

Saucy talk • Stiff upper **lips**, - fortitude or obstinacy Edge of cavity One of the two folds of flesh that bound the mouth & cover the teeth • Any structure that bounds an orifice, slit or groove • Impertinent speech, sauciness • To keep one's courage, be stoical • Whisper, Labial. A stick of candy or dynamite • A poke, stab or thrust, juk • The state of being stuck together, adhesion Cling, adhere • Mil. A group of bombs released consecutively in a straight line crossing the target area • Colloq. The backwoods, an obscure rural district • To pierce, stab or penetrate with a pin knife or other pointed object • Colloq. Smear with something sticky, baffle, puzzle • To persist, persevere, remain firm, resolute, faithful, **sticks** up for: support, defend • To fasten in place with pins or nails Impale, transfix. To be enamoured of, to stick around • To stick it out • A visible trace, impression, or sign produced or left on any substance, as a line, scratch, dot, scar, spot, stain, or blemish • Any physical peculiarity produced by drawing, indenting, stamping, or other process or agency • A symbol, written or printed: **and marks** of interrogation • An object serving to guide, direct or point out, as a boundary; a course, or a place in a book • That which indicates the presence or existence of something; a characteristic, an evidence; a symptom that which is aimed at, or toward which effort is directed; something shot, fired, or thrown at, as a target; that which one tries to attain or achieve; a goal. • Distinction • A license to make reprisals Nautical. A strip of cloth or the like knotted or twisted into a lead line at intervals to indicate fathoms of depth. An observing or noting, heed • Ejaculations of deprecation, irony, scorn or humorous surprise.

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Lips, Sticks and Marks is the firewood of seven voices and this document is the stain from their mouths...

Alida Martinez

Aruba



Patras di e Imagen

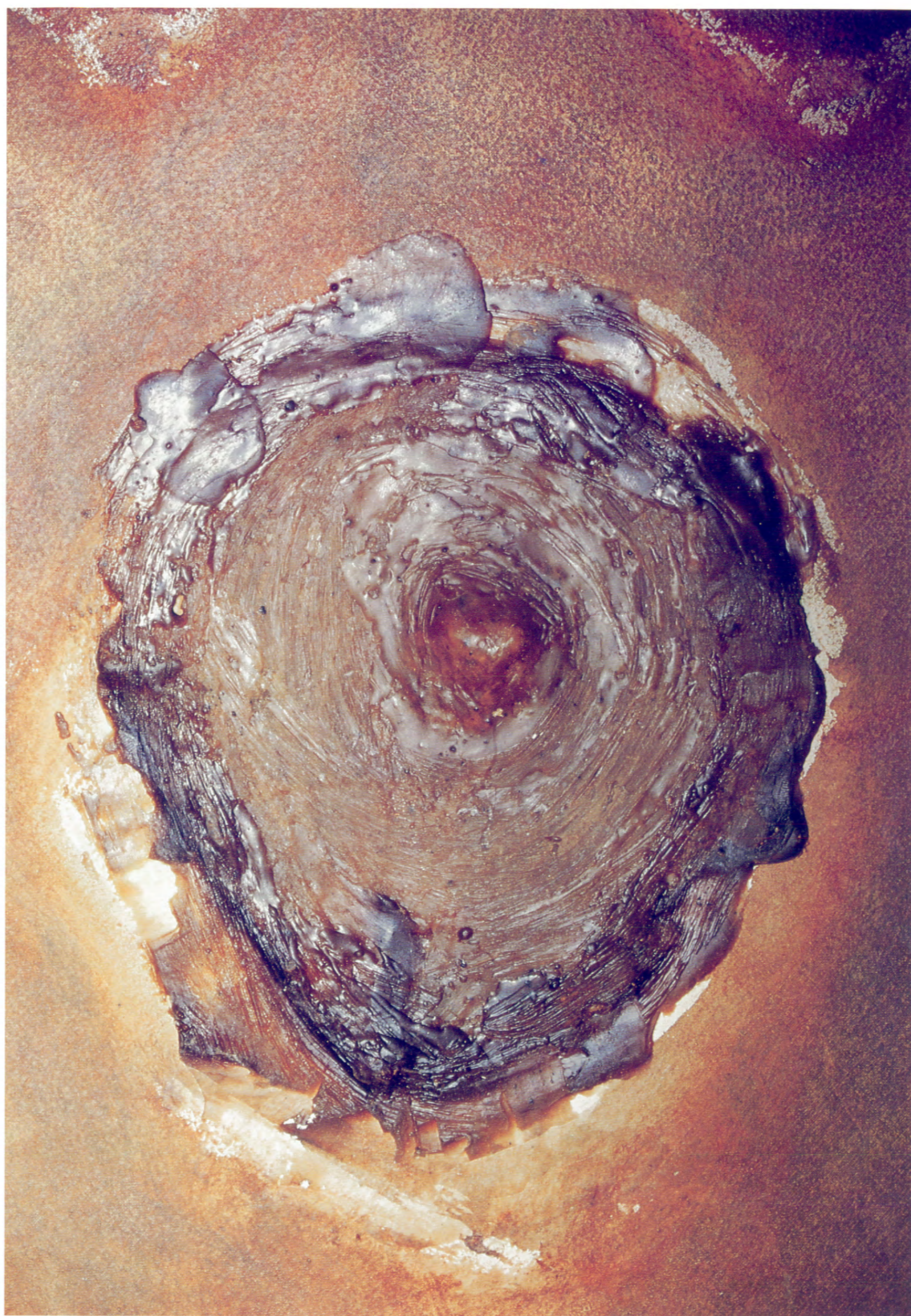
Rond di me bo ta
I ami rond Di bo
kosi ku bo kalor
impregna den bo, mi ta
mara I full tapa, na bo
ku un korona Di katuna
mi ta drumi den bo interno
lagando mi mes los den bo
pa konose e buskeda di awa limpi
jegando na bo lombrishi, "transparecia eterno".

Beyond the Image

Around me you are
and I am surrounding you
stitched with your warmth
impregnant in you, I am
completely binded to you
with "one" cotton crown
I am sleeping in your insides
leaving myself loose in you
searching in knowing "clean water"
"Eternal Transparency"

It is the ritual of everyday,
that has a warm surface,
that makes it so interesting when it gets
contact with the temperature of a human being.





