who, according to the statement on the catalogue-jacket, were selected via "an open Call for Entries"—reveals that at least 55 percent were somehow associated (or soon to be associated) with Alice Yard (ranging from exhibiting artists to those discussed or merely mentioned on its website). Others were similarly associated with Alice Yard's extended network: Popopstudios, Fresh Milk, *Small Axe*, *Arc Magazine*, Paramaribo Span, and others yet had previously exhibited in *Infinite Island* or *Rockstone and Bootheel*. In the end, only 5 percent of the artists shown in *Wrestling with the Image* were *not* demonstrably part of this amalgamated network. (By comparison, about 48 percent of *Rockstone and Bootheel's* artists were verifiably part of the same network). It is not implied, that there is anything untoward about the curatorial dispositions made by Cozier and Flores (professional engagement today invariably implies that ever more names, solicited or not, become part of one's network). What is troubling, however, is the obvious difficulty for 'non-aligned' artists to become visible. In this context, it is not insignificant that the average age of the artists in *Wrestling with the Image* had once again dropped (albeit incrementally) to 37.5 years, the youngest yet.[47] This suggests a strong presence of artists still in the process of shaping their vision and language, artists, who may still be influenced by mentors or by the 'incubating' process of a particular creative environment. The alternative scene, it thus turns out, had—at least at the time of *Wrestling with the Image*—effectively become the filter through which talent from the Anglophone Caribbean (especially outside of Jamaica) rises to both regional and international visibility.

The trajectory from *Caribbean Visions* to *Wrestling with the Image* has pointed to a gradually evolving hegemony around the international representation of Caribbean contemporary art that corresponds with the Caribbean postmodernism I have described. The most recent survey exhibition, *Relational Undercurrents*, however, indicates that a conceptual recalibration is now underway.

Relational Undercurrents, 2017–2019

Curated by Tatiana Flores, *Relational Undercurrents* opened at the Museum of Latin American Art in Los Angeles in 2017 and was later shown at other US

locations. With eighty-five participating artists from the entire Caribbean and its diaspora, it was much larger than any previously discussed exhibition (and the age of the participants had increased to an average of forty-six). The catalogue, which is co-written and co-edited by Flores and Michelle Stephens (but contains essays by other contributors as well), carefully situates *Relational Undercurrents* in the contemporary philosophical landscape and presents the most coherently theorized survey-exhibition to date. What I want to draw out is not the selection of works or artists (nor the significance of older participants), but how the exhibition's conceptual framework, which is tied to broader revisionist efforts in Caribbean studies,[48] differs from, and yet in some ways still lines up with the conceptual trajectory I have outlined.

The catalogue for *Relational Undercurrents* indicates two departures from recent contemporary Caribbean survey-exhibitions: first, a (post-poststructuralist) shift from a predominant emphasis on 'discourse' towards an *equal* emphasis on 'materiality', and, second, a retreat from the familiar attention to 'difference' in favor of renewed attention to connections and continuities. After a period in which the Caribbean has been treated as a diasporic 'space' marked by diversity and difference, there is, in other words, a tentative recuperation of place, identity and collectivity. The curatorial approach rests on Latour and Deleuze—especially the latter's assemblage-principle as it relates to the relatively new disciplines of islandology and archipelagic studies—and on a radical interpretation of Glissant's relational poetics. While the 'Caribbean assemblage' mostly consists of actual islands, the concept is scalable and applicable to any country, region or continent (irrespective of size or geographical characteristics), and thereby becomes the common denominator necessary for enabling a global relationality. The 'archipelagic assemblage' is described in terms of assorted multiplicities, liquid narratives, entanglement, invagination, ebbs and flows, ongoing processes of de- and re-territorialization.[49] In Stephens's treatment, however, the more solid features of the archipelago recede in importance in favor of 'watery links' and gestures towards Brathwaite's notion of a *submarine* unity. In the exhibition itself, this translates into a lot of attention to water, horizons, ecologies, temporalities, and alternating states of visibility and invisibility. The invitation to look away from the land towards the sea thus warns us not to get too caught up in matters of territory and boundaries in our pursuit of 'place', and in fact to let go of our *ontological* terra firma. One of the exhibition's aims is indeed to challenge the assumptions and connotations afforded by the island-trope itself—less, perhaps, as a pre-modern paradise, tropical playground, or postcolonial nation-state (this was, after all, addressed in *Wrestling with the Image*), than as a metaphor for man,

or nation, as a self-sufficient, limited and limiting entity. Along these lines, Stephens suggests that the binary relationship between island and sea must itself be reimagined and replaced with the image of 'interlapping' rather than 'overlapping' zones. Rather than a natural border, the shoreline must be seen as the threshold of infinite openness, and the notion of the autonomous human subject ought to be replaced with an oceanic one, immersed in, rather than separate from the totality of the world.[50] Deleuze is, interestingly, critiqued for not being relational *enough* in his use of the island as a metaphor for the sovereign subject. Stephens thus argues that he "draws the distinction between ocean and land too starkly, over-privileging metaphor above and against the material in his description of the island as a profound symbol of man's relationship with the outside".[51] A more radically relational model would, she argues, maintain the "*tensions* between discourse and experience, between the ancient and the modern, between metaphor and materiality".[52]

While the conceptual basis for *Relational Undercurrents* thus anticipates a future in which every archipelago is both metaphorical and material, coeval and relatable and no principle or perspective privileged, the question is, to my mind, whether the hyper-relational assemblage model is any more helpful in bringing such a future about than those it seeks to replace—whether the oceanic consciousness, despite its immersion and panoramic vision, isn't more powerless than empowered.

I have argued that contemporary Caribbean art and criticism for the last couple of decades has been characterized by a tendency to marry evocations of locality with gestures towards diasporic fluidity, to hint at collective 'problem-spaces', while refusing collective solutions, and by the celebration of difference and infinite interpretability. Despite its renewed and welcome attention to the local and material, to collectivities and continuities, *Relational Undercurrents*, it seems to me, does not aim at a revival of what Kamugisha describes as "a regionalism anchored to an anticolonial will"[53]. On the contrary, it throws into question the very notion of human agency, which would give this revival material meaning.

Yet, if Stephens ultimately seems ambivalent about an all-out post-humanist stance it may not reflect the prevalent hesitation in Afro-American and Caribbean thought on this matter (as Lewis Gordon puts it, "there would be something strange about people whose oppression is marked by dehumanization to then reject being human beings'[54]), so much as an attempt to hold Deleuze to his own 'both-and' principle of keeping opposing paradigms in tension. Under reference to Cozier's 'New Level Heads' (a large-scale mobile in which a series of human

profiles are moving forwards and backwards just above the water's edge[55]), Stephens's concluding remarks indeed leaves the door open in both directions:

> As humans, we have a complex relation to these archipelagic tensions. On the one hand, we negotiate how to stay afloat, how not to get taken over by an oceanic feeling of oneness with the totality of the natural world, as captured often in metaphors of the sea. On the other hand, we strive not to resort simply to rising out of the water and settling on land, permanently resolving the tension in our idealizations of sovereignty. The image of the drowning human, whose head bobs precariously on the water is not just an image of the sea overtaking the lonely, isolated swimmer. The bobbing head also represents the liminal moment of humanity's uncertain interaction with world, an interlapping rather than an overlapping that leaves us constantly swimming, standing, and walking on rocky, irregular, sinking and rising shores.[56]

Summary of Chapter 8

Chapter 8 has indicated an evolution in the curatorial framing of Caribbean contemporary art for US audiences, which closely corresponds with the critical, aesthetic and organizational developments described in the first two sections of this book. It has been proposed that, notwithstanding other significant problems, only *Caribbean Visions* (1995) indicated (albeit passively) an ideological and generational *contestation* over the contemporary. However, to counter the 'anthropologizing' approach of previous survey-shows like *Caribbean Visions* and *Infinite Island* with new suggestions of Caribbean agency, *Rockstone and Bootheel* and *Wrestling with the Image* intentionally set their own terms by limiting their focus to 'the popular' and 'the image of the Caribbean'. Altogether, the exhibitions discussed have reflected an elimination of expressions, which could register as provincial, belated or unequivocally ideological, in favor of works that fall within the Caribbean postmodern spectrum.[57] They have also reflected the promotion of younger artists who have internalized these codes, but who may still contribute a sense of renewal and openness. This trajectory quite accurately reflects the 1990s avant-garde's displacement of its anti-colonial predecessor, its gradual movement from the margins to the centre of the contemporary scene, and its reach into the next generation—a transition that has assumed a certain character of cultural logic, precisely because it has been difficult.

It may be possible to argue that homogenizing the profile of the contemporary along these lines, is one way of countering metropolitan dominance with the im-

age of a united front: judging by these exhibitions, artists from the Anglophone Caribbean largely self-identify as conceptual or vernacular cosmopolitanists. On the other hand, by uniting only in a vigorous renunciation of universalism, ontological stability, binarism, oppositionality and traceable causalities, this contemporary also surrenders the collective vision or resistive thrust, which would give meaning to a united front. The relentless critique of cultural nationalism has thus displaced efforts at critiquing or countering a Western or neoliberal hegemony, which, at any rate, may now be seen as too diffuse or too entrenched to warrant resistance.

To conclude my argument, chapter 9 attempts to show, at the level of three individual oeuvres — those of Barbadian artists, Ewan Atkinson, Sheena Rose and Alicia Alleyne — the loss (or inversion) of critical potency, which may result from the substitution of the 'national situation' with a more diffuse diasporic 'space' as critical and interpretive lens.

Three Barbadian Artists
and Their 'National Situation'

❧

FROM THE 1930s TO the 1980s, visual arts dynamics in the historically segregated society of Barbados were unmistakably tied to race, class and gender. The tendency for practitioners to either be white, female and middle class, or black, male and working class[1] reflected the slim economic prospects and low professional prestige associated with being a visual artist. Since formal (and, by necessity, foreign) training predominantly was a middle-class option, a pattern developed that saw women-artists taking the lead in the organization of exhibitions, galleries and art education, as well as in the advancement of a 'soft' modernist aesthetic. Though the racial dichotomy began to dissolve after Independence, the modernist expression therefore predominantly belonged to the female middle class artist, who had studied abroad. With the rise of grassroots organizations like Yoruba House and DePAM in the 1980s, however, new pioneers emerged. Determined to show the Barbadian public that modern art could be both critical *and* culturally affirmative, painters like Ras Ishi Butcher and Ras Akyem Ramsay thus introduced an edgy, semi-abstract style and a set of themes, which (anchored in the teachings of Rastafari) broke former taboos pertaining to race and class (plate 23). Alongside the artists' dreadlocks and public outspokenness, their work was widely regarded as offensive, but it still generated exactly the kind of small and influential following it takes to project the image of an avant-garde. By the late 1980s, the cutting-edge of Barbadian art had therefore become black, working class and male. This was the scenario, to which Annalee Davis and Joscelyn Gardner returned (after attending art-schools in the United States and Canada) as heirs-apparent to a progressive tradition of female 'arts activism'. For white artists it was, needless to say, a risky undertaking to challenge the black monopoly on the Barbadian contemporary, but their bid was launched

from an angle of feminism and 'white difference' with significant success. Davis and Gardner thus developed an aesthetic that often entailed a juxtaposition of controversial subject matter (race, class and gender) and decorative or carefully handcrafted elements (plate 24). In registering as both *feminine* and *feminist,* their profile differed significantly from that of their female predecessors as well as that of their male contemporaries. Also pioneering performance and installation art, Davis and Gardner furthermore restored the connection between women-artists and artistic innovation.

By the early 1990s, the frontline of Barbadian art (which included more artists than those highlighted here) was thus divided along historically over-determined boundaries of race and class, though professional alliances across this spectrum did occur (for example in the form of RA). At that point, I submit, the local art-scene was distinguished by three characteristics, to which each of the three artists I am about to discuss deliberately or unconsciously responds:

(1) Despite their internal rivalries, artists were largely committed to (if also critical of) the ongoing 'nation building' project. Although some worked in painting, and others in mixed media and installation, their works were predominantly narrative in character, sincere in approach, and critically engaged in real world issues as well as in the politics of aesthetics. Their endeavors were, in short, treated as a vehicle for national development.

(2) Artists worked in an environment with very limited institutional and critical support. The race/class division was thus exacerbated by the fact that opportunity mostly depended on personal resources or private patronage. Art had almost no public presence and visual arts commentary in the media was limited, superficial and sometimes censored.

(3) As a reflection of small-island dynamics and a long history of racial and social division (and further sustained by many artists' adoption of an autobiographical perspective), the interpretation of Barbadian art was fraught with assumptions about the artist's person and social status: rather than an attempt to expose and overcome social divides, a work of art was automatically related to a black or white, working- or middle class experience.[2]

The ensuing discussion focuses on three younger Barbadian artists, who in various ways have sought to escape or expose these conditions and yet been caught up in them, and whose local and international reception says something about the relationship between meaning and 'situatedness'.

