

“Wake The Town and Tell The People

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of
Master of Fine Arts

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University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

April 23, 2015

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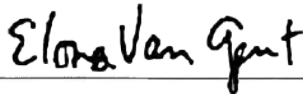
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“Wake The Town and Tell The People”



ABSTRACT

“Wake the Town and Tell the People” is an art exhibition that explores postcolonial identity through the lens of tourism, diaspora, globalization and migration. Through the process of dialectic installations of drawings, photographs and sculpture, the exhibition positions identity as liquid, one in a constant state of flux. Under modernity, this identity has been subjected to a compression of time and space. This spatial friction allows the postcolonial subject to co-exist in multiple locations. Taken in its entirety the show seeks to ask the following questions: How has identity, sense of placelessness, or presence been altered by dislocation? Can identity exist beyond the nation state in a transnational way? And if it can what are the new ways that this postcolonial subject can understand himself or herself to be part of a larger group beyond the categories of political, ethnic, subcultural or diasporic?

This MFA Thesis documents the act of material exploration, creative process and grounds the work in postcolonial theory.

KEY WORDS

Postcolonial, liquid identity, flux, modernity, time, space, placelessness, dislocation, spatial friction, drawings, photographs, sound sculptures

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to my creative growth during the past three years. Special thanks to my incredible thesis committee Franc Nunoo-Quarcoo, Osman Khan, Muge Gocek, Frieda Ekhotto.

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INTRODUCTION

“Oh my body, makes me
always someone who
questions.”

- Franz Fanon

Black Skin, White Masks

“We should think, instead,
of identity as a
‘production’ which is
never complete, always in
process, and always
constituted within, not
outside, representation.”

- Stuart Hall,

*Cultural Identity and
Diaspora*

As I approach this project, I find both my work and self at a particularly interesting junction. Fresh off the heels of travels to Ghana, London and South Africa, my return to the places I now call home (the United States and Jamaica) have left me with many questions. As I watch the deaths of Travon Martin, Mike Brown and Eric Gardner grip America's national imagination, I am left contemplating my own 'Americanness'. Here, I am using 'Americanness' both in its broadest term (the Americas, Terra Incognita, Columbus' new world) and narrowest US citizenship definition.

For centuries now, Black bodies in pain for public consumption have been an American national pastime and spectacle. Before Martin, Brown and Gardner, there were countless lynchings, Emmet Till and Rodney King. Watching the "not guilty" verdict of George Zimmerman and/or the grand jury decisions to acquit the police officers that killed Mike Brown and Eric Gardner is a lesson on the continual physical vulnerability of black bodies in the United States. The result is a conflation of a diverse group of black experiences (within the African American community and immigrant community) into a monolithic whole both institutionally (we are all blacks to cops) and as a source of solidarity (black lives matter).

Elizabeth Alexander in her essay "Can you be BLACK and Look at This?"- Reading the Rodney King Video(s) calls this 'Bottom Line Blackness'. Alexander goes on to explain, "When the Jury came back with its not guilty verdicts, what metaphorization of the black male body had to have been already in place that invoked a national historical memory (constructed by whites), a code in which African Americans are nonetheless perfectly literate?" Though she is speaking specifically about the Rodney King case, this question is as valid then as it is now. However, what about those self-identified black individuals living in America who are not African American? How do we interpret these codes? Navigating the racial landscape of the United States was my first experience in culture shock. But my understanding of the nuances of American racial landscape will always be vis-a-vis Jamaica. Cultural theorist and sociologist, Stuart Hall explains that, "We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture, which is specific. What we say is always in contest, positioned." How does my native cultural reference inform the way I read the world I currently reside in temporally and spatially? Can I ever claim a native identity? Can I do so when at the core of Caribbeanness is an acute awareness of the history of rupture and disjunction?

"Wake the Town and Tell the People" is my grappling with my post-colonial Jamaican upbringing, at a time when the Jamaican government is also seeking to redefine its relationship to Great Britain and my uneasy relationship with my dual American citizenship at a time of heightened racial tension. Throughout this thesis paper I provide an insight into my artistic process by periodically departing from an academic style of writing to mine personal stories and encounters to explain how I created particular pieces and generate ideas.

This project has been a collection of moments and interactions, which I then seek to translate into a visual and auditory experience.