Osaira Muyale

Aruba



A Letter To Myself

I know you for a long time
we were playing hide and seek
I could and could not
hear, see, touch, smell, talk
to you
but still I knew you, and still
wanted to know more about
you
appreciate, understand, trust and
love you

we are playing another game
the game of affirmation
A relationship of soul and brain
you are teaching me
the existence of love
every time we meet
I thank you for understanding
the difference of being
you are no |||||

To My friend no 11

Getting near the end of the millennium, I am still asking myself if the universe, the human being, is happy with the results of the process we are living now. We know so much, so much, but still know so little. We feel so much but still feel so little. We want the positive but still have a lot of the negative. We have a lot of love but also a lot of hate. Can we continue with this duality. If what we want is only love?

I am sitting here alone in my studio, my heart is beating intensely while I am writing these words that have been living practically everyday with me, because I feel love but at the same time lost in a dream. Afraid of what is going to happen to us and the universe if we don't come to a solution. We human beings are born to learn the process of life, to make living statements and to say one day, my soul is free of pain, guilt. My soul has discovered the one and only important energy of the soul, "love".

My work is based on this journey, to understand the why's and why nots, the pain we confront everyday and to accept and confront it, and to try to have a soul of love. To know love you have to know pain.

At the moment, for some time, I am confronting myself everyday with an invisible friend, he affirms that love can exist no matter how bad or lonely you can feel. he/she is there when I am confused or when I not. When I am feeling good, it tells me that this feeling exists and that it is real. That love exists.

My relationship with this friend is giving me a lot of strength to continue what I am doing with my life and work. The more I live the more I understand the more I am. Can I one day give my friend, the unknown friend a name? Can I call him/her/it God? Somebody you feel close to but don't know. I know he is there, everywhere I can feel it, but am I still not enough experienced to get that close? I do see it everyday, he presents himself to me, and reminds me that I am still being. It's giving me love and trust. Thank you for your words.

Looking clear, hearing silence, smelling wet, touching God,
tasting pure, talking freedom, feeling clean.





AnnaLee Davis

Barbados



An Alliteration

BIG "M", little "m" - what begins with m?

my macrocosm sometimes gets mad when i
meander through the maelstrom
of my meek madonna martyred me and my
magnificent magdalen magnet.
magically, the maladjustment to marriage magnifies the
malformation of
...my marrow?
...my mate?
...my mask?
my major man maneuvered his maleness on my
mattress like we were making
a magnificent madrigal. but as i masticate on the
remaining morsels of matrimony, the magic
meanders...meanwhile my martial male seems to be
mattoid of his
matrix and i am a mammy.

marvellous mathematics marriage maybe! a medieval
masquerade that manages
to massage massively megalomaniac mendacity that
mellows under my membranes.

this matter of mending the mask...
the malaise...
this maiden...
that man...
gives me a migraine!

me thinks the next millennium may be less miserable
and more miraculous...
maybe a matriarchal mode that manifests more than
a modicum of moulding
moral monogamous mortals. this mutating menace
messes with my mind,
and might make me melancholic and mean. but me
thinks me must meet the mischievous medley
with my muscles, munition and meditation - not
in a myopic way but with the myriad of myself.

mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmarvelous!

A sardonic somewhat-sonnet for my separated self
and spousal subject.....

the secret of this sadistic separation saunters into a salad of sarcasm, sentiment and sporadic sincerity.

the shabby sequel to settling down splutters in this separatist situation
and severe stigmas sear our skins. we shiver and
shake as we are seized by
the shattering spastic separateness.

we spoke about the splikity-splakity-split, but the
sorrow is serious.
spilt sincerity and split structures.

such a struggle!

i sense a salty-sweetness in the scab of my spiralling
separateness.

we shed the shawl of our sham of a solid stance.

we speak of the security of sobriety
the sorrow of division
the seduction of a simpler life
the shock of this scary shrapnel
the shadow of a significant other's silhouette
the scariness of our son's split sense of self

i shovel the shreds of sadness onto a string and tie a
knot and seem to sigh
in the silence that simmers in my somewhat
suspended singular self.

...and i survey his surname and my surname
and i thank goddess they are not the same.

i suture my shame
and i select the survival game

Big "S" little "s" - what begins with "s"?

A Sacred Soliloquy for my Son, Seamus

sometimes i feel sad in my sacrum since the sanctity
of the safety
net that surrounded me is now screaming sacrilege.
the sun rises,
and somehow i sit in the saddle. and as the sun sets i
sing Seamus
to sleep.

i sing about spiders and stars and slumber:

incy wincy spider climbed up a water spout
down came the rain and washed the spider out
out came the sun and dried up all the rain
and the incy wincy spider climbed up the spout again

the salient salvation of that song is survival!

so i swallow my saliva and i sing another song - about shimmering stars.

twinkle twinkle little star
how i wonder what you are
up above the sky so bright
like a diamond in the night
twinkle twinkle little star
how i wonder what you are

stars sparkle and shine and before i see my
sarcophagus, my sustenance seems
to be satisfied by sardonic sonnets and sweet songs.

yet, sometimes i am soulful and sappy and sentimental, and i sing...

go to sleep
go to sleep
go to sleep my dear Seamus
close your eyes
close your eyes
close your eyes and go to sleep
have nice dreams of the seas
of the wide open skies

have nice dreams - go to sleep
go to sleep close your eyes

and i savour his sweet sleep as i seal his day with my
scarlet kiss
on his soft skin and i swear if only i could spare him
the spasm
of my scabs...

sometimes, my stomach senses scary monsters, and i
sing songs to soothe
the soreness in his schism.