Ewan Atkinson: Transcending a National Dilemma

Ewan Atkinson's first solo-show after his return from art school in the United States was titled *Personality Disorder Machine*. It was held in 2002 and presented a body of poetically enigmatic works that discretely dealt with queerness through themes of 'family' and social education (plate 25). In a moment of rare consensus, the show earned Atkinson instant acclaim among members of the Barbadian public and the regional intelligentsia alike. Unlike those of the earlier avant-garde, these works were not preoccupied with historical divisions, nor did they seem to promote a racially or economically inflected national agenda. Atkinson had replaced the previous generation's forceful tone with a less confrontational one, and, if his work had political ramifications, they were quite oblique. While his allusions to queerness might have been expected to alienate some audiences (provided they were understood at all), it was my impression[3] that the subtle character of the work elicited a palpable sense of relief in the exhibition-going Barbadian public. I attribute this response to the perhaps subliminal impression that Atkinson's work transcended the fractures, which had reduced the arts community to a mirror image of a historically divided nation. The particular emotional needs (and inhibitions) of this community thus conditioned it to largely bypass the potentially controversial issues, and instead receive Atkinson's work as the much-needed synthesis between previously antagonistic positions across lines of race, class and gender. In the particular context of Barbados, Atkinson's work thus became an inadvertent catalyst for a less troubled nation-narrative.

What mattered to the regional and diasporic intelligentsia, however, was not Atkinson's ability to transcend a national quandary. In this forum, his work (and arguably his person as a gay, mixed-race artist) signaled a *departure* from the preoccupation with nation-building, and neatly corresponded with the broader transition to a focus on difference and hybridity, which characterized the 1990s. Also in his favor were the very diffuse or indirect references to the Caribbean, as well as the general ambiguity and playfulness of the work (features that were completely alien to the previous generation). Altogether, this added up to an apparent cosmopolitanism, which just as quickly drew metropolitan interest. In the Barbadian arts community, Atkinson almost immediately became the long-awaited and highly exportable face of the next generation.

Moving away from the delicate approach of his first exhibition, Atkinson's next body of work (characteristically enough created for a show in Miami) was more explicitly about childhood, adolescence and the performance of sexual identity.

Later on, these themes fed into the works exhibited under the title of *Fiction,* which in turn paved the way for the previously discussed *Neighborhood Report* (and subsequently the *Neighborhood Project*), where the attention to 'difference' is substituted with a strategy of queering *everything*. What I wish to draw out, however, is not Atkinson's artistic development, as much as the features of an oeuvre, which, in the specific context of Barbados, served to reconcile national differences and yet, in another critical context, would have registered as an outright departure from a specifically nation-oriented inflection.

Sheena Rose: Post- or Proto-Institutional?

When Atkinson's successor as the nation's young hopeful finally emerged, she came in the figure of a recent graduate by the name of Sheena Rose. Within a year of completing the visual arts programme at the Barbados Community College, Rose was selected to participate in the exhibition for the 2009 BDVA Symposium (see p. 146), which turned out to be a powerful catalyst for her career. In an absolutely unprecedented chain of events, Rose became a rising star of Caribbean contemporary art, reaching career landmarks, which most stalwarts could only dream of, before reaching anything that can be described as artistic maturity. With prestigious exhibitions, book covers, magazine features, celebrity sales, a solo performance at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, a full-page feature in the *New York Times* and a commissioned mural at the headquarters of the International Development Bank in Washington, DC, Rose has indeed rapidly closed in on her declared ambition of becoming a famous artist.

The oeuvre includes drawings, painting, animation, murals, happenings and performances (plate 26), most of which are loosely centered on 'ordinary life', which nevertheless is less and less ordinary as it merges with Rose's own life as an artist. She has indeed become her own perpetual work-in-progress as a 'persona' continually produced on and off social media. An Internet-search on her name thus brings up a number of artworks, but at least as many pictures of Rose as fashionista, business-woman, public figure, bohème, diva, Afro-futurist and, of course, artist. Attention is generated through daily (sometimes hourly) Facebook updates and live-recordings of an entrepreneurial, self-congratulatory or opinionated Rose announcing new ideas, working through momentary feelings, celebrating her latest (or anticipated) feats, sharing private moments, or inviting followers along on her travels. Her life and artistic development has thus become something like an ongoing reality-show, and while Rose's tendency to put herself

at the centre of the work may seem to assert a sense of agency, that agency often merges with the effort to stay in the spotlight.

Whereas Rose's significance among Barbadian peers inevitably is that of someone, who has made it into the international arena, one speaker at a symposium in the United Kingdom referred to her as an artist, who makes exciting "interventions into a localized space", and another as a "typical Barbadian artist, who portrays ordinary life".[4] She is, in other words, seen as emblematically 'international' at home and quintessentially 'local' abroad. It would be worthwhile to examine the assumptions that underpin these notions of locality (and how Rose possibly could be considered a typical Barbadian artist), but suffice it to say that, when they do not explicitly focus on her personal trajectory, the majority of Rose's 'local' themes and concerns (quotidian domestic scenes, Bridgetown cityscapes, confessions of personal insecurities, mocking the Barbadian proclivity for gossip, complaints about the national art-scene and island-mentality, vague expressions of black feminist solidarity) also tend to be relatively (and disarmingly) *universal* concerns, which turns the assertion of 'locality' into one of 'glocality'.

I believe the contradictory nature of her local and international reception can be argued a bit further, for, if Rose's work is at all counter hegemonic in a domestic context, it may be so in ways that are not entirely consistent with the tacit assumptions of a broader diasporic-aesthetic. Wainwright, as we have seen, portrays a global art-world hierarchy, where some regions have the power to define the rules of 'the contemporary', while others are conscripted to catching up. In a metropolitan environment, artists may thus (as discussed in chapter 2) see the public space as a platform for a critique of the conventional, static or prejudiced art institution.[5] Rose's incursions into the public space (through public performances and relentless Internet-activity), however, clearly do not represent a critique of a monolithic institution, but rather a concerted effort to gain visibility and compensate for its absence. Indeed, her persistent public presence can be regarded as an attempt to 'do the job' of the institution by seeking exposure and validation for her work and enhancing her name-recognition and status. In the particular national situation of Barbados, the infiltration of the public space, which in other places may register as a hierarchy-*leveling* form of institutional critique may thus represent a *proto*-institutional and specifically hierarchy-*asserting* endeavor.

Alicia Alleyne: A Pyrrhic Victory?

An indication of what conversely falls outside the parameters of the cosmopolitan contemporary (among with many other forms of expression) is exemplified in the reception of Alicia Alleyne. When Alleyne graduated with a BFA in visual art from the Barbados Community College in 2009, a friendly dispute erupted among tutors eager to acquire her works: in this small forum, it was clearly perceived that her work represented something radically new in the context of Barbadian art. Alleyne's works have mostly taken the form of painting on paper, but have also included experiments with other media, including photography and experimental printing-techniques. Her exploration of the relationship between random and intended marks, of evolving patterns, odd symmetries and subtle disturbances, and her gestures towards the collapse of meaning through the implosion or explosion of perfect geometric shapes introduces a reorientation towards form and material, which not so much transcends, as it turns its back on the previous trajectory of Barbadian art. The small scale of these works and their retreat from subject matter, not only represent a firm rejection of 'spectacle', but also a resignation from the false hopes and thwarted ambitions of previous generations—as well as an effort to preempt an interpretation of the work through her person. Consistent with the principle of deconstruction, but entirely without any quasi-political gestures, the untidy splotches and stains of her deliberately 'botched' duplication of a black square (which instead turns into a volcanic landscape), speak of non-conformity, a refusal to coincide with an established matrix (for example those offered by the previous artistic generation and the current avant-garde) (plate 27).

Her tutors' enthusiasm notwithstanding, the wider reception of Alleyne's work has, however, been lukewarm. Though some members of the artistic community were excited about the pieces shown in a 2010 joint-exhibition with photographer Mark King, my impression was of a high degree of uncertainty on the part of older audiences for whom pure abstraction may have seemed a little self-indulgent, and of an equal hesitation on the part of artists and viewers attuned to the seemingly more 'political' or playfully ambiguous gestures of Alleyne's contemporaries. The response from visiting curators has been similarly tentative, and it is clearly not due to her modest and retiring disposition alone (though this clearly has played a part too) that Alleyne hasn't been absorbed into the alternative scene or diasporic network, where the contemporary is defined. Her work, one may speculate, has not been sufficiently invested in questions about representation, subjectivities or

difference, nor is it perceptibly ironic or hybrid. Alleyne's work does, however, exercise a subtle defiance, which Wainwright picks up, when he observes her "refusal to be co-opted or subsumed into dominant art spaces".[6] If that recognition might have offered the artist a momentary satisfaction, it was also sadly predictive, for Alleyne has by now ceased to produce art.

Changing Inflections

Though the works I have discussed in this chapter may derive their strongest critical inflection from the way they respond to their national situation, it is, of course, not necessarily problematic that works obtain a new and different significance somewhere else: from the artist's point-of-view, the release from a national context can sometimes be liberating and productive. However, when the Caribbean work is picked up precisely because of its apparent criticality, progressiveness or local inscription, we have to ask how these qualities 'work' in a different context. In environments where queerness is largely uncontroversial, works by an artist like Atkinson can, for example, scarcely be regarded as counter hegemonic. Instead, they may become fodder for a broader metropolitan 'politics of difference', or, despite their cosmopolitan worldliness, 'ethnographic' trophies for curators keen to signal their support for Caribbean progressives (neither of which, of course, implies that they shouldn't be shown overseas at all).

Unless the institutional subtext for her work is closely examined, the political ambiguity of Rose's 'localized interventions' is similarly likely to get lost in translation. In an international context, we may likewise wonder if her freewheeling entrepreneurialism is part of her supposedly 'local' appeal, how it is understood (youthful excitement? a corporate reinvention of a previous generation's black militancy?) and indeed with what implications.

Along with the wider diasporic community's indifference to (or failure to detect) the resolutely counter hegemonic character of Alleyne's work, the easy co-optation of non-Western works into metropolitan agendas is a stark reminder of the uneven odds for an equitable cosmopolitanism. Indeed, the critical mutations described in this chapter at once reflect and obscure—and therefore ultimately *preserve* crucial differences and inequalities between margin and centre—inequalities that pertain to history, cultural policy and institutional power, and discrepant expectations in the diasporic liaison itself. Far from suggesting an inherent 'untranslatability' on the part of the foreign work, I simply wish to encourage some consideration, not only of a given work's rootedness in a particular situation, but of its curatorial purpose and likely function in a different context.

Conclusion to Section 3

Whereas section 1 described the strategic use of a 'politics of time' to legitimize the post-nationalist avant-garde's self-identification as 'the next generation', section 3 has shown how the critical inflection of that politics of time has affected the selection and reception of Caribbean art in the metropole. In order to escape former accusations of provinciality, exoticism or off-key modernist efforts, the critical and curatorial angle on the Caribbean contemporary has thus, over the last twenty-five years, become increasingly cosmopolitan and reflective of activities in and around the region's alternative spaces. To conclude my overarching argument, the last chapter has attempted to show how the critical scope of (even the most cosmopolitan) works by Caribbean artists may be impacted by the surrender of specific national situations as the initial, if never singular, basis for interpretation.

AFTERWORD

The preceding chapters have attempted to deliver a cumulative portrayal of the transition from an anti-colonial nationalism to a cosmopolitan postmodernism in visual art and criticism of the Anglophone Caribbean. They have described its particular inflection in a region, that was still negotiating the meaning and direction of postcoloniality, when postmodernism became the lingua franca of the international art world. The book's three sections have been dedicated, respectively, to the strategies artists adopt in order to succeed in the contemporary art-world, to institutional and organizational developments in the region, and to the conceptual framing of Caribbean art for international survey-exhibitions. It has been proposed that the hesitation, on the part of the Caribbean postcolonial state, to act as patron or facilitator for the visual arts, has driven the more experimental segment of the arts community into an alternative scene and an increasingly self-sufficient creative network. While the artworks at the centre of this network may have a critical intent, their distribution and impact therefore often remains within the network's centrifugal range. It is one of the most telling contradictions of the present moment, that the political paralysis this autonomy *imposes* on the cultural sector, seems simultaneously *elected* by the aesthetic strategies many artists have embraced (from a deconstructive conceptualism to a celebratory culturalism) as well as by the inherently transnational scope of a diaspora-aesthetic.

Since neoliberal Caribbean governments invariably favor 'the culture that pays', the official neglect of experimental art at once substantiates the current avant-garde's sense of marginalization and allows the alternative scene to assume a quasi-institutional character. Moreover, because it is marginalized (and sometimes difficult to decode), the 'cutting-edge' expression is almost automatically perceived to be counter hegemonic. Notwithstanding the talk of radical democracy, popular uprising and globalization from below, it can, however, be argued that the 1990s avant-garde effectively has de-politicized the artistic statement, overseen the privatization of cultural administration (in institutionally weak territories), and promoted a network-orientation, which also is an export-orientation—thus leaving little distance between itself and a neoliberal imaginary. The remarkable

convenience for the establishment of the methods adopted by its self-professed challengers is difficult to overlook.

While I have argued that Caribbean art never has *looked* more critical and yet never been less politically *committed*,[1] I concede that the more fundamental question of how art can stimulate political action (without mistaking the work itself for political engagement, or substituting increased visibility for social progress) has been insufficiently explored. Rejecting the notion that all art is (or ought to be) inherently political, while also acknowledging that the inflection of particular forms can evolve with time and place, I do, however, insist that art, if it wishes to be seen as politically progressive, cannot denounce collective representation or strive to keep all interpretive options open as a matter of principle. It is often said (indeed it has been a premise for the movement portrayed in this book) that the artist's role is to raise questions, not to offer answers—but this should not exempt artists from considering the ultimate objective of their activity, defining the values that anchor it or, however difficult this may be, from trying to assess its function in a given political context.