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION & LITERATURE REVIEW

PART I: CULTURAL IDENTITY AND DIASPORA

CULTURAL IDENTITY

“Terra Incognita –The New World is the third term- the primal scene- where the fateful/fatal encounter was staged between Africa and the West.... Stands for the endless ways which Caribbean people have been destined to migrate.”- Stuart Hall

In his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, Stuart Hall places cultural identity into two categories vis-a-vis his Jamaican-British identity. In the first conception, cultural identity is perceived as a shared culture to which people with shared histories and ancestry belong. There is a one true collective self buried beneath many other, more superficial or artificially imposed selves. Hall explains that, “cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us as one people with stable unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting decisions and vicissitudes of our actual history.” This conception of cultural identity has been at the heart of the Pan African political project and one that has played a critical role in all post colonial struggles which has profoundly shaped our world. It has also been the driving force for the rediscovery of lost identity, a process Franz Fanon once called the passionate research. Specifically he states that “Passionate research...directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regards to others.”

Building on Fanon’s passionate research theory, Hall questions what comprises the nature of this passionate research and call for imaginative rediscovery. He argues that with imaginative rediscovery we go beyond merely unearthing that which the colonial experience buried and overlaid. Rather we begin a new practice not centered on rediscovery, but the production of identity. He terms this “Not an identity grounded in archaeology, but in the retelling of the past.” It is with imaginative rediscovery, Hall argues, that forgotten connections are once more set in place, and the rift of separation and the loss of identity that is integral to the Caribbean experience, begins to be healed.

The second position, which Hall clearly favors, recognizes that within a cultural identity there are many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference. These differences constitute “ ‘what we really are’; or rather- since history intervened- what we have become.” One cannot talk about one monolithic experience or one identity without acknowledging the ruptures and discontinuities. It is these ruptures

and discontinuities that constitute the core of the Caribbean's 'uniqueness'. In this second conception of cultural identity, the emphasis is on an identity, which is equally centered on the task of becoming, belonging to the future on the one side, as well as of being, belonging to the past on the other. This is the temporal disjunction. It is not an identity that already exists, predating us, transcending place time history and culture, and waiting on us to unearth it. Rather, cultural identity undergoes constant transformation. Hall explains that: "Far from being fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere recovery of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position over selves within, the narratives of the past."

DIASPORAS

"Peoples whose sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violent loss cannot be "cured" by merging into a new national community. This is especially true when they are the victims of ongoing, structural prejudice." - James Clifford (Clifford 1994 :302)

At the heart of his essay, *Diasporas*, James Clifford poses the question, what is at stake, politically and intellectually in contemporary invocations of diaspora? He opens the essay by discussing the problems of defining the 'traveling term' in changing global conditions. Specifically he asks how do diaspora discourses represent experiences of "displacement of constructing homes away from home? What experiences do they reject, replace or marginalize?" (Clifford 1994 :302)

Border, travel, creolization, transculturation, hybridity, and diaspora as well as the looser diasporic are terms that clutter the descriptive landscape defining the contact zones of nations, cultures and regions. In the editorial preface of the first issue of *Diaspora*, a journal devoted to the history and production of transnational cultures, Khachig Töloölian writes, "Diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment" (Töloölian 1991 :4-5)

Clifford explains that *Diasporas* connects multiple communities of a dispersed population and at the heart of this interconnection is systematic border crossings. These multi-locale diaspora cultures, while not necessarily defined by a specific geopolitical boundary, increasingly find themselves in border relations with the old country thanks to a to-and-fro made possible by modern technologies of transport, communication, and labor migration. With airplanes, telephones, tape cassettes, camcorders, and mobile job markets distances have been reduced and two-way traffic, legal and illegal, have been facilitated

between the world's places. It is also these multi-locale diaspora cultures that complicate any attempt to impose strict meanings and criteria for what qualifies as diasporic.

This difficulty to impose a detailed definition and authenticity test can be seen in William Safran's essay in the first issue of *Diaspora*, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return" (1991). Safran offers a six prong criteria for Diaspora but once multi-locale diaspora cultures such as the Black Atlantic diaspora and the Jewish Mediterranean network are put to the test, Safran's model prove inadequate.

William Safran defines diasporas as follows: "expatriate minority communities" (1) that are dispersed from an original "center" to at least two "peripheral" places; (2) that maintain a "memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland"; (3) that "believe they are not-and perhaps cannot be-fully accepted by their host country"; (4) that see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right; (5) that are committed to the maintenance or restoration of this homeland; and (6) of which the group's consciousness and solidarity are "importantly defined" by this continuing relationship with the homeland (Safran 1991:83-84).