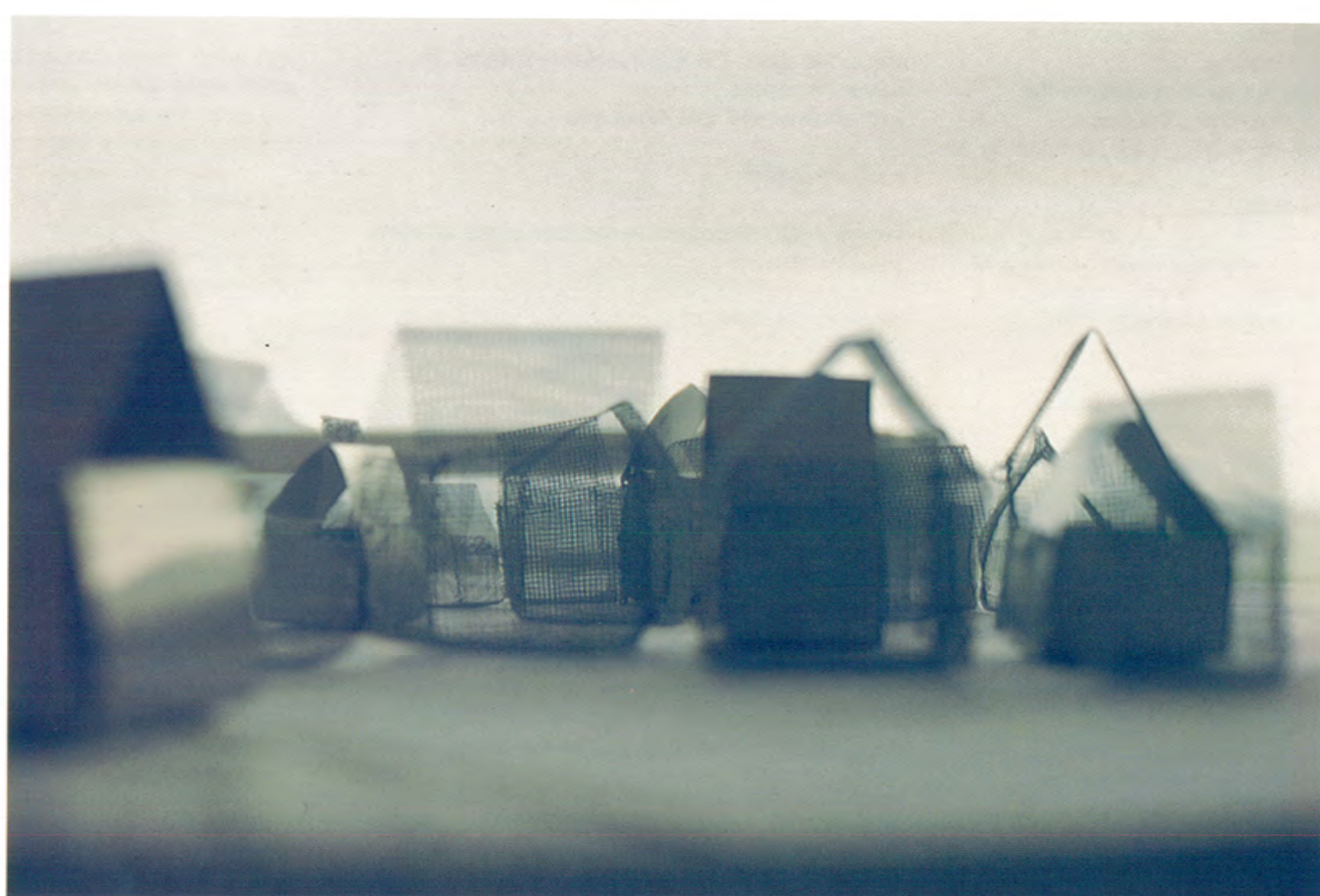
so we scramble and we scream and it seems like the seams of our siamese search are synchronised...

and i surmise
that we'll survive
like the spider in her web

and i suspect
that we might shine
like the stars in the night

and i assume that
we can dream
of the wide open skies.

and we shall soar
and we shall sail
through sacred soliloquys





Joscelyn Gardner

Barbados



In
an ocean
of veiling,
wailing words
I arise I am
I am begot
The bed be blest that I lie not

my altar of acidic crimson birth
is stained and carved into charted turf
torn lips sutured by compass-web of gold
my womb-Basin wrenched twixt continental folds
nipples swelling ripples
aft and four
angels round my head (still guarding my bed)

I breathe the lapping moonlight.....paddle limbless in the blue
aquatic carcass of my youth submerged mother..
in genesis canoe
now I voyage onward immersed in birthing tide of tears
frothing foam from passage inward weeping through my bow of fears

entombed within my skin of my pebble seeds	scales scattered far	I SEE across my turquoise sea	I think I see
Atabeyra morphosed mandorla of milk and	becomes Mary nurturing silk in immaculate light	creoled caraval of white cocooned	
slowly I down through	plunge from my my watery	hollowed gate	prow
as islands rise	before my eyes in my wake then... a birth	my spirit escapes	
multiple martyred myopic bloodied ribs as cross of albatross blackened seeds mahogany fins	shackled	from thorny uterine cage criss-crossing waters of rage in suffocating tomb in scorching womb	
		melting	

Ezili writhing breathless in the name of God and Gold
 slithers skinless from within her leaden casket mold
Father to watch and Mother to pray, And two angels to bear me sold away

If I should die before I wake,
 from spiral chaos I journey on
 a sea change of ascension
 nursing my salty
 nestled in vessel under
 safe in my sandy Virgin
 hybrid pod sacred chamber
 then
 I swallow and I swell
 crack off my shell of private hell
 unravel the myriad layers of horror
 unveil the curse
 of ultimate sorrow
 and there below
 in my watery shrine
 my skin slips off
 in bubbles
 divine





Roberta Stoddart

Jamaica



I wish my work to give of itself in a pure and simple way. I am a storyteller who fleshes out what is most important to my heart. My paintings are often symbolic and allegorical, attempting to explore lived experience of both an autobiographical and social nature. There is a response in my work to the Gothic thread running through our Caribbean histories. Our landscapes are haunted by stories told and untold, and by stories denied. Understanding our histories; individual, national, and regional, gives us the courage to engage with the present and to create a future determined by our search for truth. My painting concerns itself with the potential rewards of metamorphosis. My subjects need not be viewed as victims, rather, they are involved in the search for an innocence in which lies emotional understanding and acceptance, and a different kind of strength.

