



A CHALLENGING ENDEAVOR

THE ARTS IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Inter-American Development Bank - IDB Cultural Center Art Gallery

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INTRODUCTION

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO holds a place of honor in the IDB family. In 1967, under the leadership of Prime Minister Eric Williams, it became the first English-speaking Caribbean country to join the Bank. Dr. Williams convinced the leaders of the former British West Indies that the fate of their newly independent nations rested with the Western Hemisphere, and he spearheaded their incorporation into the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Development Bank. We are now proud of having become the Caribbean's main development partner.

This exhibition gives us the added pleasure of displaying art from Trinidad and Tobago as part of the IDB's efforts to promote knowledge of its member countries. Our Cultural Center has already organized successful exhibits on other Caribbean countries—the Bahamas, Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Suriname.

We want to highlight the fact that the Caribbean, the region that is home to Trinidad and Tobago, is geographically, historically and ethnically complex. The interaction of these elements is reflected in the Caribbean's multidimensional culture, a prime example of which is Trinidad and Tobago.

The Caribbean comprises tiny and large islands as well as portions of countries and whole countries (Belize, Guyana, Suriname) and territories on the mainland of the Americas. It is home to the second oldest independent country in the hemisphere, Haiti (1804), and the youngest, Belize (1981), as well as many territories that never became independent, including the Netherlands Antilles, the French overseas territories, the U.S. Virgin Islands (once Danish), the British Virgin Islands and other British possessions, and Puerto Rico.

It is hard to imagine today that control over Caribbean shores and islands was decided for so many centuries by so many nations of the world. Spain, Britain, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, the United States and the Soviet Union all at one point or another tried to master or influence the Caribbean and ended being profoundly influenced by the region.

Columbus reached Trinidad on his third voyage in 1498. His discoveries goaded other European states to launch their own conquest not only of the Americas but of Africa and Asia as well. Among history's turning points, the sale of the Louisiana territory to the young United States, and with it France's relinquishment of its vast American empire, was triggered by the crushing defeat of Napoleon's armies in the slave revolt that won Haiti independence and made it the world's first black republic. Another consequence of Haiti's "Black Jacobins" uprising was that planters and slaves from the French Caribbean, including the Martinican parents of painter Michel Jean Cazabon, migrated in the final decades of the 18th century to Trinidad, where they made a major contribution to the island's economy and culture. Trinidad was ceded by Spain to Britain in 1802, just as many Caribbean islands and territories have changed hands following the hazards of economic and political competition and war.

This ceaseless movement of large groups of peoples among the Caribbean countries themselves and between the Caribbean and other regions of the world has contributed to the growth of a rich culture and a rigorous scholarship. Eric Williams, C.L.R. James, V.S. Naipaul and Michel Jean Cazabon, among others, typify this cosmopolitan outlook in Trinidad and Tobago, no matter how different their personal inspiration or medium of expression. I should also mention popular art forms such as calypso, limbo and steel band music.

It was in the historical maelstrom of the Caribbean that Trinidad and Tobago evolved, reflecting in its pluralistic art the influences of American Indians, Spaniards, Britons, French, Africans, East Indians (both Hindus and Muslims), Chinese, Portuguese, Lebanese, Syrians and others. At the time of independence, Dr. Williams noted that such a diverse nation as Trinidad and Tobago was an experiment with little precedent and no absolute assurances of success. Yet this year, Trinidad and Tobago turns a youthful and promising 40. Its income levels and social indicators are relatively high compared with many countries in the hemisphere. Political participation is lively and widespread, and the country is meeting the challenges of globalization through major efforts to improve the quality of its already excellent human resources. The IDB is proud to be Trinidad and Tobago's partner in development, and pleased to provide this opportunity to celebrate its culture.

MIRNA LIÉVANO DE MARQUES
IDB EXTERNAL RELATIONS ADVISOR



MICHEL JEAN CAZABON Cambridge Street



MICHEL JEAN CAZABON Sunset Rural Landscape

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The National Museum of Trinidad and Tobago is pleased to be associated with the IDB Cultural Center in mounting this exhibition. The showing captures the visual energy of some of the artistic masters of Trinidad and Tobago. It is also an excellent visual overview of the country's art from the mid-19th century, particularly that of one of our most celebrated painters, Michel Jean Cazabon.