Another area of neglect in the present study is the slightly divergent circumstances that may have incited the post-nationalist momentum in Jamaica and Trinidad, and conditioned its more secondary character in Barbados and the Bahamas (notwithstanding their shared aesthetic orientation, Alice Yard may, for example, have a more directly 'post-nationalist' inflection than both Fresh Milk and Popopstudios). While I have suggested a connection between neoliberal policies, weak public institutions and the overwhelming success and visibility of Caribbean alternative spaces, such spaces can, as the record shows, also thrive in environments with *strong* institutions—though usually with a more equitable distribution of influence. The related assertion, that the post-nationalist avant-garde has consolidated itself through the establishment of such spaces is, moreover, complicated by the fact, that this momentum already (if largely due to external support) had become trendsetting by the time spaces like Alice Yard, Fresh Milk and Popopstudios emerged. It may therefore be more accurate to suggest that it is through these spaces that the post-nationalist movement stakes its claims on the future. And though the suggestion that that momentum has displaced practitioners more attuned to a nationalist agenda certainly held true during the 1990s and early 2000s, it is more difficult to prove that a substantive segment of the artistic field is being actively displaced today—if exactly as a result of this avant-garde's impact on the emerging generation. With the current mutations into 'neo-phenomenological' or 'archipelagic' frames of reference, the field does, however, seem to be widening.

Looming large over the present argument is the elementary question of *why*—without any immediate prospect of material rewards—so many of the region's foremost critics and practitioners have bought into the post-nationalist movement. To consider this in depth would involve a certain amount of conjecture regarding personal motivations, which I am able to undertake. Yet, in passing, let it be recalled that several pioneers of this avant-garde have expressed frustration with being defined as 'Caribbean artists' while studying in a multiculturalist metropole. In the light of such experiences, the appeal of a universal language, which seeks to erase identity-boxes, is not surprising. To such artists, cosmopolitanism may simply represent freedom and opportunity. It must be conceded too, that the nationalist paradigm often *was* marked by a stale or conservative uniformity and, by the 1980s and 1990s, certainly needed to be confronted with its own biases and limitations. The post-nationalist momentum has unquestionably had a positive effect in holding a previous generation to account, unraveling many forms of prejudice, encouraging (and demonstrating) intellectual flexibility and exploring new ways of engaging the public. What I have always found surprising, however, was the bitterness of the critique initially leveled at the preceding generation—a critique in which many older practitioners were unable to recognize their own positions. The motivation for this must primarily have been strategic: the militant adoption of slogans and terms of reference associated with postcolonial theory was an effective way of enlisting academic and extra-regional support to expedite a generational succession. For many younger artists, however, a post-nationalist aesthetic may now simply be the language with the greatest contemporary purchasing power. Without strong local institutions and canons to instill a historical awareness and context for the contemporary, such artists (who have a global access unknown to previous generations) may, at any rate, see themselves as being in conversation with a global contemporary, rather than with the fledgling and loosely documented traditions of local predecessors.[2]

At the end of my discussion, however, it may seem that just about every aesthetic, critical and curatorial practice currently in play has been challenged, and it would be hugely ironic, if my argument itself took a deconstructive direction. Though I have been motivated by what I see as the contradictions (and new myths) of the current moment—and by the overwhelming discursive and curatorial consensus, which simply renders current claims of a new pluralism untrue, it therefore seems necessary to own up to the challenge of pointing towards openings as well as closures. I therefore offer the following tentative suggestions:

First, I wish to encourage a less homogenized representation (and production) of the Caribbean contemporary. This not only requires an interruption of the

present critical and curatorial hegemony, but also a better balance between institutional and alternative agents—indeed it requires institutions to be offered the necessary support to properly execute their representational and advisory role. If this (as is likely) proves untenable in the current economic and political climate, a series of 'alternative' alternative spaces (perhaps modeled on Buntinx' micromuseum) might broaden the contemporary field.

Second, without arguing for regression as progress, I believe there was something of value in the movement here referred to as Creole modernism, at its best. Before elaborating on that point, it should indeed be noted with guarded optimism that the current avant-garde in some regards merely (if not without significant implications) has given Creole modernism's core elements a new inflection. The current preoccupation with the Caribbean as a 'construct' thus re-inscribes the region as a critical focal point, though now without borders or political coherence. Alongside the insistence on 'difference' and the anxiety about totalizing ideologies and representations, there is an emphasis on community and collaboration, albeit transient and project-related: some notion of collective agency does, in other words, persist. The desire to reach out to the general populace through public performances, video and digital media likewise echoes the fundamental gist of a Creole modernism, which precisely was distinguished from its Western counterpart by its effort to communicate with audiences through an emphasis on narrative over pure form. Unlike the contemporary avant-garde, however, the most sincere Creole modernists of the 1960s and 1970s, not only sought to avoid the colonial picturesque, but also the allure of international fashions (such as pop-art and minimalism), unless it—as Cozier precisely laments—served their idea of culture (p. 1). And whereas artists of that generation thought of modernity and a more egalitarian future as something *they* had to create, the post-nationalist avant-garde seemingly puts its faith in the globally self-homogenizing character of a cosmopolitan era.

Gradually, of course, the political betrayals, corruptions, social and ethnic divisions of the post-Independence Caribbean—not to mention the fractures of the art-world itself—complicated the anti-colonial modernists' implicit alliance with the political establishment. It has been a premise for my argument that some of the artists I have followed closely for the last two decades, and who may be regarded as the heirs of Creole modernism, in some sense 'index' that trajectory. Their oeuvres display a different kind of double consciousness to the one touted by diaspora-theorists, a double-consciousness which acknowledges the failures of postcoloniality and yet remains committed to the simultaneous assertion and critique of a historically and geo-politically situated Caribbean. Some of these

artists hold up the totality of Caribbean history, including its recent disappointments, as the *basis* (rather than the impediment) for ongoing nation-building efforts. Their works differ from so much contemporary art through an insistence on continuity and causality, their unapologetic assertion of opposing agendas, and their consciously *mediated* expressions. Such artists, in other words, assume responsibility for the risky and difficult task of representing a historical dialectic. Far from proposing this as a *matrix* for the Caribbean contemporary, I merely wish to argue for the equal recognition of artists, who have maintained some of the previous generation's aspirations—and, of course, also of artists, who have no political ambitions at all, but are invested in some of the many other cognitive, perceptual, tactile, affective or emotional processes that art can induce (with the neo-phenomenological turn, this is already happening). I do, however, also submit that closer attention to *extended individual oeuvres* may offer deeper and more valuable insights into the region's aesthetic dynamics than broader survey-shows, which always subsume the individual statement under their overarching curatorial agenda.

Third, I submit that some of the works presently taken in evidence of a post-nationalist, transnational or diasporic turn, actually allow for a re-interpretation as expressions of a 'critical nationalism'. As has been suggested, the post-nationalist inflection often originates in a contextualizing discourse, rather than in the actual works, and it is thought-provoking indeed, that figures as central to the contemporary moment as Annalee Davis and Christopher Cozier remain curiously connected to a distinctively *national* discourse—indeed Davis herself has lately advocated a 'civic nationalism' (see p. 69). Though it would require a precarious attempt to wrest them from a stated position, such a re-interpretation could do worse than commence with the *Laocoon* drawings Cozier displayed in his 2013 New York exhibition (plate 28). We might then see the empty enclosures and intimations of territoriality, punishment and impending disaster, not *only* as truthful testimonies to the nation state as the failed cause of the Caribbean middle-classes, but also as a *warning* not to let a project, which remains our least bad model for establishing democratic accountability and social justice, slip away.

Finally, in contradistinction to Hanchard, Bourriaud, Enwezor and others, who demand that modernity be acknowledged as hetero-temporal in order to declare the notion of 'provinciality' irrelevant, I second Jameson's observation that such discursive measures merely conceal the economic and institutional inequality, which precisely is reflected in temporal dissonance, and therefore serve a neoliberal agenda perfectly well: "this means that there can be a modernity for ev-

erybody which is different from the standard or hegemonic Anglo-Saxon model. Whatever you dislike about the latter, including the subaltern position it leaves you in, can be effaced by the reassuring and 'cultural' notion that you can fashion your own modernity differently, so that there can be a Latin-American kind, or an Indian kind or an African kind, and so forth (. . .). But this is to overlook the other fundamental meaning of modernity, which is that of a worldwide capitalism itself ".[3] The implication of Jameson's statement is notably not that modernism (and postmodernism) can only be articulated in certain prescribed ways. Just as "all paths to capitalism are unique and 'exceptional', contingent and determined by a unique national situation",[4] so are the artistic responses to modernity: within the conception of *one* modernity, 'belatedness' could, in other words, be put to political use by exposing, rather than concealing (as cosmopolitanism precisely is designed to do) the fundamental inequalities that continue to impact artistic practices across the globe.

I close in full recognition that a knotted, unwieldy and often contradictory reality has been tied into a somewhat rigid and totalizing argument. I have done so in exasperation with the ubiquitous, and oddly celebratory references to 'Caribbean complexity' as an insurmountable obstacle to positing any truth about the region. While my argument does not seek to monopolize the truth, it is based on a conviction of the importance of naming and mapping our own reality, if only for others to adjust the findings.

Introduction

1. The newsletter was published in collaboration with the Canadian artist Gayle Hermick, who lived in Barbados at the time.

2. Cozier 1993b, 6.

3. Ibid., 7 and 1993c, 8.

4. Thompson 1993, 8.

5. Butcher and Ramsay 1993b, 10.

6. Davis 1993a, 4.

7. Thompson 1993, 8.

8. Butcher and Ramsay 1993a, 11. *RA* allegedly collapsed for similar reasons.

9. Cozier 1993a, 7.

10. Davis 1993a, 4.

11. My discussions are predominantly centered on the island-nations in which the source material originates, and on those with an interesting dynamic between institutions and alternative spaces.

12. Lazarus 1999, 10.

13. For a discussion of postmodernism in other areas of Caribbean studies, see Meeks 2007.

14. Annalee Davis' *On Being Committed to a Small Place* was released as I handed this manuscript over to the publisher.

15. Ganguly 2002, 241.

16. Bourdieu 1992, 55.

17. Canclini 1995, 16–21 observes that Bourdieu's theory of autonomy has less explanatory power when it comes to postmodern and hybrid art forms, which reject the separation between 'high' and 'low' expressions.

18. For a rigorous critique of Bourdieu from an art historical perspective, see Hooker, Paterson and Stirton 2002.

19. Adorno cited in Schulte-Sasse, 1984, xviii. Ganguly 2002 points out that Adorno's position on aesthetics, which often has been misconstrued as elitist, in fact was a function of his "desire to rejoin philosophy with social criticism" (247) and while "the aesthetic dimension of Adorno's work holds out (. . .) the possibility of a valid, that is

'adequate' or 'authentic' subjective experience', the 'task of a philosophy premised on historical materialism is to decipher this re-authenticated truth understood in terms of the social contradictions governing its production" (Nicholsen in Ganguly 2002, 251).

20. See Adorno 1991, 99.

21. Bürger 1984, 57.

22. Foucault 1976, 95

23. Rosler cited in Hooker 2000, 216.

24. Jameson 1984.

25. See for example Bernstein 1991, 25.

26. See Kellner 2001, 402.

27. A dilemma treated by Kwame Anthony Appiah in his 1997-essay "Is the Post- in Post-Colonial the Post- in Postmodern?".

28. See the helpful distinction in Parry 1998, 47 between a xenophobic imperial nationalism and an insurgent anti-colonial nationalism conceived as "a means of soliciting the participation of heterogeneous communities and classes in defeating and displacing the colonial state".

29. Moore-Gilbert 1997, 36−37.

30. Said 1994, 66.

31. Bhabha 1994, 122

32. Young 2004, 192−198.

33. Kapur, 1998, 197.

34. Brennan 1991, 93 and 97.

35. Wilson Harris, Alejo Carpentier and Derek Walcott have likewise been described as pioneers of a Caribbean postmodernism.

36. Benitez-Rojo 1996, 4.

37. Britton 1999, 12−19.

38. For a detailed analysis of Glissant's intellectual evolution, see Hallward 2002, 66−133.

39. Meeks 2007, 71.

40. Parry 2004, 76.

41. Some readers may be too young to remember that Jameson, in 1987, was the subject of a scathing retort by Aijaz Ahmad, who, in a piece titled "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'" argued that the former's conception of the 'Third World' amounted to a form of Orientalism.

42. See also E. San Juan Jr.'s valiant attempt to defend both Ahmad and Jameson in *Beyond Postcolonial Theory*. Citing Gramsci's emphasis on "the circumstantiality of aesthetic form and cultural practice in general as shaped by varied audiences and generic conventions" (256), he concedes that Jameson's allegorical hermeneutic takes stock of the "utopian power" of a given cultural artifact as "the symbolic affirmation

of a specific historical and class form of collective unity" (Jameson cited in San Juan, 1998, 258).

43. James 2009: "The Pleasure of Disorientation".

Chapter 1

1. The 'consecration' of Manley as the matriarch of the nationalist movement, and of *Negro Aroused* as its official emblem has been extremely controversial, partly because of the artist's British birth and her ties to Jamaica's political elite, partly because it has been seen as a reflection of curatorial idiosyncrasies on the part of the late National Gallery curator David Boxer (Paul 1998, Poupeye 2013). My use of *Negro Aroused* in the present context deliberately points towards the politically fraught atmosphere, which surrounds the Creole modernism discussed in this chapter.