The Abyss

and now let us bleed

what is clotted in fear
we shall let flow away
what is pure shall remain
we shall remember

is not the dream of every innocent
to live the life of the dead?

hero
idealist
visionary
regionalist

there is innocence in this
there is innocence in weeping
for the greatness of love

let us flood the ground with tears
let us drink the red blood of wounds
let us drink the Great Sadness
of the Abyss

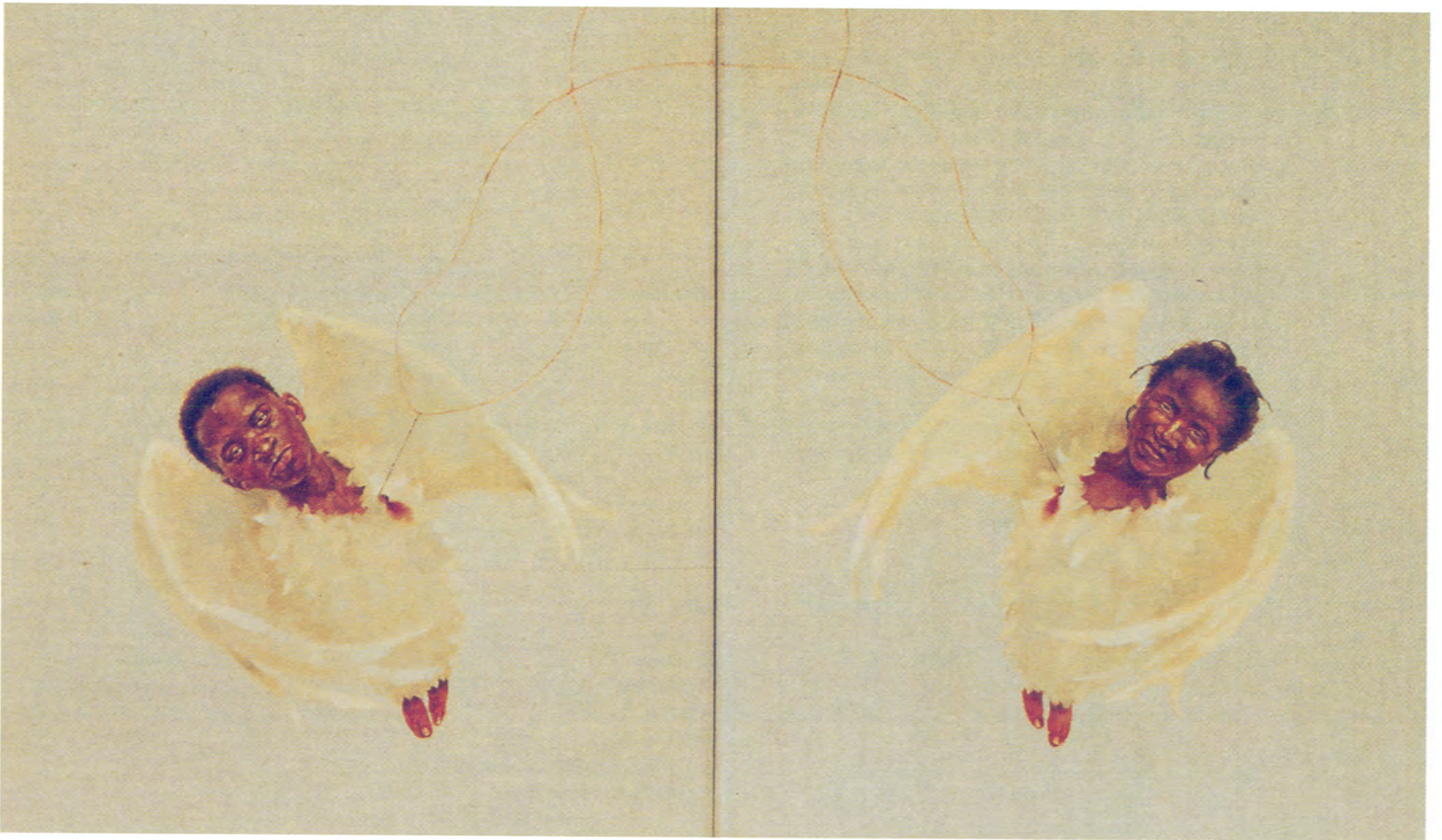
I embrace the heroes who have gone before me
who are here with me now
when I saw them
when I knew who they were
my heart opened and I fell
little feet falling in the huge space
into the Abyss
where what is what is not underfoot
is Greatness in the Nothingness
and in the fall.....

little ears hear the miracle of the silence
little hands light the spark that never goes out

let us drink the red blood of wounds
let us drink the Great Sadness
of the Abyss

hero
idealist
visionary
regionalist

there is innocence in this





Susan Dayal

Trinidad
& Tobago



I believe I expressed delight at being invited to participate in the exhibition Lips, Sticks and Marks. Not only is this an opportunity to play with the big girls, whose courage and determination I admire and whose work inspires, it is more importantly about seven women working individually but thinking collectively.

I do not dwell on the reality of male domination but I acknowledge its existence. The media colours our view on everything and it is rife with male biases. So we grow up with these ideas held as ideals and watch as they filter down to our behaviour and attitudes.

I recently met the first opposition to my work. A female viewer described my work as titillating and vulgar. Obviously I was offended. It struck me how deeply ingrained misogynous attitudes have affected us so that we cannot disassociate female nudity from obscenity.

This is why I feel that images of ourselves by ourselves are so important. We must reclaim that territory and be proud to say we have breasts, vaginas, hips and wombs. We must cease to measure our value on the measurements of Venus de Milo.

Even within the art world, work is measured against the tastes of the white European male (incidentally the same yardstick used for Venus de Milo). So, having this show originate from within the Caribbean and be curated by Caribbean women is an important and valuable change of focus.

So you can guess where my interests lie. My own work is inspired by "female culture" and Trinidadian culture, fashion, feminism, folklore, as well as Carnival. Many of my pieces are body related, some are wearable and some are not. I construct these "body masks" from materials not usually associated with clothing to explore notions of comfort and discomfort, liberation, constraint, power, subservience, protection, violation, beauty and sacrifice. These have been the messages behind the ideals of fashion and beauty for centuries.

Employing colour, texture, whimsical decorative elements and the use of wire is cultural. The basic structures beneath many of the first carnival costumes were of wire. These intricate skeletal frames constructed around the body are then embellished using fabric, sequins, papier mâché. These materials are not normally associated with "fine art" so the viewer must reassess her/his association between art and material.