The exhibition provides a deeper appreciation of the indigenous artistic expression found in the Caribbean, where over the past century artists have striven to create works that were distinct from certain Euro-centric examples. The works in the current exhibit are, therefore, richly imaginative material evidence of the cultural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago.

Our gratitude must go to Félix Angel and his team at the IDB Cultural Center, as well as to all who have helped to make this exhibition possible. It is presented for your enlightenment and pleasure.

VEL A. LEWIS
CURATOR OF MUSEUMS



MICHEL JEAN CAZABON Asphalt Lake



MICHEL JEAN CAZABON River Scene



MICHEL JEAN CAZABON River at St. Anns

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THE ARTS IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

This exhibition examines the development of the arts in Trinidad and Tobago as a result of the many forces that have interacted during the islands' colonial history. Those forces include the impact of cultural and economic dependency, the Spanish, English and French presence, a population transplanted from Africa, East Indies migrations, eventual independence, and the various political agendas generated by special ethnic interests.

In a society that must constantly reinvent itself—as has been the case of Trinidad and Tobago—there are often few attachments to the past. Under such circumstances, cultural expression serves to question or validate certain intellectual and political postures. By giving artists their place in society, art speaks loud and clear about the need for authenticity and clarifies a peoples' role in making their own history.

The first group of works in this exhibit comprises ten watercolors by the 19th century artist Michel Jean Cazabon, selected from the collection of the National Museum in Port of Spain.

The second group features paintings and sculptures by artists who came of age in the 1950s and are known as the pre-independence generation, what with official independence from England occurring on August 31, 1962. It also includes works by a post-independence generation not far removed in age, and more or less identified with the same concerns. Most works in this section come from the National Museum and the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.

The third part of the exhibit highlights artist LeRoy Clarke and his position in the country's art scene. Three of his paintings are shown. Clarke decided to divert from the path taken by the previous generation, not only in formal aspects but in conceptual and ideological terms as well. He embodies many of the concerns that originated in the revolts of 1970, concerns that in many ways contributed to the proclamation of the Republic on August 1, 1976.

The fourth portion of the exhibit features the work of younger artists such as Wendy Nanan, Christopher Cozier and Irénée Shaw. Their generation has helped art in Trinidad and Tobago make the transition to the 21st century, thus providing a sample of what the country can offer today at the international level.

The final part of the exhibit features artistic expressions associated with Carnival. Although the country's Mardi Gras has done much to portray an image of Trinidad and Tobago abroad with which not everyone agrees, Carnival nonetheless is important to tourism and the national economy. It has served as the vehicle for advancing the nation's music and for developing the steel pan, the only instrument invented in the 20th century.

The exhibit concentrates more on what is tangible than on what is speculative, using the works of the artists to make that point. It does not, of course, include all of the country's important artists, and its composition may in fact appear somewhat fragmentary. Yet, a shifting fragmentation has always been part of the fabric of society in Trinidad and Tobago. An utterly cohesive exhibit would be misleading, and ultimately perhaps a disservice to the significant individual artistic contributions shown here.



MICHEL JEAN CAZABON Pines House



MICHEL JEAN CAZABON House in Trinidad II

A CASE APART

Cultural uniqueness is the result of many factors that impact societal behavior and identity. The circumstances under which those factors play out foster a process of transformation, the direction of which may be altered as the various factors interact and new ones are added. Whatever the mix, the result is change.

In Trinidad and Tobago, finding and defining such an identity is elusive, to say the least. It is difficult to pinpoint the nation's permanent values and ideas, whether imposed or appropriated, and the resulting cultural expression that helps to define society. There has been persistent change seemingly for the mere sake of change. Traditions have not put down their roots, and in turn a certain disinterest in the past has become the norm that rules everyday experience.

What makes Trinidad and Tobago so unique when it comes to the arts (if not in other aspects as well) is its societal idiosyncrasies and its detachment from Anglo-Saxon traditions, or any other tradition for that matter. This unique separateness has been one of the islands' few constants over nearly 200 years. An understanding begins by recognizing that the various forces that interacted throughout colonial domination did not all come to Trinidad and Tobago from the same source, or with the same intensity. Even during the 1950s, when Trinidadian artists studied for the most part in England in the same schools with Jamaicans and Barbadians, there were factors that consistently prevented society from reaffirming a hegemonic tradition. Trinidad always had its own position toward the Commonwealth.