2. Parry 1998, 45; Lazarus 1999, 78.

3. According to Emery 2007, 83, the term was first used by Joseph Clarke in a discussion of Jean Rhys. Whereas my use of 'Creole modernism', as will become apparent, references an aesthetic strategy of partial assimilation and partial rejection, Clarke does not elaborate on the concept itself, focusing instead on the impact of the *Afro*-Creole on the *white* Creole subject (in contrast to Percy Hintzen, who conversely exposes the effect of the 'Creole as norm' for the black Caribbean identity). See Clarke, 2003, "Caribbean Modernism and the Postcolonial Social Contract".

4. Lee 2013.

5. Cozier 1999, 22.

6. Krista Thompson 2006, 290.

7. Cozier 1993b, 6.

8. In focusing on the critique of modernism as a fundamental aspect of the generational rupture that took place in the 1990s, I echo Poupeye (1998a, 183–184), who cites "disillusionment with the social and political ideals of the previous generation" and a growing resentment with the highly marketable and formulaic representations of 'culturally relevant' subjects' that were dominating the art-scene. Wainwright (2011, 157) points to the *Small Axe* collective's effort to "disrupt a rendering of the Caribbean as a provincial zone (. . .) looking beyond the limits of an anti-colonial and diasporic political and cultural architecture". In a Bahamian context, Krista Thompson (2007), describes the dichotomy between works of a representational and/or picturesque character on one side and modernist/conceptualist works on the other. There is no doubt that the specific arguments and community dynamics have varied according to location, but I have focused on the most vocal, traceable and influential voices in the fashioning and promotion of 'the next generation'.

9. Tancons 2012a, 46.

10. Paul 1999, 75.

11. Paul 1998, 81.

12. Paul 1999, 77.

13. Paul 1998, 80–81.

14. Paul's citation of the following statement by Luis Camnitzer testifies to her fundamental divergence with Cozier over the issue of 'nationalism' but a shared openness towards the 'international': "The intention of the artists was to find a Cuban answer to those movements, not to follow them. They expressed the wish to create an informed nationalistic art rather than one stemming from isolationism" (2007, 26–27).

15. Paul 1999, 75.

16. Stuart Hall cited in Paul 2007, 30. Hall's perception of postmodernism was, however, more nuanced than the citation suggests (see Grossberg, 1996).

17. It is speaks to Cozier's wide appeal, that his work graces the front-cover of numerous academic publications, including: David Scott's *Refashioning Futures* (1999). Charles Carnegie's *Postnationalism Prefigured. Caribbean Borderlands* (2002); Faith Smith's *Creole Recitations*: *John Jacob Thomas and Colonial Formation in the Late Nineteenth-Century Caribbean* (2002). Michaelene A. Crichlow's *Globalization and the Post-Creole Imagination*; *Notes on Fleeing the Plantation* (2009), and Leon Wainwright's *Timed Out. Art and the Transnational Caribbean* (2012).

18. Paul 2007, 30.

19. Annie Paul herself presently sits on the board of the National Gallery of Jamaica.

20. Hucke 2013 suggests that the 'intuitives' were associated with an *Afro*-centric approach, whereas the (Afro-*Creole*) modernists were both 'nationalists' and 'internationalists'. In a later essay, Paul herself suggests that the 'modernists' considered themselves both 'cosmopolitan' and 'internationalist' (Paul 2007, 29).

21. See also Kamugisha 2007b, 21, who observes that the postcolonial state has elicited the following characterizations by political theorists: "high legitimacy deficits', 'hegemonic dissolution', 'severe moral and ethical crisis', 'postcolony', 'predation politics' and concerns 'over the sustainability of democratic governance'".

22. Hintzen 1997.

23. Hintzen 2002, 94–95.

24. See the chapter titled "Creole Discourse and Racism in the Caribbean" in Aaron Kamugisha's *Beyond Coloniality.*

25. Notwithstanding the significant social gap between working- and middle-class blacks of the anti-colonial generation, Hintzen suggests that the former's cultural traditions were weakened or erased by urbanization, thus allowing this segment to be co-opted into an anti-colonial movement, which did not have its interest at heart. A radical movement like Rastafarianism (often regarded with contempt by the black

middle classes) was thus subsumed by Afro-Creole nationalism (see Hintzen 1997 for an extended discussion of the intersection between anti-colonialism, Marxism and international capitalism).

26. Hintzen 1997.

27. Paul 2007, 29–30; Paul and Thompson 2004, v–vi. See also Cozier 2004, 405, where he speaks about the need to escape the inherited nineteenth-century models of representation still demanded by the art market in the early 1990s.

28. Hucke 2013, 138.

29. Arnold 1981, 50–58.

30. Pollard 2004, 60.

31. For an insightful discussion of this aspect of Harris, see Henry 2000, 90–115.

32. I have drawn inspiration from a recorded 2012 lecture titled "Creole Modernism? On Aimé Césaire and Wifredo Lam".

33. When I prefer to describe this modernism as 'Creole' rather than 'cosmopolitan' (Mercer 2005) or 'vernacular' (Knauft 2002), it is because these designations seem indicative of, respectively, a universalism and a populism, neither of which to my mind reflects the movement's character, which was (at its best) internationalist *and* Caribbean, cerebral *and* socially concerned. Nevertheless, the aspirations of Creole Modernism are not by necessity exclusive to the Caribbean—indeed, its self-awareness closely resembles that of the nationalist modernism in India described by Partha Mitter (2005). In my usage, Creole modernism thus designates a process of selective aesthetic appropriation, which resonates with Brathwaite's concept of interculturation, and thereby seeks to expresses both situatedness and agency. The use of the contested term 'Creole' in this context is, moreover, without any *default* racial bias, even if such biases occasionally are detectible in works by its various proponents. Natalie Melas's conception of a 'Creole modernism' (which is argued through the singular example of Wilfredo Lam) does, however, speak of an alternately enchanted and disenchanted '*black* modernity', which "desists and dissolves its arranged marriage with primitivism" (51 mins. into the recorded lecture). Lam's 'Creole modernism' is thus envisaged as distinctly black, and arguably more rigorously subversive than some of the works included in my much more inclusive definition. Melas also (and persuasively) suggests that Creole modernism can be regarded as a manifestation of Glissant's 'forced poetic' (19–20 mins.). Puri describes this 'forced poetic' as a collective situation in which "a need for expression confronts an inability to achieve expression" (2004, 92).

34. See Berman 1982, 16. What preoccupies me here is not when modernity as such commenced, but when Caribbean artists began to reflect on it. For an account of a Latin American trajectory, see Unruh 1994, where the author observes that artistic vanguards were "unquestionably stimulated in part by European avant-gardes of the

pre-and post-World War 1 era (…). But Latin American vanguardism grew out of and responded to the continent's own cultural concerns" (3).

35. See for example Kern 1983.

36. Huyssen 1986, 25.

37. Hucke 2013, 166 does, however, observe the impact of Mexican muralism on a Jamaican modernist like Karl Parboosingh.

38. Hintzen 1997.

39. More detailed discussions of Jamaican modernism are offered by Archer-Straw and Robinson 1990, Poupeye 1998a and Hucke 2013.

40. Krista Thompson's "Black Skin, Blue Eyes: Visualizing Blackness in Jamaican Art 1922–1944" describes the initial consternation, on the part of black subjects, at the prospect of being portrayed.

41. Walmsley and Greaves 2010, 12.

42. Poupeye 1998a, 50.

43. Clarke cited in Hutton 2012, 391.

44. Ibid.

45. Taylor 1995.

46. Greaves cited in Roopnaraine 2005, 158.

47. I do not mean to suggest that such artists (or the steadfast exponents of an original Creole modernism) have no presence at all. In their respective *national* arenas, some do indeed have significant local followings with gallery representation, retrospective exhibitions and, occasionally, national honors etc.

48. See for example Therese Hadchity, "Islands. Or the Post-Colonial Artist and the Absent Institution".

49. From his early involvement in the DePam movement, which sought to 'bring art to the man on the street', Ramsay's work has been motivated by an unwavering identification with the lowest strata of society. Like that of the anti-colonial generation, his work has been committed to the articulation of a distinctive Caribbean identity, but gradually also to a critique of the region's postcolonial reality. Drawing on the teachings of Rastafari and black history, his oeuvre has thus revolved around the themes of imperialism, capitalism, Diaspora, blackness, poverty, migration, masculinity, mortality and, not the least, a romanticized perception of the artist's redemptive role and particular agency. Meanwhile, it is only through a closer scrutiny of the changing critical context and reception of Ramsay's oeuvre, that its increasingly resistive character becomes apparent. The waning hopes of the DePam generation and the fate of culture under changing Barbadian administrations compounded (over the last decade and a half) with the artist's own incremental and premature marginalization from the contemporary art scene, has gradually engendered an aesthetic of partial withdrawal and increasing self-referentiality (or indeed Glissant's 'opacity'). Ramsay's

later oeuvre thus reminds us of a failed collective trajectory, of which he himself is both critic and victim. Increasingly resistant to instant consumption, each work now demands a reciprocal commitment from the viewer in the labor of interpretation by insisting on its own contextualization by the preceding oeuvre. The work thus not only defies the rapid consumerism of contemporary culture, but develops its own power of refusal.

50. Hallward 2001, 129.

51. Paul 1999, 63–64.

52. Poupeye cites Nettleford for the divergent perception, that the *intuitives* were the new creators of Jamaican culture: (the intuitives) "must be closely observed as guides to that aesthetic certitude which must be rooted in our own creative potential if the world is to take us seriously as creators rather than as imitators" (Nettleford in Poupeye 2007a, 76).

53. Sivanandan 2004, 47.

Chapter 2

1. The term 'postmodern' has always been controversial because it seems contingent on a negation of 'modernity' as enabling condition. Many theorists (including Habermas, Bhabha, Gilroy and Mercer have instead focused on broadening the concept of the 'modern' and of 'modernism'. See also Jameson 2002, 5–13.

2. Burgin, 38.

3. Several of these are no longer based in the Caribbean.

4. Noceda 2012, 24.

5. Poupeye 1998b, 42, observes that assemblage and installation had become increasingly common in Jamaican art, and that this, significantly, happened "because these process-oriented art forms challenge the notion of the carefully crafted and, therefore, saleable art object". My own experience of the Caribbean gallery world, however, suggests otherwise, and I doubt that many Caribbean artists have ever felt overwhelmed by market demands. Along similar lines, Simon Lee (2013) thus writes of Cozier's relationship with the international art world: "He is pragmatic enough to recognise, 'The Art World is where the money is. . . . I'm not judging it' and his praxis can be seen as a logical development of the close relationship between the avant garde and commodity culture. Consequently given the dearth of opportunity here (to earn a living, pay the bills) from his art, 'One of the main reasons I show abroad rather than here, is that I get commissions'".

6. Thompson 2007 similarly discusses the public's reservations towards experimental and conceptual art in the Bahamas.

7. See also Cozier's comments on the "visual syntax" of Caribbean popular culture as somehow demanding installation (comments which ironically seem to promote, rather than question an essential identity) in the 1999-interview with Annalee Davis: "installations . . . is more about getting in touch with ourselves and our sensibility in more diverse and rooted ways" (150). In his 2004-essay Cozier likewise talks about finding an alternative to ART (with capital letters): "I had at that time become wary of making any more objects. The art market on the island was avariciously touting and defending yet another generation of 'nostalgic' and 'pastoral' picture makers. Calling oneself an artist was becoming increasingly shameful under these circumstances. I became more interested in working with things co-opted from everyday life, towards understanding their status as signs or symbols". (Cozier 2004, 405).

8. Tancons 2012a, 50

9. See "Visual Enterprises" in *Maco Caribbean Living* 2013–2014. http://www.macocaribbean.com/visual-enterprises. Accessed March, 2018, but link now disabled. The already-politicized nature of the nationalist aesthetic, which Cozier turns against, arguably precludes an understanding of his work as altogether a-political.

10. Cozier cited in Laughlin 2007.

11. Lazarus 2002 posits the important rejoinder, that the field of postcolonial studies has produced an essentialist and culturalist notion of 'the West' and of 'modernity', which obscures the role of capitalism in creating both.

12. Wainwright 2009a, 133.

13. Tancons interview 2011, 45.

14. Dees interview, 2015.

15. Burton 1997, 64 and 133.

16. Cozier cited in Laughlin 2013.

17. Private correspondence, June 2019.

18. Paul 2003.

19. Tancons 2012a, 46.

20. Gugolati 2017.

21. Dees-interview, 2015.

22. Gosine 2013, 1.

23. Paul 2003.

24. Kamugisha 2007a.

25. Fung's documentary on Cozier's oeuvre is titled "Uncomfortable. The Art of Christopher Cozier.

26. Calhoun 1995, 214. Wainwright 2009a, 132 suggests that members of Cozier's alterNative group "have opted not to abandon difference at all, but have reincorporated difference on their own 'alternative' terms and of their own kind".

27. Gugolati (2017) suggests that Cozier's *Blue Soap* occupies Homi Bhabha's 'third position', but also points to affinities with Foucault and Glissant.

28. For a comparative discussion of Adorno and Derrida, see Schulte-Sasse 1984.

29. Kester 2009, 407.

30. Kempadoo 2013.

31. More recently Cozier has (by his own account) taken a stronger interest in the "phenomenological encounter" of the work itself (private communication, June 2019).