The exercise of dressing up in these body masks and photographing myself in them is reminiscent of playing dress-up as a child. My performance before the camera is dictated by the costume and the photos help me to understand my new persona. Perhaps this role play is really an exercise in self-discovery.

However I describe my work, it is clear that different issues inform it. After all, I am a woman from the Caribbean.





Irénée Shaw

Trinidad
& Tobago



People deprived of their history can make up their own, and what better job can there be for an artist shifting through the anxieties of a Post-Colonial society, where the divide between myth and actual experience often disintegrates and we find ourselves in a unique contemporary space.

Over the years, I have been developing a series of self portraits which are highly personalised and subjective attempts at analysing the cultural climate in which I exist. While most times we are comfortable with the female face and figure being observed through various forms of art, in this work I am insisting that the person who has been observing her self (the subject) and the maker of the subject are the same. Because of this, I have concentrated on my own mirror image. I have gone further into this to the point that the investigations rarely shifted from my own body.

As a Caribbean person, in the the light of our historical circumstances, the assertion of my own narrative and presence is important. At one of my first exhibitions one viewer warily proclaimed, "Who she feel she is to paint she self on such a big canvas?! She must feel she is somebody" In my work I am responding to this self consciousness; this arena of doubt.

Traditionally, we have never completely controlled or had a share in the historical constructions or the configurations of mass-media that label us and therefore we always run the risk of being misrepresented. I recall being being told by a well respected artist that if I wanted to make "serious paintings", I had to avoid using too much colour. Needless to say, I did not buy this. I continue to challenge the notion that one has to live and work in a place covered by a grey haze to have a "real" and "serious" life. Years later I even found myself making a large black and white painting in response to this and then had fun decorating and violating it with beautiful pink and red artificial flowers.

So, I continue to desecrate canvas with my image of myself and its attendant decorations, trying to figure for myself who owns them and their meaning. This brings me to another arena where I have tried to synthesise forms that have traditionally been considered "low art". For example, in my work I am not worried by the usual association with domesticity because of the use of fabric, lace and artificial flowers as these are often some of the tools used to find a creative outlet within the confines of the domestic space. Groups of family portraits on top of a well crocheted centre piece are familiar altars of adoration to us all. I take the alleged lofty art practices such as figuration in oils on canvas and use the elements found in that female dominated interior world to contaminate the canvas with my singular vision. Out of this, the space from which my work evolves is defined.

These elements of self exploration in the work have continuously manifested themselves in what I call "visual dramas" in which the chief role was acted out by the artist herself. Now, they have evolved to enlist the assistance of archetypes who begin to carry the narrative - off the wall - into real space, even as they leave some of the

trappings of the introspective interior world behind. The "Queen of Grande Riviere" appears to disrupt the flatness of the supporting wall behind. It creates facets which seem to "face off" or mirror each portrait in which the gesture of her turning head is depicted. As your eye moves across each frame in this accordion like structure, I present her carrying her ceremonial bouquet through our life's emotional stages.

By enlisting models and painting on a life sized triangular shaped structure that borders on polychromed sculpture, Adam and Eve and their struggle become cast in a drama about my response to some of society's standard roles. As they are thrust into the viewer's physical space, they can also enlist them as other players in my psycho drama.

Even though the work has often shifted in and out of the third dimension before, the painted surface has now become another element in relation to the object status of the work. The object asserts an occupation of real space while at the same time combines it with a rendering of space that causes the viewer to have to deal with the visual sensation as well as the physical impact.

But all along, we, in places like this, have never had a problem taking what we need to "play a mas"; the individually created persona in the theater of the street that is Carnival. Be it a "Red Indian" or a "Fancy Sailor", the representation is inevitably transformed and now we find ourselves in a circumstance where to play yourself is the most popular part and one that is not limited merely to two days of carnival revelry.

The original significance of the role played is reconfigured to suit ones personal history, experiences, likes and dislikes. The creation of spectacle to rival any old Hollywood film is second nature to us in this process and the ultimate challenge for the real performer/creator has always been to assert their individual presence in space. This is why I like and I am drawn to the the idea of a "visual drama", the title of my last exhibition being 'Self Portrayals.'





Meeting History With Art: “The Myriad of Myself”

“Where yuh going?” they said. “This road not yours to walk. Go home to yuh big yard. That’s where yuh belong.”

“Tell History for me,” I said, “I not playing his game.”

They pulled off my disguise then, laughing so hard they could hardly stand up. But they only scratched my throat with the ratchet blade. Blood dulled the knife’s silver-edged glint.

“History say yuh can take yuh chances, but yuh can’t hide,” one said. “Your skin glitters bright in the dark. We can sight yuh anyweh yuh go.”

“I’ll zip out of it,” I said. “There’s an opening between my legs.” They only laughed more.

Well I did. Unzipped, I rose up flapping, high and cool as a kite. But I had no form. Unnamed, nameless, invisible, I floated over the landscape of burnt cane, over the all-inclusives and their swimming pools, over the markets and the stalls of jerk chicken. I looked down on everything. I was hungry but I couldn’t eat. I was tired but I couldn’t sleep. I was vulgar abstract. No context at all. It was like being trapped in a dream. “History,” I thought, “you win this first round.”

“History’s Posse” from (My Mother’s Last Dance) by Honor Ford-Smith

For someone from the peripheral quote unquote old world -- India to be precise -- where modernity is often in pitched battle with tradition, one of the great advantages of the Caribbean would appear to be its lack of suffocating “tradition”. A profoundly modern enterprise such as visual art could thus be free to take root and flourish in new and unexpected ways or so I thought (Irénée puts it particularly well: “People deprived of their history can make up their own, and what better job can there be for an artist?”). But in the absence of agonistic tradition there appears the vexed issue of identity and race. Who is entitled to make history in this “unique contemporary space”? To re-present it? To be the subject of it? Benitez-Rojo is right in saying that in the Caribbean skin colour “is a color neither of the Self nor of the Other; but rather a kind of no-man’s land where the permanent battle for the Caribbean Self’s fragmented identity is fought.” As this show makes its debut in Barbados where only recently there was tension about who was eligible to be national hero, I have no doubt that similar questions will be raised again.