The medieval Jewish Mediterranean network and the modern Black Atlantic complicate Safran's model. While the two differ economically and politically- the Jewish network being commercially self-sustaining while the Black Atlantic is caught up in colonial/neocolonial forces-the cultural forms, which sustain and connect these two "expatriate minority communities" are comparable within the range of diasporic phenomena. The greatest complication arises when attempting to define these two networks within Safran's "centered" diaspora model. African American/ Caribbean/British cultures do not qualify as they are oriented by continuous cultural connections to a source and by their teleology of "return". These histories of displacement fall into a category Clifford calls "quasi Diasporas", as they show only some diasporic features or moments if we are to adhere to Safran's model.

Clifford explains "We should be wary of constructing our working definition of a term like diaspora by recourse to an 'ideal type', with the consequence that groups become identified as more or less diasporic, having only two, or three, or four of (Safran's) basic six features. Moreover at different times in their history, societies may wax and wane in diasporism, depending on changing possibilities-obstacles, openings, antagonisms, and connections-in their host countries and transnationally. Whatever the working lists of diasporic features, no society can be expected to qualify on all counts, throughout its history. And the discourse of diaspora will necessarily be modified as it is translated and adopted." (Clifford 1994:306)

Instead he offers a different approach. Clifford argues we should resist locating essential features and instead specify the discursive field "diacritically", focus on diaspora's borders, on what it defines itself against and most importantly what articulations of identity are currently being replaced by diaspora claims? He stresses that the relational positioning at issue here is of "entangled tension" not a process of absolute othering. Diasporas are preoccupied with and defined against (1) the norms of nation-states and (2) indigenous, and especially native, claims by "tribal" peoples.

As it relates to nation-states, an important distinction needs to be made between diasporic populations and immigrants. Diasporic populations do not come from elsewhere in the same way that "immigrants" do and as a result resist assimilation national ideologies. In a nation like the United States, the immigrant narrative is one of loss and nostalgia for the 'Old Country' en route to establishing a whole new home in a new place. Such narratives are designed to integrate immigrants, not people in Diasporas. "Whether the national narrative is one of common origins or of gathered populations, it cannot assimilate groups that maintain important allegiances and practical connections to a homeland or a dispersed community located elsewhere." (Clifford 1994:302) This is further complicated if the members of the Diasporic community are victims of systematic prejudices in their host nation.

While diasporic cultural politics are by no means innocent of nationalist aims or chauvinist agendas, whatever their ideologies of purity, diasporic cultural forms can never, in practice, be exclusively nationalist.



Figure #1 Ginal (2014), Charcoal on Paper

PART II: ON PRACTICE AND PROCESS

My artistic comprises of drawings, paintings, sculpture, photography and performance collide into a dialogue. My goal is to pare each idea or form down to its essentials and then put it into a sensible dialog with other, similarly minimal pieces. Playing off the inherent strengths and weaknesses of each medium, I allow the ideas or concepts to dictate the form. The aim is to bind these various mediums together into a dialectic installation, using sharply curated string of visual, formal and conceptual rhymes to guide the viewer through a narrative.

My practice relies on the mining of memory to generate ideas, walking through local markets for formal inspiration and materials, recording chance encounters, and material experimentation. Photography serves the purpose of documenting a performance in which, with very few exceptions, the only audience is the camera. This chapter will oscillate between recounting pivotal moments in the form of prose and academic analysis. Each prose will explain the creation of various pieces throughout the thesis show reinforcing the themes of identity and migration.

The chapter will be broken down into the following subsections:

Oh Bruni What Is Your Name?

“YOU know WE can’t swim right”

In A Cold Sweat

Scars, Scratches, and Keloids

Oh Bruni What Is Your Name?



Figure #2 Stranger than the Village, (2015), C-Print

It is hot, tropical hot, African hot. We have been posted in this small restaurant bar, or as the hand painted sign proclaims 'Love Me Spot', since noon. It's now half past three and the sun shows no signs of relenting. I have been steadily nursing my local beer for the past twenty minutes while my companions have been engaging in a heated drunk conversation exclusively in Twi. I scan the bar while idly peeling the label off my bottle. Excluding the consistent patina of red dirt that seems to invade everything, 'Love Me Spot' could very well be a hole in the wall somewhere in Kingston. A woman approaches the bar with a great deal of excitement and flare. I know this woman. Her name is Comfort and she is a small woman with a larger than life personality. "Oh Bruni how are you?" she greets. "Do you remember me Bruni? You should buy a drink for your old friend! Nana Comfort is thirsty, I'll have a beer." She deposits herself in the chair next to me. I have only been in Bekwai, the sleepy market village an hour north of Kumasi, Ghana for the past week, but here I am now amongst 'old' thirsty friends who refuse to