32. Aranda-Alvarado 2004, 37.

33. Laughlin 2013.

34. Sheller 2015 similarly speaks of the Bahamian artist Tavares Strachan, as someone who "refuses to make themes of Caribbean identity central to his work in any conventional or obvious ways, but it is nonetheless present. Indeed he explicitly resists being positioned as a 'Caribbean artist' or an 'African diaspora' artist, which has opened up a different kind of (international, cosmopolitan) space for his work." Sheller nevertheless re-argues the necessity of making the connection explicit "I want to argue that even if he does not position himself as a Caribbean artist, a reading of his installations grounded in Caribbean history, literature and theory offers a very productive means of interpretation to the problematic of Caribbean *Rasanblaj*'".

35. Smyth-Johnson 2014, web-article.

36. Laughlin 2013.

37. In the 2013 award announcement on the Prince Claus website, Cozier is described as a 'cultural activator'. http://www.princeclausfund.org/en/news/copy-of-2013-prince-claus-laureates-announced.html.

38. The combined insight of Adorno and Bürger was that autonomy neither can be overcome, nor entirely attained—it is never unequivocal or, for that matter, a question of *choice* (see also Ray 2007).

39. Paul and Thompson 2004, v–vi

40. Gene Ray (2007) argues that SI achieved a more systematic and complete erasure of the boundaries between 'art and life' than its predecessors of the historical avant-garde.

41. A confusion exacerbated by the intersections between contemporary aesthetic discourse and that of radical political theory, such as Antonio Negri's autonomia-movement. Bishop (2006, 184–185) moreover argues, through Ranciere, that 'we can no longer speak of old-fashioned autonomy versus radical engagement, since a dialectical pull between autonomy and heteronomy is itself constitutive of the aesthetic'.

42. Alberro 2009, 4.

43. Ibid., 15.

44. Lippard 1984, 342

45. Kester (cited in M. Wilson 2007, 112) points out, that Bourriaud is keen to differentiate between 'relational aesthetics' and activist art of the 1960s. The premise for a relational aesthetic is thus the immaterial labour of a post-industrial society: "If the artist under industrial production had the job of creating complex or well-constructed objects as an antidote to mass-produced dreck, then the postindustrial artist must now create alternative models of sociality to challenge the instrumentalizing of human social interaction in a post-industrial system". See also Bishop 2004, 52–79.

46. Bourriaud 1998, 22.

47. Hand 2011.

48. Bishop 2004, 52.

49. Kester 2009, 410.

50. Kester cited in Wilson 2007, 107.

51. Kester 2009, 408. Others have connected Bishop's preference for 'rupture' and 'disorientation' with Laclau and Mouffe's 'agonistic' politics (Jackson 2011, 47–48).

52. Bishop 2006, 180–182.

53. Bourriaud cited in Bishop 2004, 54.

54. Bourriaud 1998, 31.

55. Enwezor 2002, 45. Enwezor in some ways echoes Canclini (1995, 243), who suggested that deterritorialization is a defining aspect of the postmodern condition—an aspect, which, he argues, renders cultural antagonisms between "colonizers versus colonized, cosmopolitanism versus nationalism" redundant (229). Canclini instead promotes a hybrid culture, which rejects postmodern nihilism, but shares its reluctance to "invent or impose a meaning on the world", as well as its impetus towards "questioning the conditions in which we construct the real" (248).

56. Enwezor 2002, 45.

57. Ibid.

58. Bhabha 1983, 18.

59. Bhabha 1994.

60. Boyd 2006.

61. Artist's website (accessed June 2019).

62. Hall 2005, 57.

63. Artist's website.

64. See http://archive.hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/emisferica-121-caribbean-rasanblaj/campbell for a discussion of the event (accessed June 2019).

65. Citation from the original project-website. A summary is available at http://arcthemagazine.com/arc/2012/11/ebony-g-patterson-launches-cheap-clean/ (accessed June 2019).

66. The Neighborhood Report is part of a larger undertaking titled The Neighborhood Project.

67. Kennedy-interview.

68. The event was live-streamed "to linked public spaces in Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, Bermuda, the Bahamas, United States and the web, via Facebook, on March 10, 2012" (citation from original project-website).

69. Patterson's recent exhibition *". . . while the dew is still on the roses . . ."* (Speed Art Museum, Kentucky 2019–2020) is an elaborate (and by all accounts moving) tribute to young black victims of violence. One may wonder whether the effort to award these young men a posthumous visibility might not be overshadowed by the show's spectacular (if lovingly crafted and emotionally powerful) sensory overload, but the lingering questions for me pertain to the importance conferred on 'visibility' as an end in itself (being seen rather than *heard*), as well as to the relationship between the installation's implicit offer of 'closure' and the revolutionary appeal in Claude McKay's accompanying poem "O let us nobly die/So that our precious blood may not be shed/ In vain".

70. See also Yudice's discussion (2003, 299) of cross-border artistic collaborations, where "cosmopolitan artists who are 'in the loop' attempt to commiserate and collaborate with the downtrodden or unveil the ideological underpinnings of power differentials between the two countries", as well as Kester (cited in Hand 2003) for whom there are just too many examples of "community based work by well-known and established artists that reinforce the neo Victorian view of a given 'disadvantaged' community or constituency as an instrumentalised and fictively monolithic entity to be 'serviced' by the visiting artist'".

71. In an emblematic passage, which speaks to the deliberate diffusion of specific political visions (while proudly invoking Marx), Stimson and Sholette (2007, 13) explain how the agenda of contemporary collectivities differs from that of post-war (modernist) collectivities. Current hopes are thus "that the dream of collectivism realize itself as neither the strategic vision of some future ideal, of a revised modernism, nor as the mobile, culture-jamming, more-mediated-than-thou counter-hegemony of collectivism after modernism, but instead as Marx' self-realization of human nature constituted by taking charge of social being here and now. This means neither picturing social form nor doing battle in the realm of representation, but instead engaging with social life as production, engaging with social life itself as the medium of expression. This new collectivism carries with it the spectral power of collectivisms, just as *it is realized fully within the hegemonic power of global capitalism*" (my emphasis).

72. Paul 2010, 19.

73. Puri 2003, 24–25. The reputation/respectability dichotomy was initially suggested by Wilson (1973).

74. Edwards 2001, vii.

75. In their introduction to the exhibition-catalogue for *Rockstone and Bootheel* (which precisely focused on the popular, as will be discussed in chapter 8), Backer and Newman-Scott suggest that "even as they claim to 'complement' Western-oriented art history by adding more artists, genres, and countries to the canon", the majority of Caribbean survey-exhibitions "fail to challenge its *basic structures and assumptions*" (my emphasis).

76. In earlier drafts I referred to the same movement as 'populist', by which I meant anti-elitist and in various (more or less mediated) ways centered on popular culture. Since the term 'populism' is now too burdened with ultra-right connotations, I considered 'vernacular', 'vernacular cosmopolitan' or simply 'popular', but felt that neither really encapsulated the full spectrum of expressions and motivations I want to consider in this section. Though 'culturalism', according to Eriksen and Stjernfelt (2009), suggests that "individuals are determined by their culture", what I seek to describe is an instrumental use of culture as a form of resistance. While this resistance often is billed as anti-Western and anti-elitist, it abandons the Marxist focus on economic inequality in favor of efforts towards self-fashioning and also doubles as an export-strategy. While Eriksen and Stjernfelt further argue that culturalism is quite compatible with the more bigoted forms of nationalism, this is generally not the gist of the expressions I describe. Indeed, its 'local' inflection is never too 'nationalist' to pass for a vernacular cosmopolitanism, which is why I see no contradiction in discussing it alongside other expressions of post-nationalism.

77. Jones 2006, 36–37.

78. Rosengarten 2002.

79. C. L. R. James 1963, 413–416.

80. Lazarus 1992, 94. Meanwhile, it speaks to James's intellectual complexity, that his elevation of cricket to 'art' and the importance he conferred on the didactic novel, did not inhibit a simultaneous enthusiasm for Picasso and Pollock. For a discussion of James's position on abstract expressionism, see Craven 2005.

81. Edwards 2007, 12.

82. Pollard 2004, 111.

83. See also Brathwaite's comment cited in Poupeye 2009, 170: "But there is another way of looking at the artist and at society; and that is a view which begins by looking upon society as made up of elite and the masses (the people or folk); in according them an equality of consideration, equilibrium of attention. Within this more balanced framework, priest, politician, judge, critic, artist, inhabit the fulcrum of our consciousness, mediating that gap and gulf between the one and the other, creating a continuum between elite and folk, requirement of a healthy society" (from Brathwaite, "Art and Society").

84. Brathwaite 2013, 356 in fact describes two phases of cultural nationalism, of which the first is 'international', and the second 'local': "there was a certain spirit and expression of nationalism. But our 'actions' had been mainly 'international' gestures: anti-establishment, anti-colonial: not popular, people-based, certainly not native."

85. Scott 1999, 214.

86. Thomas 2002, 44–46. While Thomas identifies radical consumption as the primary means of this 're-shaping', she goes to some length to put this claim in perspective. Reflecting on her own findings, she writes: "However, the popular music associated with dancehall culture represents and reproduces aspects of contemporary dominant systems of belief—such as 'making it' in the marketplace—that also embody particular political visions. This raises thorny questions for academics, policymakers, and activists concerned with the transformative potential of popular cultural production and representation. If modern blackness is supposed to be countercultural, where is its counter hegemonic politics? If it marks a new kind of representation holding a new public power, does it embody a new mode of articulating protest? Does it carry a particular vision for the future?".

87. Scott 2000 uses the figure of 'Zeeks' as an embodiment of the irreconcilable 'difference', which refuses and resists middle class acculturation and exposes the failure of the postcolonial state to accommodate all citizens. Following M. G. Smith (though critical of his middle class frustration with the failure of 'acculturation'), Scott argues that in historically divided societies, like Jamaica, the state cannot successfully become a mediator of shared values. What we need today, he suggests, is a permanent pluralism without coercion—an agonistic way of living together, where contestations lead to (temporary) 'settlements' rather than fixed solutions.

88. Meeks 2007, 37–39. See also Paget Henry's incisive objection to Scott's position, which he says represents the "replacement of revolution with a writerly social criticism" (Henry 2001, 350) and the discussion of Scott's romanticized perception of the figure in Crichlow 2009, 111. Likewise the concluding remarks on Ebony Patterson's use of the 'rude boy' in Archer-Straw 2012, 365: "They are a new breed of rude boys whose faces stare back at their African heritage—blankly".

89. Cozier 2004, 413 says: "By bathing myself with blue soap, I was thinking of the status of the artist in society as a rude tongue".

90. Poupeye 2007a, 80.

91. Paul 1999, 60.

92. Paul 1998, 83

93. Paul 2010, 15

94. Paul 2007, 32.

95. Bhabha 2000, 139–140. Knowles 2007, however, asserts that Bhabha's perspective on the vernacular is elitist.

96. Entry titled "In the wake of daggering" on the artist's website: ruddyroye.com.

97. Minshall 1999, 34.

98. As a curator, Tancons specializes in transposing elements of 'mas' into the visual arts establishment. In August 2014, she was responsible for the 'Uphill Downhall' intervention at the Tate Modern, which is advertised as an 'indoor carnival'. She likewise co-curated (with Krista Thompson) the *En Mas* traveling exhibition, which was staged at institutional and non-institutional venues in the United States and the Caribbean between 2014 and 2018.

99. Tancons, and Minshall cited in Tancons, 2012b, 46–47. Neither Minshall's, nor Tancons' perception of carnival as 'performance', however, seems based on the deconstructive and postcolonialist understanding of that concept as discussed on p. 54.

100. Tancons 2012a, 47. Cozier 1993c, 10 was already critical of carnival, when he wrote "Is modern Carnival, for example, evolving into anything more than an extension of our communal consumerism within an officially sanctioned context? Some mas' camps even have mannequins in display windows like in the suburban shopping malls. As a symbol of social anarchy or individual expression Carnival has become questionable".

101. Laughlin 2010, 22.

102. Irrespective of her own track-record Tancons 2012b herself does express some ambivalence about curating carnival or introducing it to the museum.

103. Laughlin 2010, 24.

104. Tancons 2012a, 47.

105. Danto 2001, xvii–xxx.

106. According to Hallward (2001, 79–81) Glissant rejects folklore precisely because it lacks self-consciousness. See also Green 2007, 79: "I question the idea that Carnivals everywhere are inherently oppositional, an idea that has grown through the application of Bahktin's (1984) ideas about medieval and renaissance carnivals to just about anything that even remotely appears 'Carnivalesque' and that includes Carnivals themselves". Likewise, Puri 2004, 114, who suggests that we "need to both dethrone Carnival as the privileged site of study in the Caribbean and change the nature of the questions we ask about it" and furthermore that "it is crucial to remember that Carnival in the academy might serve a very different function from that which it serves in Caribbean societies".

107. Laughlin 2010, 23.

108. Tancons 2011, web-article.

109. Tancons 2011. Tancons develops this argument around manifestations of the carnivalesque in the context of the 'Occupy Wall Street'-events.

110. Tancons 2011, my emphasis.

111. Adding to the list of such proponents, Sheller 2012 argues for a direct connection between popular culture (like dancehall), Caribbean spirituality, erotic agency and liberation.