Lips, Sticks and Marks is a re-presentation of Caribbean realities by “seven women working individually but thinking collectively” to quote Susie Dayal’s tidy phrase. The distinction made by Chris Cozier is important here. These women are not claiming to **represent** Caribbeanness but to **re-present** facets of it emerging from their own highly personal examinations of their inner and outer realities. Moreover this is a show whose scant regard for boundaries, borders, rules and other people’s traditions or innovations marks a significant break in many ways with what has gone before in the name of art in these islands. This is work that proudly wears its heart on its sleeve and is unafraid to proclaim the art of craft and the craft of art. Some of these women immerse themselves in “female culture” and produce in and out of it, others like Roberta Stoddart and Irénée Shaw seem to occupy their gender without being preoccupied by it. Annalee Davis’s work energetically explores the consequences of forms of womanhood--mother, wife, individual--while Susie Dayal interrogates and challenges notions of fashion, beauty and “art”. On a more exclusively spiritual level Osaira Muyale talks of “feeling clean” while Alida Martinez speaks of “searching in knowing clean water, Eternal transparency”. Joscelyn Gardner’s complex installation evokes Nina Simone’s powerful song about identity, “Four Women”, with its plaintive line “Whose little girl am I?”

Joscelyn’s “In the Chamber of My Birth” is an artful re-production of the rape of the Caribbean Basin. It is hard not to think of Benitez-Rojo’s “repeating island”, “the painfully delivered child of the Caribbean, whose vagina was stretched between

continental clamps”, “because Europe, in its mercantilist laboratory, conceived the project of inseminating the Caribbean womb with the blood of Africa.” Roberta’s “Black Pearls” is part of the same history “criss-crossing waters of rage, blackened seeds shackled in suffocating tomb” as Joscelyn puts it, adrift in the sea, amputated black penis, torn vaginal lips--the strange fruit of slavery. The Middle Passage as still life, a portrait of the beginning of modernity which is synonymous with the birth of the Caribbean archipelago.

Roberta’s work is remorselessly and unrepentantly descriptive but what is she describing? Is this landscape or mindscape? Or treacherous land-mined scape? What we do know is that this is Roberta’s reality/realism. A realism that is embodied in anthropomorphic, anthropological detail, in which vulnerability and metamorphosis are personified and look you in the eye. Her work subjectifies emotion. The recurring black subject in her paintings has exposed her to criticism for she is racially speaking, by and large, white. The intensely human faces in her mindscapes are the kind of face you would encounter in the streets of Kingston. Roberta is a true painter in the old style, her heroes are Caravaggio, Velazquez, and the more contemporary Lucian Freud.

Her lyrically epigrammatic “It must be a duppy or a gunman” foregrounds the church and its graveyard first encountered in “God’s Bride” a few years ago. The decrepit grill-work fencing the graveyard also fences the painting. Stray animals, dogs, goats, rats and bats encroach. The gravestones are dominos--a link to the popular--with pendant teardrops of blood oozing from the black holes which suggest bullet wounds. No one paints blood as exquisitely as Roberta and the bejewelled church and gravestones seem to emit an unholy glow. In the very centre of the graveyard and painting is a coffin with a small male body in it. “This is it this is it this is it, I’ve been hit” he seems to be saying, immediately creating a hyperlink to David Rudder’s Madman’s Rant and its visual version exhibited by Chris Cozier in early ‘98 in Port-of-Spain. As in other parts of the Caribbean gun violence has become a central figure stalking the Jamaican landscape. Blacks dominate this nightscape and the inside of the coffin/cradle encasing the dead man is a rich warm uterine red, suggesting pulsating life and rebirth rather than death. An allegorical story about the nation states of the Caribbean?

Taken all together, Joscelyn’s and Roberta’s work in this show represents a visual anthem, linking the past which haunts the Caribbean into its violent present. Wholeness and completion is to be attained by a “repeating voyage to myself.” In a way this is the thread that unites the work of these seven women. One senses the care and deliberate self-love with which they examine their interior spaces and turn these inside out for us, inviting us to participate in their explorations.

Osaira’s “Chance and Change” is a deep meditation on the power of water to cleanse and purify. On one level her work seems to be very personal, dealing with self-knowledge and conscious amendment of the self after ritual cleansing. But her body is also a metaphor for the body politic and there is more than a suggestion that her “letter to myself” so reminiscent of Joscelyn’s repeated “voyage to myself” is a message to wider society to purify and remake itself, to heal, to opt for health over sickness.

Alida’s cocoon-like image and the repeated wax-images of her face are intriguing as is the title of her piece “Beyond the Image”. Is there a flirtation here with the notion of “Imágo”, the “final and perfect form of an insect after it has been through its metamorphoses”? The perfect insect that emerges from chrysalis goes through a stage of being cocooned. What is being hatched in the securely bound cocoon of Alida’s body? Warmed by human heat and secured by nourishing fluid, this seems to be another riff on the theme of rebirth and new life in a new world. As Alida says, this work is all about identity and invites viewers to enter “in our own inner body that screams for understanding”.

Irénée Shaw’s “visual dramas” resonate with vigour and excitement. Her depiction of the 104-year old subject of the Queen of Grand Riviere as a commanding figure in the colours of life rather than death, threatening to “disrupt her supporting architecture” as she asserts her presence, is a good example of an artist choosing to invest an ordinary subject with great significance in the same way that some years ago she

painted the great Eric Williams as she saw him--a diminutive, brown figure. It is exciting to encounter intuitive vibrations and echoes between work by Caribbean artists, writers and singers across generations, national boundaries and aesthetic practices. In his celebrated *History of the Voice*, Kamau Brathwaite says "I shall end with the violet and red extremes of the spectrum", and goes on to describe "the beauty and power of Miss Queenie's language: she is after all, priestess, prophet and symbolist:". Miss Queenie, a kumina queen, is imaged in remarkably similar terms to Irénée's Grand Riviere, though one is a verbal portrait and the other visual.

Irénée's creations refuse to tamely occupy a wall space and Adam and Eve thrust themselves into our midst, life-size figures challenging us to recognise them, members of "the community of the painted". Adam astride an island hillscape, his own (forbidden?) fruit flanked by snake and scythe against an undergrowth of banana leaves is a welcome re-vision of the species' dominant creation myth. The unexpected tilts and angles signal Irénée's presence and you can almost see her peering back out of her work at you, caught in the act of manipulation, arms stretching out towards the viewer, pushing you, pulling you--now she's in your face, now she isn't.