refer to me by my real name. I have crossed paths with Comfort several times and despite my ardent protest she insists on referring to me exclusively as “Oh Bruni”. I cringe. “Oh Bruni” is Twi for ‘White Man’, which is synonymous with stranger (among other associations). I have spent my entire life identifying as being part of the African Diaspora. Yet here it is: I have come all the way to Africa, “The Great Aspora”, just be called a white man. I can feel the blood rushing to my face, burning me red like the dust covered floors of ‘Love Me Spot’. My companions take note and break out into raucous laughter. “No Oh Bruni! I am not white. I am tired of this Oh Bruni shit! That’s not my name”. Visibly taken aback Comfort says “Ok Bruni, ok...ok. Relax Bruni.”

Why is she still calling me Bruni?

She looks at me with a wry smile – entertaining my identity crisis – and says, “Tell me Oh Bruni, what is your name?” to which I respond “Cosmo Whyte”.

The irony of this moment is not lost on me and immediately I make a note in my sketchbook that reads “Oh Bruni what is your name?” This encounter is an important insight into my evolving practice. It is through the recollecting like encounters or moments that I then create some of my work. A simple note in my sketchbook “OH Bruni What is your Name?”, is a reminder to revisit this encounter.

Stranger than the village (Figure #2) is a photo documenting a performance piece. Facing away from the camera a figure is seen suspended in a black void. Perfunctorily pinned to the figure’s back is an iconic image of James Baldwin. Balanced precariously on the figures head is an odd megaphone. For the performance I sampled, “chop and screw” the opening remarks from Baldwin’s Nigger. The sample is turned it into a 3 min Jamaican dub beat, complete with heavy distortions and played on the megaphone balancing on my head. The performance would end once I managed to get through the sample without loosing balance. Which was harder than you think. For my thesis show the sample was extended into a 30 min piece played intermittently through out the show.

“YOU know WE can’t swim right”



Figure #3 YOU know WE can’t swim right (2015), C-Print Photo

We only knew him as Rastaman - a lanky, dark-skinned man who moonlighted as a tennis coach and swimming instructor, when not working in one of Montego Bay’s many hotels. In fact, the synonym Rastaman undoubtedly was adopted due to working in the hotels. Easy for the tourist to remember and they can tell all their friends how they met an authentic rastaman. This was the man who taught me how to swim.

Neither of my parents were particularly strong swimmers. In fact, the vast majority of Jamaicans can’t swim. With such situational irony in mind, my mother paid for swimming lessons for my sister and myself. Enter Rastaman, the con artist who moonlighted as a tennis and swimming instructor.

The lessons were held at “Dead-End” beach, famous for being right next to Montego Bay’s international airport runway and one of the few free beaches locals would frequent. Dead-End beach was roughly two miles long, with large rocks punctuating small stretches of white sand shorelines. The currents all seemed to congregate at dead end, bringing with them lovers, baptisms, local families, and debris from never ending construction. When at Dead-End all activities would come to an abrupt stop to watch the

various planes land or take off, carry with them our desires to travel beyond these shorelines.

The locals of Montego Bay, as with all coastal people, are hyper aware of the sea. The sea is a source of food, income, our internal compass and its vast body of water is what separates us from our various diasporic homes. The locals of Montego Bay are also hyper aware of the politics of the beach. The beach with its premium white sand – a commodity to be privatized, sold or stolen – is the site where carnal desire for the other is often realized. Having said that, most Jamaicans can't swim.

Swimming lessons consisted of my sister and I lying on our stomachs practicing our free style strokes for three agonizing hours while Rastaman periodically shouted corrections to our forms from a distance, while fraternizing with his friends. There was a great deal of humiliation in watching all the other children frolic in the water while my sister and I remained beached. Each evening when my mother came to pick us up, she would be greeted to wonderful reports of our progress and two sand-covered children who wanted nothing more than to escape the beach.

The routine lasted for a little less than a month before we informed our parents and they confronted Rastaman about the true nature of our dry swimming lessons. Our very next session started with a visibly irritated instructor marching us to one of the nearby piers. Rastaman looked at my sister and myself sternly and instructed us to jump into the water below and use what we had learned to swim ashore. We stood there in quizzical silence before my sister said: "YOU know WE can't swim right?"