112. Zizek 2011.

113. Torres-Saillant 2006, 38.

114. Parker 2017.

115. Patricia J. Saunders 2016, 96, suggests that Johnson's work (including his well-known *Pum-pum Tun-up East and West* figures) questions (rather than endorses) the perception of the dancehall as endowing women with a new-found power. For a comparative position, see Hope 2011.

116. K. Thompson 2012, 101.

117. In contrast to the prevalent use of sequins and other decorative elements in contemporary costumes, Griffith returns to the no longer fashionable use of masks and unadorned cardboard with which he creates a shadow-play to represent the 'not visible'. The traveling exhibition 'En Mas' (which, among others, featured works by Marlon Griffith, Ebony Patterson, Charles Campbell, John Beadle and Hew Locke) was curated according to a similar principle of returning to the craftsmanship of carnival.

118. Tancons 2011.

119. For a fuller discussion of this trend see M. Hall 2006. See also Bishop 2004, 52.

120. Extracted from a text on Davis' web-site ("Of People and Place. The Work of Annalee Davis").

121. Hallward 2001, 130

Chapter 3

1. As a sub-section of visual culture, the 'study of visuality' is a distinctive product of postcolonialism that centers on the primacy of vision in subject-formation. In Mary Lou Emery's introduction to *Modernism, the Visual and Caribbean Literature* (2007), for example, one finds the following (astonishing) statement: "The colonial relationship is thus one of vision—of seeing and looking (. . .). The colonized artist and writer is positioned within this visual ontology as lacking the capacity to see and, thus, to create or judge art (. . .). To become fully human, the colonized person must demonstrate this development by entering the realm of art." (15).

2. Mierzoeff 1998a, 6.

3. Kitaj cited in Mierzoeff 1998b, 208.

4. Hall cited in Paul 2004, 36.

5. Puri 2004, 19.

6. Chrisman 2004, 193–194.

7. Gikandi 2004, 118. In her insightful essay "A Sidelong Glance: The Practice of African Diaspora Art History in the United States" (2011), which anchors diaspora-theory in the *specific national context* of the United States, Krista Thompson shows how that discourse has functioned productively as an important counter-narrative to an art historical tradition in which black art has been completely marginalized.

8. Notwithstanding his explicit adoption of Foucault, Scott distances himself, not only from "the old Marxism with its assured knowledge of a mastered future" but also from "more recent poststructuralist cultural criticism with its accent on rationality-deconstruction" (Scott 1999, 20), p. 64.

9. As Scott explains in a 2005 interview with Stuart Hall, his views here and in *Conscripts of Modernity* (2004) are underpinned by the Foucauldian notion that the present is out-of-joint with "our former languages of opposition, hope and change". Scott's emphasis on historical rupture is, he insists, aimed at establishing a "de-familiarizing and pluralizing ethos" (59). His suggestion is therefore both of a radical difference between the challenges of the postcolonial present and the anti-colonial past, and of radical differences within the present. For a critique of *Conscripts of Modernity*, see Paget Henry 2007, which questions Scott's reduction of anti-colonial longing (and its revolutionary telos) to little more than a romantic narrative structure, as well as his assumption that *any* discourse can be without an inherent bias: "As he de-legitimates anti-colonial longing, he must legitimate anti-essentialist longing" (236).

10. Outside of particular national contexts, Scott's black diasporic anti-anti-essentialism is, ironically, wholly de-politicized and risk-free. His agenda, moreover, requires the double circumnavigation of Foucault's anti-humanism and Fanon's nationalism. Gikandi (2004) and Lazarus (2011, 161–183) have objected to the hijacking of Fanon for the post-nationalist cause.

11. Scott 1999, 122.

12. Ibid., 125–26.

13. Mercer 1994, 3.

14. Hall 1999, 9.

15. It is debatable to what extent Scott avoids the unicentric Afro-orientation critiqued by Boyce-Davies 1999, 105–106. Though both endorse a trans-nationalist discourse, Boyce-Davies (noting that 'cross-cultural paradigms challenge the notion of easy binary oppositions'), seeks common ground between peoples across histories and geographies, whereas Scott's diasporic perspective is limited to the black experience. Lazarus 1999 likewise argues that the privileged position Gilroy ascribes to the black Caribbean presence in relation to modernity marginalizes other colonized regions (not to speak of the Caribbean's many other ethnic groups, we might add).

16. Even a strong proponent like Avtar Brah 1996, 192 suggests that the all-embracing thrust of the diaspora concept "is both its strength and its weakness".

17. Whereas the diaspora concept in principle opens up for alliances in all directions (including south-south partnerships), the very origin of the concept in its contemporary application relates to migrations from less to more privileged locations. Puri 2004, 28–29 indeed observes a metropolitan (even nationalist) bias in Gilroy's 'Black Atlantic', when he implicitly confers a normative status on Britain and thereby "makes a double movement between denying the nation-state (. . .) and unintentionally re-inscribing that nation-state".

18. Hall 1999, 10

19. Wainwright 2011, 168.

20. Bailey 2012, 7.

21. A struggle well portrayed in Mercer 1994 and Hall 2004.

22. Dirlik 1994, 344

23. Powell 1997, 15.

24. Ibid., 169.

25. Powell 2009, 19–20.

26. A similar problem arises in the promotion of Cozier's 2014 video-installation at the Monique Meloche Gallery in Chicago. The video (which, according to the gallery's promotional blurp, is tentatively titled *Gas Men*, or *Globe*—the latter, perhaps in an effort to demonstrate the rhizomatic nature of meaning, is a reference to a Port-of-Spain cinema) "investigates the ongoing environmental and sociopolitical challenges presented by commercial expansion and political opportunism. (. . .) Cozier explores the dubious space of multinational companies and their role in global politics (. . .) Thematically intrigued by the role of geography, Cozier created *Gas Men* to interrogate the specifics of site and movement of bodies. The beach in the scene could be Venezuela, Mexico, Trinidad, or Lake Michigan. Adopting a methodology akin to the aforementioned multinationals, Cozier situates his practice in many different locales; creating site-specific work while identifying gestures and elucidating concerns that are part of the larger diaspora" (http://moniquemeloche.com/exhibitions/gas-men). What 'specifics of site and movement' might mean, when the scene could be any of a number of locations, is left unsaid, and one is compelled to ask why environmental damage caused by multinational corporations is a concern of "the larger Diaspora" and not of citizens everywhere? Indulging Cozier (or his gallery), we may conversely ask, whether this activity poses the same *political* problem for diasporic citizens in Lake Michigan and in, say, Trinidad? The works—formally stunning though the stills may be with the seemingly choreographed movements of the 'gas men'—therefore, to my mind, exemplify the tendency for the diaspora concept to undermine rather than qualify claims of political engagement.

27. Puri 2004, 6.

28. See esp. chapter 2 in *The Postcolonial Unconscious* ("Fredric Jameson on Third-World Literature': a defence").

29. Jameson 1986, 69; Ahmad 1987, 8.

30. Pascale Casanova develops a similar (if far more detailed) argument for literature in *The World Republic of Letters* (Harvard University Press, 2007).

31. Jameson 2008-lecture, my transcription (15:00–16:20 mins.)

32. Wainwright 2009b, 204 makes the same point when he says that 'The most widely visible frameworks for historicizing diaspora have been unable to maintain the separation from the national necessary to ensure their analytical and strategic usefulness'.

33. Again, a superb example is Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters,* referenced in note 30.

34. Spencer 2017, 122.

35. Lazarus 2011, 25.

Chapter 4

1. It can, of course, be argued, that the original Salon des Refusés of 1863 was the mother of alternative spaces, but as the initiative of Napoleon III, it can hardly be considered 'anti-establishment'!

2. Beck 2002, 255.

3. Bourdieu 1993, 42.

4. Bourdieu 1992, 123.

5. Ault 2002, 3 and Ontiveros cited in Ault 2002, 10.

6. Corrin 2004, 382.

7. Bennett 1995, 193.

8. Bourdieu, 1993, 236.

9. Notwithstanding his insistence on art's autonomy from any form of management, Adorno 1991, conceded the necessity of institutions managed by sensitive 'experts', which would offer art some protection from the market-forces.

10. M. Hall 2006, 77–81.

11. Fraser 2007, 153–154. See also Jameson's comments on the decreasing autonomy of the artwork versus the increasing autonomy of the institution in his 2012-George Foster Lecture "The Aesthetics of Singularity. Time and Event in Postmodernity".

12. Anderson, 1991, 113, 135. Echoing Lazarus, Hazel Pierre (2007) notes that the suggestion of 'modular' nationalisms (positing an inherently derivative dynamic) is among Anderson's most controversial ideas. Many of the institutions to which na-

tionalism gave birth (particularly within the Commonwealth) were, however, un-questionably modular. Poupeye opens her essay "The National Gallery of Jamaica: A Critical History" (Poupeye 2013, 83) by stating that institutions like the Institute of Jamaica (out of which the National Gallery emerged) were established throughout the British Empire in the late nineteenth century. See also the opening paragraph of Cummins 2013, where it is observed that: "The eighteenth and nineteenth-century British model of the museum was transported and applied, not merely to the West Indies, but to Canada, Australia and New Zealand and the Pacific Islands . . . (etc.)".

13. Modest 2012a, 192.

14. Modest 2012b also argues that perceptions of the Caribbean as 'not cultural enough', has led to a serious anthropological and museological neglect of cultural artifacts, especially those pertaining to black culture.

15. Karp and Kratz 2007, 22. Canclini 1995, 127 reflects briefly on the question "Are national museums possible after the crisis of nationalism?". In seeking to provide a viable model, he holds up the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico as being (architecturally) both open and centralized, and projecting a "tension between monumentalism and minituatization, between the archaic and the recent".

16. Prakash 2004, 215.

17. Bennett, 2006, 59–63.

18. Davalos 2012, 363.

19. Poupeye 2014, 7.

20. Karp 1992, 2.

21. Poupeye 2014, 12.

22. Karp and Buntinx 2007, 213.

23. Buntinx 2007, 235–239.

24. It is thought provoking that Jamaica, where the national gallery has had a strong profile, until recently (with the establishment of NLS [New Local Space]), has had a surprisingly modest alternative scene. Whether the national gallery's recent efforts to "engage actively with the youth and popular culture of the moment" (Poupeye 2014, 13) can be construed as an attempt to occupy both center and margins, or whether it, on the contrary, is forced about by the scarcity of alternative institutions, is hard to say.

25. James 1959, 6.

26. James was at once an admirer and a critic of T. S. Eliot and may have been alluding to his influential essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919).

27. K. Farmer 2013, 172. On the formation of museums in the region, see also Cummins 2014.

28. Burke 2010, 127.

29. Ibid., 128.

30. Such endeavors are exemplified in the policy-recommendations offered by

Keith Nurse in his 2015-report "The Creative Economy and Creative Entrepreneurship in the Caribbean". Acknowledging the need for small developing states to diversify their economies, he introduces the concepts of 'cultural entrepreneurship' and 'creative capital' (the cumulative product of artists and art administration, businesses with a stake in cultural distribution, tourism, the media and the internet), as means towards greater economic flexibility. Nurse notes with concern that, while the 2005 *UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* recognizes the need to "support the development of the cultural industries and policies in developing countries through technology transfer, financial support and preferential treatment", it does not "guarantee space in the global market" (696–697).

31. See Nunley and Bettelheim 1988, Green 2007 and Burrowes 2013.

32. Marshall 1992, 21.

33. Creighton 2003.

34. Nurse, 2004, 48.

35. Scher 2011, 8-9.

36. Cummins 2014, 21.

37. Wainwright 2011, 157.

38. Sander 2007, web-article.

39. Wainwright 2011, 158.

Chapter 5

1. *ARC Magazine* launched itself as a non-profit enterprise, which (like the RA-newsletter two decades earlier) is committed to "sharing information about contemporary practices, exhibitions, partnerships, and opportunities occurring in the Caribbean region and throughout its Diasporas", It has ceased to produce printed issues but continues as a notice-board for art-related events.

2. Canclini 1995, 116–117 similarly remarks on the neglected condition of numerous Latin American museums.

3. See: http://aliceyard.blogspot.com/2010/11/. Accessed March 2018, but link now disabled.

4. Granderson Lab was highlighted in the *Trinidad Guardian* on March 8, 2015 under the headline: "An Art Space Grows in Belmont".

5. Artzpub 2010 (link disabled); Tancons 2012a, 43.

6. L. M. Harris 2010. "Artsy-Fartsy Friday". *Au Courant Daily Blog.* November 19, 2010. Accessed August 15, 2014, but link now disabled.

7. Artzpub 2010 (link disabled).

8. Wainwright 2011, 27, thus reminds us that "Painting harked back to the old co-

lonial order, rather than in the direction that creativity in the Caribbean had begun to move towards".

9. Several authors have redressed the tacit understanding of the Creole as *Afro-Creole.* Munasinghe 2006, 552 moreover singles out the implicit, but contradictory perception of Afro-Trinidadians as "engaged in interculturation" and Indo-Trinidadians being subjected to "acculturation". See also Khan 2004, Mohammed 2009, Puri 1999.

10. Presently, the ministry is listed as Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts.

11. Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism, "Draft National Policy Framework for Multiculturalism and the Draft National Cultural Policy". http://www.culture.gov.tt/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/10.-2013-The-Draft-National-Policy-Framework-for-Multiculturalism-The-Draft-National-Cultural-Policy.pdf. Accessed June, 2019.