Annalee Davis' extraordinary installation is a raw and visceral depiction of the wounds of modernity from the point of view of the female of the species. It is clear that what we are invited to partake of is a woman's attempt to come to terms with the "splikity-splakity-split" with her mate; the realisation that her "spiralling separate-ness" toward her "singular self" and their son's resulting "split sense of self" is a "screaming sacrilege". Modernity has meant a kind of liberation for many women, but it is a bittersweet freeing for it entails seemingly sacrilegious disruptions and distortions with blame for this "unholy" state of affairs often laid at the feet of women. The exhibition of the couple's wedding clothes, their son's baby clothes and the suspended "houses", thrusts before our eyes these symbols of domestic harmony while at the same time inviting us to sit down and listen to the circumstances of their disintegration and violation. For the many of us who have been confronted with the consequences of modernity this could be a catharsis, an invitation to "suture the shame and select the survival game" to paraphrase Annalee. Once again, Annalee's smoking alliterative text recalls Brathwaite and his lamentations during HIS "time of salt", "that time of alarm" when he lost his wife, Zea Mexican. She displays the same "nakedness of soul that is at once startling and illuminating." The difference is that as Gordon Rohlehr so perceptively noted, Brathwaite was writing from "within the silent howl and scream of the straitened man", Annalee however is not silent, although she too is articulating the howl and scream of the wounded. Whereas Irénée's constructions seem on the very verge of speech, Annalee's installations wilfully breach the realm of the visual to convey the "Antillean drama of anguish" which Rohlehr talked about in reference to Brathwaite's work.

It is only appropriate that the youngest artist in this show should introduce the theme of playful sexuality. Susie Dayal's tantalisingly titled "She Web" posits woman as aggressive temptress. Her use of wire as she says is cultural, meaning that being from Trinidad she is naturally drawn to the methodology of carnival costume, and she doesn't give a damn about a prevalent obsession with avoiding being mistaken for "kitsch". My personal view on this is that one woman's "kitsch" is another woman's la-di-da "quiche", in other words these are questions of taste, not art. Susie makes "body masks" in which the wearer can pose and play different roles and discover heretofore hidden personas. This is another way of making acquaintance with oneself in the sense that Osaira Muyale talks of. Isn't this the essence of playing Mas?

"In an ocean of veiling, wailing words" as Joscelyn's text goes. The move to accompany the show with texts by the artists is one I genuinely welcome. This is what art can be in the Caribee. What is remarkable about this show is the reaching out of these artists to one another and to a Caribbean audience. It is not at all surprising to me that it's a group of women artists that has decided to overcome the "separatist situation" seemingly imposed on us by our colonial histories, to give us a visual feast of the kind one would expect to find from a region with a culture of carnival. In literature one talks of the West Indian novel rather than the Barbadian novel, or the Grenadian novel or the St. Lucian novel, but in art one is confronted with Jamaican art for instance or Trinidadian art. At what point does an island become too small a dot to have an art of its own? It is profoundly odd that while something like the Faber

Caribbean Series is trying to break down the linguistic barriers that separate our literatures, art can still be corralled by language.

What makes this work Caribbean is not that it conforms to any stereotypes about how art from this region should or should not look. These women are not willing to play History's game and they refuse to be trapped in a dream. I keep quoting Brathwaite in relation to their work because he is the supreme practitioner of history as art (history as art is ART, not art history) and has largely been responsible for "the relocation of the archipelago in history; the redefinition of New World identities through the recognition and clarification of the seminal images and rhythms through which Caribbean peoples may now revision themselves, beyond the limitations of received stereotypes." Just like Brathwaite's work, *Lips, Sticks and Marks* offers "corridors through which stereotypes are revisited and experienced anew, modes of descent into self and into the formative historical experiences of a civilisation" (Rohlehr). And what's best, it scorns the uptight severity and reticence of high modern abstraction.

This is work fashioned in and by the Caribbean, work that offers "viable options for viewing ourselves". This work is not meant for viewing, or hanging on the wall; these are not semi-religious objects for visual contemplation but carefully orchestrated "experiences". Some playful, some contemplative, some more urgent and some cathartic. But they are all, thank goddess as Annalee would say, expressions of "the myriad of myself".

Annie Paul
5/8/1998

From The Inside Out

Traditionally, from within the cultural fortifications, the “expert men” continue to be busy talking at and around each other; dizzied by the remarkable spectacle of nationalist justifications and projections. In general terms, it has, all too often been a language about measuring, knowing and owning, representing rather than re-presenting.

Meanwhile, on the outside, between territories, I found myself moving through studios and exhibitions from Kingston to Oranjestad. I began to realise that these particular women were talking to and with each other and to us all. Their work expresses a casual indifference and consequently the option of a celebratory response to the overwhelming comfort and stagnation that stifled artistic possibility on the “inside”. **Lips, Sticks and Marks**, their eventual collaboration, is evidence of this process that has been going on since the early 90’s.

In Aruba, it became clearer in 1996 when I was fortunate enough to see the “Women in Evolution” exhibition. It consisted of the work of four Aruban artists, two of whom are participating in this exhibition. Like much of our contemporary work, the materials were domestic and co-opted from everyday life, the presentation and/or form was dispersed in space (the exhibition consisted of four installations) and the content was overtly biographical.

For us all the bold faced strategy of recording random or constructed reflections is an important means of asserting ourselves and declaring presence. In much of the the work, text and image become fused together as components of one symbolic mechanism. Perhaps it is our only defence against a historical and media construction that persistently renders us silent. Like the sentences that occur on surfaces in all our work, Osaira Muyale’s personal notations, once written to form a spiral on the floor, defined the shape or condition of that silence.

“Women in Evolution” was attempting to alter our perception of our relationship to the ordinary and the routine of everyday existence. Through this process of self-declaration, the artists’ relationship with the other individuals in their everyday lives provides a vantage point from which to reflect upon the social order, its structures and strictures. The works represent an assertion of presence that attempts to link the sociological, spiritual and biological realms or domains. It is about placing oneself in actual, cultural and historical space through personalised responses to the constructing of a symbolic language.