"YOU know WE can't swim right" Is a C-print photograph 52 x 38" mounted on Plexiglas. The image depicts a dreadlocked male figure, wearing a bright red coat and black pants, floating face down in turquoise waters. On closer inspection one notices how ornate the coat is. The Queen of England's royal insignia is embroidered repeatedly along the back and seams, golden buttons, again bearing the Queen insignia, adorn the back. The coat belongs to a Buckingham Palace Royal Guard. Who is this Rastafarian redcoat figure? Is the figure dead? Is he a traitor, a deserter, a visual manifestation of the colloquial "redcoat" or a metaphor for a post-colonial island and its inhabitants who have to sink or swim under the weight of history? In the upper left corner hints of the setting sun can be seen on the water's surface. On the lower right corner the figure's legs disrupt the undulating waters suggesting there might be some life left in this figure.

Though not a faithful reenactment of my early childhood swimming lesson, the image was meticulously crafted in the waters of Dead-End Beach in Montego Bay. Each detail was carefully considered. The setting sun would turn the Caribbean water's turquoise, which would then compliment the deep red British coat. Taken in its entirety, the turquoise water, the redcoat and the black pants, would create a visual homage to Marcus Garvey's Pan African flag (1). The decision to print the image on Plexiglas creates a very delicate object that is at odds with the macabre imagery.

In A Cold Sweat



Figure #4 Head Boy, C-Print Photo (2014)

In “Head Boy” a figure sits in a classroom facing the camera. There is a great deal of contextual clues suggesting this is somewhere outside of the US. The stoic dreadlocked figure is wearing a British Royal Red Coat, black pants and bare feet. His bearded face is shiny with sweat. The blackboard has math (specifically fractions) and Spanish. Why Spanish? Who is this figure?

Head Boy was one of three pieces selected for the Jamaica Biannual and is a recreation of an experience from my adolescence.

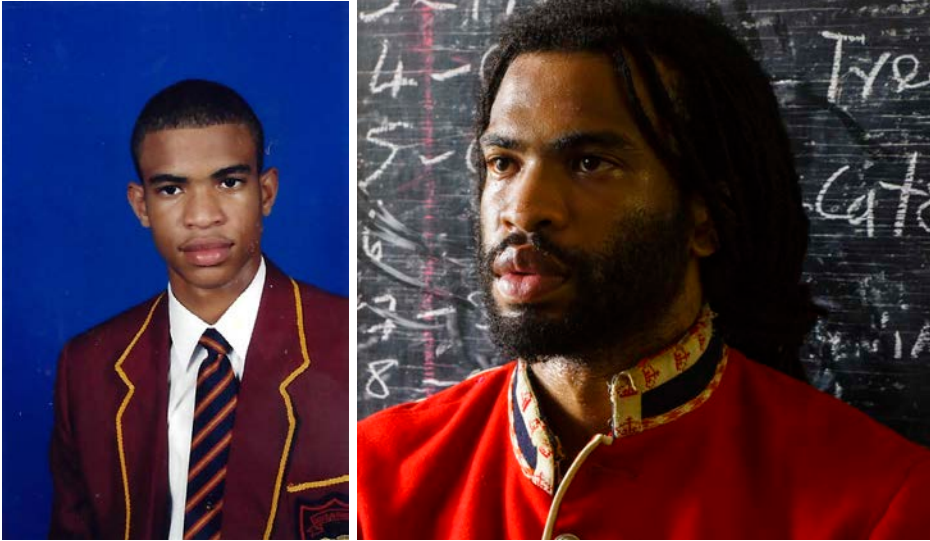


Figure #5 Artist at age 18 Figure #6 Cold Sweat (2015), Video Still

At age 16, after completing regional Caribbean exams, young Jamaican boys and girls apply for entry into six-form. Between ages 17-18 those who are accepted are then groomed for the Cambridge Advance Level exams (A-Levels). With the A-Levels exam comes the honor and distinction of wearing your schools blazer and tie. The rationale is if you were going to sit the British exam (even have your papers flown in from Cambridge and flown back for grading) then you must dress like an English boy. Here is the catch, on average the temperatures in Jamaica are in the high 80's, dipping to the 70's during the rainy seasons. Nothing prepares these boys and girls for that first month of wearing a blazer and tie in tropical weather. Sweating was my first bodily response to colonial retentions.