12. See also Cozier's remarks about this ministry in Tancons 2012a, 46.

13. This date is taken from a wall-text at the museum. Cummins 2014, 17, however, suggests that the museum was "given a specific visual arts mandate in 1962, after the abrupt death of the Federation of West Indian States failed to produce a home for the nascent 'Federal Collection".

14. In an attempt to fill this gap, the architect and gallery-owner Geoffrey Mac-Clean has authored an overview of Trinidadian art history, which was initially available online. "Introduction to the art of Trinidad and Tobago" (accessed February 2016, link now disabled). A 2012-exhibition catalogue likewise offered an overview of the nation's recent art history. See MacClean and Waldron: "The Art of Trinidad and Tobago."

15. Pearce 2014a (link disabled).

16. MacLean cited in Pearce 2014a. Aquarela existed from 1984–1997.

17. Pearce 2014a (link disabled).

18. See Walmsley and Greaves 2010, 156.

19. Studio 66 Art Support Community. 1996. *Signs and Portents (National Emancipation Exhibition of Fine Art 1996)*. Exhibition-brochure, p. 3.

20. See *Prince Claus Fund Journal* no. 6, 14 (http://www.princeclausfund.org/files/docs/PCFJournal6.pdf). Accessed March 2018, but now disabled). See also Ramcharitar 2008.

21. See 'gimme culture blog-spot': http://gimmeculture.blogspot.com/2007/08/closure-of-cca7.html (accessed June 2019).

22. Citations from Ramcharitar 2001 derive from an unpublished and untitled paper (cited with the author's permission), prepared for the 2001 AICA-SC Symposium at University of Central Florida.

23. Ramcharitar unpublished paper, 2001, 7.

24. Ibid., 8.

25. See: http://legacy.guardian.co.tt/archives/2007-08-18/Attillah.html. Accessed June 2019.

26. Tancons-interview 2012a, 44

27. Posted on the following blog-spot. Accessed June 2019. http://gimmeculture.blogspot.com/2007/08/closure-of-cca7.html.

28. Laughlin blogspot, April 13, 2014.

29. Campbell, web-post.

30. Tancons 2012a, 43

31. Tancons 2012a, 49.

32. The frequency with which the word 'play' is invoked in the context of the alternative Caribbean art scene is, on that note, compelling (for instance in an enthusiastic statement like 'Four generations of children played and imagined in this yard' (see p. 104). Similarly in the promotion of this 2011 event: *Fresh Milk Residency 1—Five Days of Playing*. The word's connotations of process and unfinished statements are presumably intended to suggest an opposition to the capitalist economy's emphasis on the finished product. In a Caribbean context, however, it also reflects the perception, noted by Burton (1997) of all oppositionality as 'playful' and (more wishfully) all play as 'oppositional'. Abrahams (1983, 51) likewise argues that 'play' pertains to the competitive, masculine domain of 'reputation' and therefore connotes "highly unruly behavior" and "noisy oral dueling".

33. Brathwaite 2013, 368.

34. Tancons 2012a, 47.

35. Laughlin blogspot, April 13, 2014

36. Campbell 2012, web-post

37. The word 'informal' seems to downplay the radical expectations associated with the 'alternative' label. Yet I would argue that the opposition to the 'formal' (i.e., institutional) space still posits a counter hegemonic direction. The 'informal' moreover resonates with the ideas of 'process' and 'impermanence' discussed in connection chapter 2.

38. https://freshmilkbarbados.com/about/. Accessed June 2019.

39. See: http://greenartlaballiance.eu/?p=1213. Accessed June 2019.

40. Zulfiqar 2014.

41. Including the Maria Holder Memorial Trust and the (now defunct) Art and Sport Promotion Fund (see Zulfiqar-interview, 2014)

42. Written information about the venture is difficult to find. The following link offers some insight into its early phase: http://blog.informtainment.com/2009/11/bim-ventures-venture-capital-fund.html. Accessed June 2019.

43. Nurse 2015, 704 observes that, although forays are made into the development

of the creative economy, "the low status of the sector when compared with other economic sectors" remains a concern.

44. See Walmsley and Greaves 2010, 109.

45. "2nd NAGC Visual Art Forum", Sherbourne Conference Centre. September 18, 2004. See conference proceedings: 21–22.

46. See also Cummins 2014, 21.

47. Barbados, Ministry of Community Development and Culture "National Cultural Policy for Barbados 2010", 7–10.

48. Barbados Parliament, Cultural Industries Development Act. 2013. Accessed June 2019. http://barbadosparliament.com/htmlarea/uploaded/File/Bills/2013/Cultural%20Industries%20Development%20Bill%202013.pdf.

49. Cultural Industries Development Act, 10–28.

50. Brathwaite cited in Rudder 2010, 11.

51. See also Cummins, Thompson and Whittle 1999, 146; Walmsley and Greaves 2010, 110.

52. See Rudder 2010, 15 for a discussion of the rise and eventual demise of Yoruba Yard, which is ascribed to lack of support from the surrounding society as well as "self-destructive in-fighting".

53. A number of unverifiable explanations of the BGA's demise were put into circulation, ranging from internal conflicts among the board members to political disgruntlement with a private entity taking on the role of a national institution.

54. While no printed invitations are mailed out, Fresh Milk events are advertised via e-mail, Facebook and several associated links, so this complaint seems quite unjustified.

55. Zulfiqar-interview.

56. A notice on Popopstudio's website in June 2019 states that the venue is under renovation and preparing to "take on new life".

57. *Arc Magazine*, October 7, 2013: http://arcthemagazine.com/arc/2013/10/caribbean-journal-reports-six-great-art-galleries-in-nassau/. Accessed June 2019.

58. S. Farmer: "The Popop Spirit. Nassau's Popopstudios International Centre for the Visual Arts".

59. The Bahamas, Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture. "National Cultural Policy for the Bahamas. Working Draft, version 1.1, 22 February 2006". http://philipburrows.net/ncp1.1.pdf. Accessed September 8, 2014, but the link has since been disabled; however, the following site suggests that the policy was never enacted: https://ifacca.org/es/noticias/2006/02/02/national-cultural-policy-for-the-bahamas/. Accessed June 2019.

60. Draft National Cultural Policy for the Bahamas (2006), 27–30.

61. Walmsley and Greaves 2010, 107.

62. An overview of Bahamian art from 1492 to 1992 with texts by Patricia Glinton,

Charles Huggins and Basil Smith was published by the Finance Corporation of the Bahamas/the Counsellors Limited in 1992, but copies are difficult to obtain.

63. James 2003, 5–9.

64. The budgets for 2015 and 2016 were, however, raised—ostensibly due to the museum's success in developing an international profile (private correspondence, October 2016).

65. Private conversation, August 2014.

66. As the founder and artistic director of Volta, NY, Coulson does, however, already wear more than one hat. Conceived in 2008 as an art fair, Volta "showcases galleries (whether young or mature) that choose to work with the most exciting emerging artists". See http://www.nyshuk.com/volta/. Accessed June 2019.

67. Craton and Saunders 1998, 545. Walmsley and Greaves 2010, 106 suggest the period to have been 1957 to 1960.

68. E. James 2016, 27 does, however, recall that when the NAGB started its community outreach programmes, "Artists felt isolated and often lamented that they did not have anyone to really talk to about their work. The level of distrust within the local community at the time was rather high and had to be un-wedged by persons not directly invested in it".

69. Pam Burnside, interview September 6, 2014.

70. When Stan Burnside and other artists in the 1980s and 1990s formed the movement known as 'Opus 5' and later 'B-CAUSE' ('Bahamian Creative Artists United for Serious Expression'), which, with their critical and social agendas, opposed certain other forms of art, some artists must have felt alienated (see Walmsley and Greaves 2010, 107). Krista Thompson's curatorial essay "No Abstract Art Here" (2007) for the National Gallery's 3rd National Exhibition likewise posits a distinction between artists committed to the 'picturesque' and those with the courage to explore 'the ugly'.

71. E. James 2016, 22–23.

72. *Frieze-Magazine* online, issue 162, March 2014: https://frieze.com/article /island-life. Accessed June 2019.

73. See K. Thompson 2007.

74. Entry removed with website under reconstruction. See instead Cox's comments at: https://frieze.com/article/island-life. Accessed June 2019.

75. Nixon 2015, 187.

76. Ibid., 188.

77. It seems no coincidence that John Cox is interviewed by *Forbes Magazine* on April 29, 2018 on 'How to Be a Groundbreaker'. He is quoted as saying "I am passionate about The Current because it feels like my life's work manifested in one job, to transport Bahamian art and culture to a new level at Baha Mar". https://

www.forbes.com/sites/jerylbrunner/2018/04/29/artist-john-cox-on-how-to-be-a
-groundbreaker/#536afdfb4aaa. Accessed June 2019.

78. *Frieze Magazine*, 162. April 2014. Accessed June 2019. http://www.frieze.com
/issue/article/island-life/.

Chapter 6

1. See Habermas 1991 (orig. 1962). What Habermas strictly speaking argued was, of course, that the democratizing function of the public sphere has *declined* with its gradual colonization by state and corporate interests.

2. N. Fraser 2007, 499

3. Dean 2007, 522

4. In relation to the music industry Best 2013, 173–174 suggests that in the first decade of the twentieth century, "websites were not fully regarded as public spaces", but this changed with the introduction of YouTube and subsequently Bajantube (2007), which "seemed to give free access and facility to all artists". Best proposes that "It was evident that in the years after 2010, the Internet would take over as the new facility for breaking local acts to the local and international market".

5. Dean 2007, 527.

6. Habermas 1991, 27.

7. It is not implied that the alternative spaces are at fault in this respect: it is difficult for private entities to reach all segments of the population. My impression is, however, that even a very well-established space like Alice Yard is relatively unknown outside the extended artistic and academic community.

8. Situating the issue in an altogether different theoretical framework, Pearce 2014b argues that artist's residencies (i.e., 'alternative spaces') have a "recuperative potential for the teleoaffective structure of visual arts practice in the Anglophone islands" (22). These spaces aim at overcoming a pervasive sense of unimportance (what she refers to as 'immateriality') among artists of the Anglophone Caribbean: "In the twenty-first century, infrastructural concerns are a key factor in the shaping of the affective space for visual arts practice (. . .). I assert that artist residencies can serve as a means of subverting the affect of immateriality" (28).

9. Though generally encouraged by the prospects of a network-society, Varnelis 2010 cautions that "it becomes easy to find a comfortable niche with people just like oneself, among other individuals whose views merely reinforce one's own" and (about blogs) "Conservatives talk to conservatives while liberals talk to liberals. Lacking a common platform for deliberation, they reinforce existing differences".

10. Laughlin 2010, 27.

11. Hardt and Negri 2000, 321–324.

12. Ibid. The relationship between multitude and empire is, however, extremely ambiguous. Their relationship is first described as binary ("a two-headed eagle", 61), but it is subsequently pointed out that their dynamic is not dialectical, and that the multitude is also "internal to Empire", where it acts as an "absolutely positive force" (62).

13. Ibid., 294.

14. Ibid., 411.

15. Brennan 2003, 364. See also Balakrishnan 2000 and, for a critique of *Empire*'s Western/masculinist bias, Rofel 2000.

16. In a postcolonial context, the material notion of 'globalization from below' generally refers to the anticipated equalization of current wealth- and power-concentrations (to be effected by the penetration of the metropole by labor from the margins—often, according to Hall 2003b, 195–196, migrants 'sans papiers', who disrupt the rules of 'globalization-from-above'). Discursively, it is envisaged as 'subaltern' subversions of metropolitan hegemonies (as for example implied in the title of Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffins's *The Empire Writes Back* [2002]). In Sheller 2012, the vision of 'citizenship from below' converges with that of globalization from below. The former is, in other words, not merely theorized as the (self-) empowerment of the 'other-than-economically marginalized' in national contexts, but as part of a broader transnational project aimed at re-structuring existing social relationships (see esp. the chapter "Erotic Agency", pp. 239–304).

17. Ramsey 2013, 76–77. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08854300.2013.832955 (link has restricted access).

18. Brennan 2006, 201.

19. Davis 2019. 150.

20. Scott 1999, 148–149.

21. Ibid., 217.

22. Hardt and Negri 2000, 314. See pages 35–36 that mainly refer to humanitarian NGOs and argue that such organizations are the 'moral instruments' of Empire.

23. Yudice 2003, 18–23.

24. Though Yudice's area of research is Latin America, many of his arguments can be extended to the Caribbean.

25. Yudice 2003, 158.

26. A global trend, which also has divided the political left. Bennett 2007, 115, for example, welcomes it as an anti-elitist turn: "It is precisely because we can now, without regret, treat culture as an industry and, in so doing, recognize that the aesthetic disposition forms merely a particular market segment within that industry, that it is a particular form of life like any other, that it is possible for questions of cultural policy

to be posed, and pursued, in ways which allow competing patterns of expenditure, forms of administration and support to be debated and assessed in terms of their consequences for different publics, their relations to competing political values and their implications for particular policy objectives—and all without lacerating ourselves as lonely subjects caught in the grip of the contradictory pincers of culture and administration". McGuigan 1996, 51–74, on the contrary, points to the irony of a neoliberal cultural policy, which simultaneously answers 'leftist' concerns over cultural elitism and a right-wing free market and 'value for money' ethos.