I felt that I had to say this because the primary negative response to contemporary art, and particularly that produced by these women, is aimed at their status as individuals and attempts to devalue their experience in defence of an unquestioned scramble to “fix” and also “fix” Caribbean identity.

I feel strongly that the texts and illustrations in this catalogue speak (or should speak) for themselves, but I do not mean that in the usual glib way. I think that this is so because the work asks questions about the spaces that we as contemporary artists are living in.

Some of us may be affronted as the work is not providing answers or simply illustrating the usual indigenous myths or justifications. But isn’t it important and necessary for art to be forcing us to ask questions and, as a result, attempting to usher us toward other issues and discourses that are derived from and driven by the work and our experience as individuals living and working here, today, in this location called the Caribbean?

I also think it is impossible to enter into an understanding of contemporary Caribbean art without an investigation of the issues being brought forward by these artists. As women, their work begins from a vantage point that is automatically outside of the usual configurations. Think of the many that secure easy support at home and abroad with stylistically pleasing and well rendered ethnic and anti-Colonial icons from island to island, still.

I don’t think that I am saying anything unique or very new. Many of the significant

players in the formation of contemporary Caribbean art have been women and many of the early protagonists in this narrative may have sublimated their individual desires or interests in favour of creating nationalist icons, often in Modernist stylisation. Recent generations have not taken on that responsibility or burden and have suffered significantly for this within the confines of these localised “pioneer” and developmental narratives.

As a result of this, I feel that exhibitions like **Lips, Sticks and Marks** also encourage us to re-evaluate the work of some of our predecessors. For example, Atteck of Trinidad painted many portraits of friends and relatives, but it is only her paintings of folk settings and festivals that had currency in the nationalist critique. While she herself might have (or might not?) functioned comfortably within that framework, what could be the other meanings to be derived from looking at her work with different expectations? It is certainly within this same frame work that value is often bestowed upon the work of Edna Manley of Jamaica or Amelia Pelaez of the Vanguardia movement in Cuba. This investigation could take us into an even broader re-evaluation.

I do not think exhibitions like this are about inclusion into or are in defiance of some kind of canon or order. None really exists, especially in the eastern Caribbean where most of these artists are living and working. Exhibitions like this may cause us to think more carefully because as we rush headlong into nationally driven art histories and justifications, we may also be in the business of obscuring the complete field of intentions that may reside in the creative pursuits of these individual artists, then and now.

Ultimately the work is about two things; the real configuration of what constitutes artistic investigation in the world today as well as its trajectory from this particular location.

Christopher Cozier
9/7/1998

List of Works

Alida Martinez: *Beyond The Image*, Mixed Media Installation, 39 1/2”H X 83”W 1998.
Photography: Jose M Fernandez.

Osaira Muyale: *Chance and Change*, Multi Media Installation, Dimensions Variable, 1998.
Photography: Jose M Fernandez.

Annalee Davis: *An Alliteration, A Soliloquy, and A Somewhat Sonnet*
Multi Media Installation, Dimensions Variable, 1998
Photography: Walter Bailey.

Joscelyn Gardner: *In The Chamber Of My Birth (a Repeating Voyage to my Self)*, Multi Media Installation, Dimensions Variable, 1998.
Photography: Ronnie Carrington.

Roberta Stoddart: *Black Pearls*, Oil On Linen, 40”HX48”W, 1998.
Learning How to Glide, Oil On Linen, Ten panels, Each panel 10”HX12”W, 1998.
It Must Be a Duppy Or a Gunman, Oil On Linen on Hardboard, 27 1/2”HX46”W, 1998.
Photography: Donette Zacca

Susan Dayal: *She-Web*, Galvanise wire, 24 x 27 x 15” 1998.
Self Portrait In She-Web 1, Silver gelatin print, 8 x 10” 1998.
Self Portrait In She-Web 2, Silver gelatin print, 8 x 10” 1998.
Pretending to be Prissy, Mixed media, 20 x 27 x 10” 1998.
Self Portrait In Prissy 1, Silver gelatin print, 8 x 10” 1998.
Self Portrait In Prissy 2, Silver gelatin print, 8 x 10” 1998
Photography: Susan Dayal.

Irénée Shaw: *Queen Of Grande Riviere*, Oil on Board, 3’H x 6’W x 16” Projected, 1998.
Adam, Oil on Board 6’H x 2’W x 24” Projected, 1998.
Eve, Oil On Board, 6’H x 2’W x 24” Projected, 1998.
Photography: Abigail Hadeed.

Lips, Sticks and Marks opens in Barbados at The Art Foundry on August 23 1998 until October 25 1998.

Mission Statement - It is the mission of The Art Foundry to provide professional regional and national artists with the physical facilities/curatorial services to exhibit new and innovative works of art. The Gallery will present and interpret contemporary Caribbean art through a schedule of diverse exhibitions which explore aesthetic, cultural and ideological issues. The Gallery's goal is to encourage such expression in the Caribbean and to foster links with the other arts - music, literature, drama and poetry. Director: Joscelyn Gardner.

Caribbean Contemporary Arts will host **Lips, Sticks and Marks** at The Museum of Port of Spain, Fort San Andres, South Quay, Port of Spain, Trinidad in their Contemporary Arts Programme 2, from November 24th until December 5th 1998. Caribbean Contemporary Arts is located at 39 Long Circular Road, P.O Box 3064, St. James, Trinidad and Tobago. Tel: 868 622 7402 Fax 868 622 5313 email: mail@caribbean-arts.com. Director: Charlotte Elias.

Lips, Sticks and Marks is a collective of works created by seven women from the Caribbean. The idea for this exhibition evolved out of a panel discussion that took place in Trinidad in January 1998. The pannellists, Annalee Davis, Alida Martinez and Irénée Shaw were establishing a context for Irénée's solo exhibition “Self Portrayals”, and made links between their works and those of Susie Dayal, Joscelyn Gardner, Osaira Muyale and Roberta Stoddart.

The web that holds these works together is one that intertwines notions of space and comfort zones.

These artists engage the viewers dis/comfort as they explore these notions of space: physical and psychological, interior and exterior; private and public, internal and external. After the presentation, the artists felt strongly that they should draw on the connections made that evening and create work that could be seen in one space, and that the show could travel to several countries in the region.

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