In 1532, Trinidad received its first Spanish Governor. In 1632, the Dutch, which were subjects of the Spanish Crown, rebelled against the empire and occupied the island. A "population document" issued by the King of Spain in 1783 made it possible for French planters to settle in Trinidad, and with them the first slaves, as well as freed slaves. Twenty years later the island became an official English possession with the signing of the Amiens Treaty with France. Tobago would not be officially annexed until 1899.

The presence of the Catholic French made a most decisive impact on the economic exploitation of the land and even explains many conservative aspects of Trinidadian society that endure today, including a particular vision of the arts. It is significant, for instance, that up until the first two decades of the 20th century, a large segment of the population was still educated in French. In fact, Michel Jean Cazabon was born in Trinidad but descended from a free colored community in Martinique that had settled in Trinidad at the end of the 18th century to develop a prosperous sugar industry.

There were also implications from the island's geographic proximity to the Latin American continent. Trinidad used to be attached to the Paria peninsula and was part of the Venezuela "Capitanía." Equally important is the effect of a large influx of Africans during the 18th century, and Indo-Asians during the 19th century, the latter lured to the island with the promise of work. The Indo-Asians included Muslims and Hindus, as well as a significant Chinese minority. Recent world events have shown that even in an environment of economic prosperity, time alone does not solve all the problems of cultural assimilation, adaptation and syncretism.

Any objective analysis of the relationship of art to these historical processes is difficult because there is to date no comprehensive compendium of art history in Trinidad and Tobago. The lack of such a study at the beginning of the 21st century reflects more than a casual disinterest on the part of the general public towards the arts. Social history is not an alien subject to English Caribbean intellectuals, as evidenced by any number of prestigious volumes, among the most notable two studies by Gordon Lewis, *Growth of the Modern West Indies* and *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought: The Historical Evolution of Caribbean Society in its Ideological Aspects, 1492-1900*. Eric Williams, the national hero who led the country for 20 years following independence, was himself a historian and political scientist. His collection of writings is impressive, as is the number of issues he dared to deal with, including his famous *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* (1962), and *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean, 1492-1969* (1970).

Trinidadian artists are open-minded and progressive, and one could say that proportionally, there is no other country in the Caribbean where so many of them write, teach and promote art. This despite the fact that practicing the arts has not been an easy occupation in Trinidad—which shows that a decent standard of living and state-protected social guarantees do not necessarily translate into development of a sophisticated and intellectually motivated social group. When the newly relocated Piarco Airport was recently inaugurated, for example, conspicuous was the fact that it did not contain a single commissioned work of art.

The economics regarding the visual arts were so alarming that last year the government implemented new incentives for the purchase of artworks at the corporate level, allowing businesses to deduct up to 150 percent of the actual expenditure up to TT\$300,000. Six months later, “galleries reported a significant lack of interest from the bigger players in the business community,” as reported on July 11, 2001 in the *Express*.

Perhaps those are some of the reasons why figures such as Nobel Laureates V.S. Naipaul and Derek Walcott left Trinidad and never returned. When he came to Washington in 2001 to present his book *Half a Life* at the IDB Cultural Center, Naipaul told *The Washington Post*: “I always wanted to be out in the grand world...I never wanted to be in that little island where I was born.”

The Trinidad Theater Workshop, founded 40 years ago by Derek Walcott in Port of Spain, has not been able to stay above board financially and does not even have a permanent headquarters. Some observers argue that more art education is necessary if the arts are to gain the support they need to survive.

“We do not need more local plays, we need better local plays and playwrights,” read a recent review by Raymond Ramcharitar in the *Express* about school plays and theater performances.

There are ongoing efforts to improve the situation. Geoffrey MacLean has researched Cazabon and other island artists. Ralph Baney is working on two books, one dedicated to his wife, the sculptress and printmaker Vera Baney, and the other about his own work as a sculptor. Carlisle Chang’s lawyer and long-time friend still keeps all his notes and papers. LeRoy Clarke is also working on his own book, and Nina Squires continues documenting her work as well as that of others. Vel Lewis, the curator of the National Museum, is working on a book dedicated to ten artists. Still, a comprehensive study paralleling Williams’ vision lies ahead.