Cold Sweat and Head boy were documentations of the simple act of sweating through the heavy wool of a British Red Coat. Can one think of sweating as silent protest? Would my sweat transform the British Red Coat, the sweat stains being a reminder of this baptism? How would a Jamaica read this photograph and video? Would the striking imaging of a sweating Redcoat in a classroom make the Jamaican viewer question the colonial retentions that have been normalized?

Scars, Scratches, and Keloids



Figure #7 Mother's Tongue, (2014), Charcoal on Paper

The drawing in Figure #7 depicts a male figure, clad in all white, hunched over, holding his face. Between his legs are stenciled the words “Bumbo-Ras-Clat”. Above his face the ripped paper visualizes an ambiguous violence. The drawing is built up of layers of charcoal that are then sanded down creating a network of scratches, a visual white noise.

The title “Mother's Tongue” provides the strongest contextual clue for reading this drawing through the lens of language, annunciation and power dynamics. The text, “Bumbo-Ras-Clat”, is an explicative in the Jamaican dialect Patios. Hand cut from paper that has received the same surface treatment as the larger drawing, the text is written in Roosewood, a typeface associated with Spaghetti Western Films and circuses.

The image is sourced from archival footage of the West Indies Cricket team's famous 1966 tour of England (Figure #8). That summer the West Indies team handed their recently disposed colonial masters a devastating and demoralizing defeat, provided much need relief to the many West Indian immigrants in England. During the height of the Apartheid struggle and deteriorating racial conditions in England, this victory signaled a political shift in the way West Indians would understand the colonial sport. I grew up in the height of West Indian Cricket reign and it was at cricket matches that I heard adults

discuss issues of Pan-Africanism and Colonialism. I must note I also am young enough to have never known a colonial Jamaica but old enough to have heard a specific group of people refer to the good old days of colonial rule.



Figure #8 West Indies vs England 1966

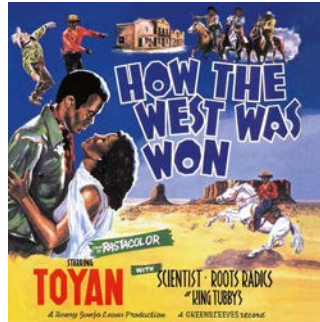


Figure #9 How The West Was Won- King Tubby

By juxtaposing the text with a colonial sport I am trying to subvert the Queen's English as the language the subaltern must speak in order to be heard. The typeface is reminiscent of early dub vinyl cover art, some of which borrowed very heavily from the Spaghetti Western romanticization of Western expansion.



Figure #10 Keloid Drawing 1, (2015), Charcoal on Paper

Figure #10, #11 and #12 represents the evolution of my drawing process. The networks of scratches that constitute the drawing surface have evolved into concentrated forms I refer to as Keloids. A keloid is a growth of extra scar tissue where the skin has healed after an injury. This series of drawings move away from overt cultural signifiers into an ambiguous space with fragmented figures are suspended, floating and in various states of falling. The act of falling is ephemeral with each moment quickly replacing the next before impact. The Keloids are register of each moment an overlay of information. at times engulfing the figure.



Figure #11 "Sweetback", (work in progress), charcoal on paper



Figure #12 Keloid Drawing 2 Detail, (2015), Charcoal on Paper

BECOMING THE WELL TRAVELED AFRICAN



Figure #13 Black Star Line Certificate

*Seven miles of Black Star liners coming in the harbor
Seven miles of Black Star liners coming in the harbor
It's repatriation
Black liberation
Yes, the time has come
Black man, you're going home*

Black Star Liners by Fred Locks, 1975

At the beginning of the Twentieth Century, Marcus Garvey envisioned a shipping line that would transport goods and ultimately people throughout the African diaspora, mobilizing an Afro-centric global economy and means of transit from one hub to the next. The Black Star Line operated from 1919-1922, during which it was repeatedly undermined by powerful entities that understood the breadth of its potential. J. Edgar Hoover's fledgling Bureau of Investigation cut its teeth on The Black Star Line, prosecuting Garvey for mail fraud and, rumor has it, sabotaging the Line's fleet.



Figure #14 The Well Traveled African, shipping pallets, speakers, car batteries.

Based on Garvey's Diasporic vessel, The Well Traveled African (Figure #14) is another type of Diasporic vessel. The kart is built entirely from memory of a Jamaican DJ pushcart, using found shipping pallets, second hand wheels, and speakers. This not only references the aesthetic of Commonwealth briccollage- constructing and creating from a diverse range of available materials pervasive throughout Commonwealth nations- it also elevates this cultural technique of briccollage as a viable contributor to contemporary sculpture.