27. McGuigan 1996, 62–63. McGuigan's argument is primarily centered on public sector corporations like the BBC.

28. As precisely noted in Keith Nurse's re-structuring plan for Carifesta.

29. E. James 2016, 29 says of the Bahamas National Gallery: "Each initiative led to another connection, another opportunity. Chris Cozier's visit led to Alice Yard invitations for several artists. CARIFESTA led to Bahamian art being introduced to a Guyanese audience via a group talk Elfrieda Bissember arranged at Castellani House (…). Networks allow people and ideas not only to move, but also be transformed. They allow the artist and the arts organisation to re-imagine the boundaries of community and extend the system of relations."

30. In the context of what he terms 'mock-institutions', Sholette 2011, 153 similarly observes that: "Each of these mock-institutional entities sports its own logo, mission, and website, engaging in a process of self-branding not so much aimed at niche markets or product loyalty, but rather to gain surreptitious entry into visibility itself."

Chapter 7

1. To substantiate these dates, see for example I. Walcott 2007.

2. This publicly announced agenda, which was used to justify the significant resources contributed by Barbados to the partnership, was not realized. There was not a single Barbados (or even Caribbean) based artist in the Venice 2017 Diaspora Pavilion curated by David A. Bailey and Jessica Taylor.

3. Bourdieu 1992, 301, original emphasis.

4. For Hanchard 1999, 247 'Afo-Modernity' is "no mere mimicry of Western modernity, but an innovation upon its precepts, forces and features".

5. Enwezor 2010, 601.

6. For extensive discussions of alternative modernities, see Knauft 2002, in particular the chapter by Trouillot 2002 (220–238). Against Marxist theorists, for whom modernity is directly tied to capitalism, Trouillot argues for a plurality of modernities

based on ontological difference: "critics of eurocentrism flesh out their arguments in terms of chronological primacy (…). The mistake here is to forget that chronological primacy is itself a central tenet of North Atlantic imagination" (231).

7. Danto 1997, 126.

8. Danto's gesture is of course towards Hegel and has spawned a profusion of comparative writing.

9. Smith 2006, 698–704.

10. Ibid., 707.

11. Oguibe 2014, 594.

12. Hucke, 2013, 154–156.

13. Wainwright 2011, 36.

14. Ibid., 42–43.

15. Hall 2000, 4.

16. Ibid., 7: "they have found, at the very centre of these stigmatized forms themselves, the sources of a positive identification and struggle. This is the moment of profound historical reversal, the site at which black became beautiful, and anti racist struggles began to connect directly to the politics of recognition".

17. Piper cited in Wainwright 2011, 96.

18. Araeen cited in Wainwright 2011, 106.

19. Wainwright 2011, 108, for example, questions the strategic usefulness of an entirely diluted diaspora-concept, and argues that when it "is invoked to elucidate actual works of art (…) it becomes difficult to see what distinguishes one work of art from another, since each serves, quite interchangeably, as evidence of the 'diaspora aesthetic'".

20. Araeen 2000, 17. The essay offers a discussion of multiculturalism as being about "how the dominant culture can accommodate those who have no power in such a way that the power of the dominant is preserved' (16). He suggests that: 'In a culturally plural society all individuals must have the full right to decide for themselves how and where they want to locate themselves; and the recognition of their creative ability should not be dependent on their identification with the cultures they had originated from".

21. McGuigan 1996, 139.

22. Jameson 2006.

23. See Trotz and Mullings's interesting treatment of the subject in "Transnational Migration, the State, and Development: Reflecting on the 'Diaspora Option'".

24. Hall 2000, 4.

25. The 'politics of time' must, however, be considered a symptom, rather than a cause of more fundamental global inequalities. Wainwright himself 2011, 107 indeed observes that "the multicultural 'mainstreaming' of attention to art is not the same as more widely reaching social, political and economic change".

26. Amanda Anderson 1998, 268, traces a stoical cosmopolitanism to the time of Alexander the Great.

27. Ibid., 269.

28. Bhabha 1996; Mignolo 2002; Byrne and Schoene 2013.

29. Beck cited in Byrne and Schoene 2013, 2.

30. The principle of 'relationality' may draw on Glissant's 'poetics of relation', Mouffe's idea of 'agonism' and, most obviously, Bourriaud's relational aesthetic, while 'inoperativity' is specifically borrowed from Nancy.

31. Byrne and Schoene, 5.

32. See interview with John Cox at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOBU 1EOm-vM (Accessed June 2019) and Laughlin 2013.

33. Britton 1999, 52.

34. Brennan 2001b, 660. See also Brennan 2003, 339, where he strongly objects to Hardt and Negri's notion of the present as a post-imperial era.

35. Brennan 1997, 39–40. Boyce-Davies 1999, 99–101 argues, that the United States has taken over the role of a previous Eurocentrism. This has occurred, she argues, in order to maintain the United States' "very distinct capitalist colonial relationship with the rest of the world", and to protect its market interests.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 41. See also Cheah 1998, 302–303, who critiques the idea of hybridity as a new and viable basis for cosmopolitanism. Not only does the foregrounding of hybridity (as theorized by Homi Bhabha and James Clifford) confer a deceptively normative status on the subject who has 'access to globality', but it is also a "theory of resistance that (…) underplays the material institution of neocolonial oppression at a global-systemic level" (302). Arguing in favor of the nation-state, Cheah submits that "To comprehend the possibility of the national-in-the-cosmopolitical (…) we need to understand postcolonial national culture in terms other than as an immutable organic substrate or as an ideological form imposed from above, a constraint to be transcended by the formation of an emancipatory cosmopolitan consciousness" (303).

38. Brennan 2001b, 675.

39. Brennan 2001a, 77. Anderson 1998, 271 however, argues that the "more local and agonistic intellectual practice" posited by Gramsci in opposition to cosmopolitanism (which he regards as inherently imperialistic) "comes close to positive versions of the idea". On a related note, it would indeed be difficult to distinguish between a benign cosmopolitanism and a 'successful' multiculturalism.

40. Oguibe, 594.

41. Brennan 2001a, 76.

42. Brennan 2001a, 79 indeed observes that the cultural dimensions of cosmopol-

itanism originate in "the Creole nationalisms of Latin America, which often had to be built against the great power in the North".

43. Guilbault 2011.

44. The BDVA-symposium showed how easily one diaspora-based position can morph into other: in the Caribbean, David Bailey, once associated with a branded black British art, did not seek out the black nationalist expression, but indeed those more readily related to a hybridity-oriented cosmopolitanism.

Chapter 8

1. van Niekerk 2007, 7.

2. Ibid.

3. Mosquera 2003, 146.

4. Hall 2003a, 32, my emphasis. Brennan 1991, 93–94 argues that Glissant's position reverses that of Bhabha: "in a sense Glissant is demanding that those in Bhabha's camp explain why 'ambivalent similarities' are any more appealing than conflictual differences' (. . .). What is at stake here is not only the rejection of what Bhabha calls the 'strategy of simple reversals', but also that related idea, unanimously vilified today in the humanities, called 'essentialism'. Reading Glissant suggests that the anti-essentialist position may only be addressing half the story (and supposing that half the story is universally applicable is precisely what Glissant is calling imperialistic). Whatever the important gains of anti-essentialism (. . .). It refuses to allow for the ungracious gesture of separatism".

5. Hall 2003b, 195–197

6. van Niekerk 2007, 117.

7. Ogbechie 2005, 89.

8. Araeen cited in Ogbechie 2005, 86, n. 19.

9. Wainwright 2011, 157.

10. Of course, the huge difference between 'imported' and 'imposed', and the occasional difficulty in telling one from the other, induces the question of how cultural imperialism works today. Elaborating on Said 's contention of a new hegemony which "is not a question of a directly imposed regime of conformity in the correspondence between contemporary United States cultural discourse and the United States policy in the subordinate, non-Western world. Rather, it is a system of pressures and constraints by which the whole cultural corpus retains its essentially imperial identity and its direction." (Said 1994, 323), Brennan (2006, 141–144) argues that imperialism (unlike colonialism) needs no coercion, since its dominant logic is fully internalized. This is for example observable in a proliferation of theory, which conspicuously fails

to detect continuities between contemporary globalization and earlier periods of co-lonialism. While cosmopolitanism's rules of engagement can be regarded as the cul-tural extension of US foreign and economic policy (and its function in the Caribbean must be considered alongside ideological and economic interests), it is, however, not so much the intention of this book to dwell on the global pervasiveness of US imperi-alism, and inadvertent artistic compliance with such schemes, as it is to prompt more consideration of what relative freedom and what forms of expression to challenge the same are currently being neglected.

11. Wainwright's review of the 2005-exhibition *Back to Black: Art, Cinema and the Racial Imaginary* (curated by Richard Powell, David A. Bailey and Petrine Archer–Straw) suggested a clear American bias in the conceptual framework, which largely drew on the Black Power moment in the United States, while ignoring the different inflection of 'black' in the United Kingdom, and the difference of both from what obtains in the Caribbean (Wainwright 2006).

12. Poupeye 2007b.

13. *Caribbean Visions*, 13.

14. Lewis and Hewitt 1995, 19.

15. Ibid., 20.

16. As also noted in Tancons 2012b, 40.

17. Poupeye 2007b, 3.

18. Lewis and Hewitt 1995, 19.

19. Poupeye 2007b, 2.

20. Lewis and Hewitt 1995, 20.

21. Ibid., 25.

22. Nettleford 1995, 39.

23. Zaya and Borras 1998, 303.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Mosaka, 2007, 15

27. Ibid., 16

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., 17.

30. K. Thompson 2012, 99.

31. Cotter 2007.

32. Paul 2007b, 29–30.

33. *Rockstone and Bootheel* catalogue 2010, 154.

34. On the one hand, the frequent overlaps of artists in exhibitions with seemingly different scopes suggest that the talent-pool from which artists are drawn, is relatively limited. On the other hand, it shows that most individual works can function in many

different interpretive contexts. Oftentimes, it is only in relation to an artist's previous work, that specific inflections become apparent—a context, which the survey show always suppresses.

35. Backer and Newman-Scott 2010, 8.

36. As Tancons 2012b, 41 points out, the exhibition approached popular culture through representation, rather than enactment.

37. Hoffmann February 2010, blog-entry: http://ctartscene.blogspot.com/2010/02/. Accessed April 2020.

38. Ibid.

39. Genocchio 2009, par. 1.

40. It will be remembered from chapter 2 that Krista Thompson took inspiration from Cozier's early opposition to the 'picturesque'. Coming full circle, *Wrestling with the Image* implicitly nods back towards Thompson's own preoccupations as noted in a 2012-review by Marta Fernandez Campa: "Caribbean Art in Dialogue: Connecting Narratives. Wrestling with the image" and also in Thompson's own essay "How to Install Art as a Caribbeanist" (2011).

41. Cozier 2011, 11.

42. Flores 2011, 25.

43. Ibid.

44. Cozier 2011, 6–7.

45. This similarity is nevertheless overshadowed by the significant difference between the aesthetic and conceptual paradigms with which the 'Creole modernists' and the 1990s avant-garde, respectively, have aligned themselves, i.e., between a humanist modernism, and an increasingly post-humanist postcolonialism.

46. Pinas's profile in *Wrestling with the Image* catalogue, 83.

47. Due to the unverifiability of two artists' year of birth, this figure may have a slight margin of error.

48. See Stephens 2013.

49. Apart from Deleuze, see also Elaine Stratford et al.

50. Stephens 2017, 284–285.

51. Ibid., 289.

52. Ibid., 280.

53. Kamugisha 2019, 214.

54. Gordon 2005, 17.

55. See also Caroline Miranda's review in the *LA Times*, which quotes Cozier as follows: "I was trying to capture that sense of being suspended—not just of being afloat, but of a kind of tragedy," Cozier says. "I wanted to underscore this idea. Islands are these separate entities floating in the open sea." https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-relational-undercurrents-molaa-20180222-htmlstory.html. Accessed June 2019.

56. Stephens 2017, 290.

57. See Wainwright 2018 for a discussion of the use and misuse of the term 'provinciality'.

Chapter 9

1. See Angel 1999, and Cummins, Thompson and Whittle 1999.

2. Gardner 1999 makes the same point.

3. The show was held at the Zemicon Gallery, and these were my observations as exhibition host.

4. Both remarks were made during the two symposia titled "Sustainable Art Communities: Creativity and Policy in the Transnational Caribbean", which was a joint project between the Open University in the United Kingdom and Leiden University in the Netherlands in 2013.

5. In 1994, the black British artist Eddie Chambers, for example, raised a Union Jack over the Liverpool Town Hall, in which the traditional colors had been substituted with the Rastafarian red, green and gold (see Poupeye 1998, 18).

6. Wainwright 2012, 46.

Afterword

1. See Jameson 1984 and Brennan 2010 for a discussion of the correlation between aesthetic choices, economic structures and social agendas.

2. In Jamaica, where the national gallery has a comparatively strong profile, contestations over these issues have indeed been more explicit (and more venomous) than elsewhere in the region.

3. Jameson 2002, 12.

4. Ibid.

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Therese Kaspersen Hadchity was born in Denmark and studied art history and modern culture at the University of Copenhagen. In 1990, she relocated to Barbados, where she worked as a freelance curator and visual arts commentator until 2000, when she opened the Zemicon Gallery in Bridgetown. After its closure a decade later, she returned to academia to reflect on the critical dynamics she had witnessed and participated in. She presently teaches art history, contemporary art, and aesthetics at the Barbados Community College and the University of the West Indies at Cave Hill. Her research has been centered on the changing conceptual foundations for the region's visual art and criticism, as well as its institutional dynamics and cultural policy