Figure #15 Jamaican DJ pushcart



Figure #16 Jamaican market pushcart

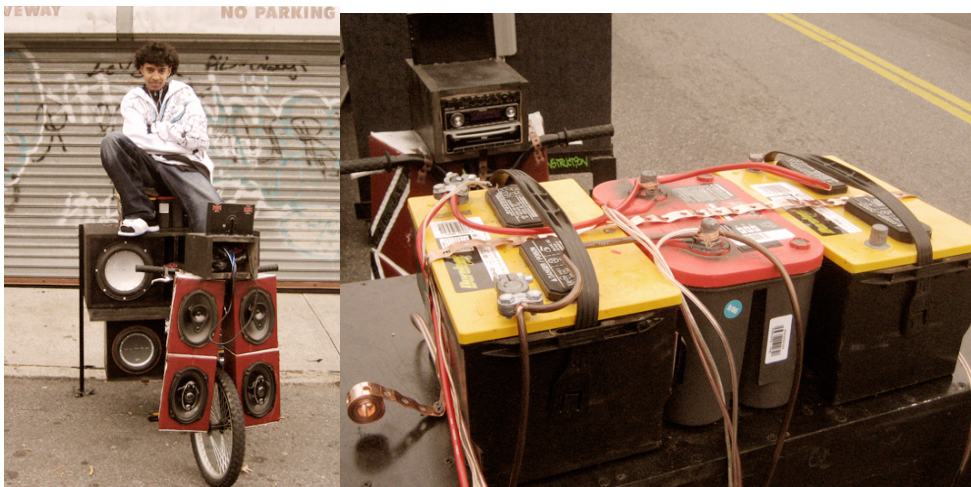


Figure #17 Trinidadian Immigrant Stereo-bike sub-culture in Queens New York



Figure #18 Promised Land 1



Figure #19 Promised Land 2



Figure #20 The Well Traveled African Installation shot.



Figure #21 "Wake the Town and Tell the people", (2015) wood and speakers.

PART III: ARTIST IN DIALOGUE



Figure #3 YOU know WE can't swim right (2015)



Figure #22 Hippolyte Bayard- Self Portrait as a Drowned Man 1840

Hippolyte Bayard During the 1830s there was a race among inventors to be the first to perfect the photographic process. Louis Daguerre won the race (at least, he was the first to patent a process) and gained all the glory. However, this left other inventors feeling bitter. For instance, Hippolyte Bayard had independently invented a rival photographic process known as direct positive printing, and had done so as early as Daguerre, but his invention didn't earn him fame and riches. Credited with the first fake photograph. Titled "Self Portrait as a Drowned Man" (1840), the photograph shows Bayard pretending to be dead, with writing on the back that declared it a suicide because of the lack of recognition

for his life's work. A staged shot and a false caption was all it took to make Bayard's photo one of the most memorable in early photographic history.



Figure #23 O'neil Lawrence- Discarded-Reliquary (2010), C Print Photo

Jamaican born artist, O'neil Lawrence, uses figures interacting on the shores of the Kingston Harbor. Against the backdrop of Caribbean Sea, Lawrence hints at the Middle Passage, as he reflects on the constant evolution of societies created by the journey of the ancestors.



Figure #24 Radcliff Bailey "Windward Coast", (2009-2011), Piano Keys, Plaster bust and glitter

Radcliffe Bailey's "Windward Coast" is an installation comprised of 35,000-odd wooden piano keys with black and white tips, extracted from 400 pianos. The pile has been spread out and shaped into a vast rectangle. Its edges are neat, but inside those edges it undulates, conjuring a turbulent, wind-whipped sea. Emerging from the waves of wood is a sculpted head, covered in black glitter. A conch shell is also attached to a corner wall. It emits a percussive sound, an audio recording of the artist dropping the pieces of wood as he constructed the work.

Like all his work, "Windward Coast", triggers many possible meanings. It evokes, most immediately, the slave trade and the "Middle Passage," but at its core is a simple tale of the Artist lost at sea as an adolescence. Radcliffe Bailey's philosophy is to make art rooted so deeply in personal narratives that when combined with ambiguous poetics, the narrative transcends the personal into a universal read of displacement.



Figure #25 Renee Cox- Queen nanny (2006), C-Print Photo Figure #26 Toussaint Louverture

Renee Cox was born in Colgate, Jamaica in 1960. Her family moved to Queens, New York as baby. Cox has used her work to make social critiques on a range of subjects from institutionalized religion to motherhood. In 2006, Cox exhibited at the Jamaican Biennial with a series entitled Queen Nanny of the Maroons. Queen Nanny is the only female national hero in Jamaica. Queen Nanny of the Maroon, as she was officially called, was a military leader of the Jamaican Maroons in the 18th Century.

In Queen Nanny (Figure #25), Renee Cox uses mimicry as a means to subvert the historical significance of the British Redcoat.

However, nobody did this better than Toussaint Louverture. Louverture was the architect of the first and arguable only successful slave rebellion, as it resulted in Haiti's independence in 1804. Once the overseer to Napoleon brother-in-law's plantation Toussaint Louverture eventually joined and led the Haitian rebellion. Once a member of the island's liberators, Toussaint started dressed as Napoleon as a means to infuriated Napoleon.



Figure #27 Installation shot



Figure #28 David Hammons- African American Flag (1990)



Figure #29 Tom Sachs 'Waffle Bike' (2008), mixed media.



Figure #30 Satch Hoyt, “Celestial Vessel”, (2009), 45rpm vinyl records, steel, magnets, oil paint, audio component



Figure #31 “Wake The Town and Tell The People”, (2015)
wood and 30 speakers



Figure #32 Nadine Robinson, "Coronation Theme: Organon", (2008), audio speakers

Nadine Robinson's "Coronation Theme: Organon" is a great, rumbling wall of potential power, a majestic ode to past blood, sweat and tears and a firm promise of future might. Twenty-eight powerhouse audio speakers are stacked high against a wall, the volume turned low so that a churning mix of choral music, vocal invocation and rhythmic electronic chants ebbs and flows.



Figure #33 Los Carpinteros “Una-Noticia” (One News), 2012, wood, metal, speakers

EXHIBITION



Figure #35 Thesis show



Figure #36 Thesis show



Figure #37 Thesis show



Figure #38 Keloid Drawing



Figure #39 Thesis show



Figure #40 Thesis show



Figure #41 Punch Drunk Love

Punch Drunk Love- a sugar bowl bought in the Buckingham Palace gift shop sits delicately on top of a braided shipping rope. The sugar bowl is filled to the brim with rum. Water and a ship/ vessel is eluded to. Jamaican rum distilled from sugar cane instead is the only actual liquid present. The rum, becomes a metaphor for liquid identity- cannot freeze, never solid, complicated history. The shape of rope mirrors keloids from drawings but also can suggest an island. This piece is in conversation with everything in the room.



Figure #42 Thesis show

The ocean, and its transitory potential, evoked again, through some of the humble tools with which we attempt to manage and profit by it.

While not an Africanist or afro-centric, Stuart Hall was profoundly concerned with Africa to Caribbean society and culture. If you're asking about the centrality of Africa to Caribbean culture you're asking about a translation. Diasporic translation of what Africa became under slavery and colonization. Jamaica has very profound unmitigated roots in the memory of Africa all combined with other melodies and rhymes, realities and other aspects of religions.

Living in pluralist worlds in which Africa was still alive or rather what it had become in the new world- most noted in presence of African music in religion.



Figure #43 Thesis show

DISCUSSION / CONCLUSION



Figure #44 The Conversation

The final images in my thesis show are two photos (figure #44) titled the conversation. The entire show has been a three-way conversation between Stuart Hall, James Baldwin and myself. Both figures tackle this issue of stranger in interesting ways and this mirrors my growing temporal displacement. Baldwin in his seminal story *Stranger in the Village* investigates his own relationship to citizenship in the US through the experience of being the first black man a small village in Switzerland. Stuart Hall used the temporal displacement that resulted from his migration to England as a way to critique cultural identity and diaspora. I have reached the point in which I have to reconcile with the fact that I have migrated from Jamaica to the US and the longer I stay in my host country the more I become a stranger in my former home. I agree with Halls second reading of identity and believe that the modern condition is now the hyphenated identity. As a Jamaican I was inherently a part of a multi location diaspora the more I move the more locations I add to the mix.



Figure # 44 “Say it Loud...”,
megaphone, short wave radio (2015)

Just like the curious megaphone on top of the figures head (Figure 44), I am also a product of globalization. This object was bought in Ghana, made in China, used heavily throughout West Africa, and has become a surrogate for the drums in public spaces.

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