MICHEL JEAN CAZABON

Born in 1813 near the port of San Fernando (the second largest city after Port of Spain), Michel Jean Cazabon went to England as a youth to be educated there. Later he studied art in Paris and traveled to Italy. He exhibited in Paris for a few years (1839, 1843-47) at Salon du Louvre and is believed to have been a disciple of Paul Delaroche. If this is true, he probably knew Charles Francois Daubigny, the French landscape artist who predates the Barbizon School. Cazabon's schooling is indeed that of French landscape painting and in this regard he shows great technical and stylistic proficiency. His most important client in Trinidad seems to have been Lord Harris, Trinidad's British Governor from 1848 to 1854. They met when Cazabon returned to Trinidad from Paris. In the years to come, the artist would complete 39 commissioned works related to the governor's work and personal life, including his wedding.

Cazabon produced a substantial number of works, including several series' of lithographs about Trinidad, Demerara and Martinique. His work is the most accurate and in some cases the only pictures of a time and place gone by, a window through which we see the brighter side of life and society in Trinidad and other Caribbean islands during the 19th century.

The current exhibit features only Cazabon's watercolors, the technique that best illustrates his talent as well as his romantic vision of the ideals of his day. Reality as a subject had begun to be appreciated in relation to nature and anthropologi-



MICHEL JEAN CAZABON Rural View from Sea

cal values, but Cazabon leaned toward a more traditional concept of interpreting them. His painting, as well as his ideas about art and its purpose, do not seem to have evolved over time. For these reasons, Cazabon's style can be characterized as documentary, even if that was not his original intention, and relates better to the style developed by traveling artists in the New World. Despite the beginning of movements in other directions in France, or as had happened already in Spain with Goya, for Cazabon and many others in the New World, accurate description was more important than any other social, formal or intellectual comment.

Cazabon overcame great social barriers, and from this point of view his life as an artist is remarkable. It is obvious that he felt closer to the wealthier and educated than to any other societal group. His talent, he decided, was better served if put at the service of a craft appreciated by those with the capacity to do so. He restrained himself from crossing over into intellectual or purely artistic pursuits. As Pat Bishop has put it bluntly, Cazabon's landscapes show no attempt to "render the local landscape in a manner related to new ways of seeing." One may add that neither do they demonstrate any interest in examining other layers of society aside from simply documenting them.

One must keep in mind that even for a person of Cazabon's abilities, making a living was not easy. In the colonies, the privileged represented a very small group. After ten years in Martinique, Cazabon returned to Trinidad in 1870 and continued to work until he died in 1888, plagued by economic difficulties. After his death, his work remained known only in the circles of those who employed his services. It has only been over the past ten years, thanks to the ingenuity of marketing, that his legacy has resurfaced as a source of pride of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.



MICHEL JEAN CAZABON Coast of La Brea

THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE GENERATION

Between Cazabon's death and the Second World War, the arts in Trinidad and Tobago seemed to enter a hiatus. Very little is known about artistic activity during this period, and even less has been found. An arts society did organize a 1939 exhibition that proved that art in Trinidad was not confined to the wealthy. But save for the work of Hugh Stollmeyer (1913-1981) and his short-lived "The Society of Trinidad Independents" (others list it as "The Society of Trinidadian Independence"), art was probably produced only at the grass-roots level. Stollmeyer was basically a self-taught artist (although he appears to have studied for a while at the Art Student's League in New York) whose presence at the time did not have the impact his work is now accorded. Some examples of his work are on exhibit at the National Museum in Trinidad.

The British colonial system did not encourage education in the arts in the Caribbean colonies. There was a privately sponsored Trinidad Art Society founded in the early 1940s by Sybil Atteck, Alice Pashley, H. May Johnson and Andrew Carr, the latter a historian. They followed the example set by "The Independents," hosting some cultural activities, including exhibitions by local artists who, although hardly professional, were interested in the visual arts.

In the early 1950s, Marguerite Wyke was one such promoter. She herself had artistic proclivities and worked in clay and glass, among other mediums. She was responsible for bringing the Barbadian artist Karl Broodhagen to Trinidad after he had spent a year (1952-1953) in England studying at Goldsmith College. Broodhagen gave a course on sculpture, a subject completely new in Trinidad. Broodhagen had gained notoriety for receiving a commission for a bust that was featured in an English film at the time.



MARGUERITE WYKE Steel Drums

Sybil Atteck (1911-1975) is one of the most historically important and prominent names in the arts of Trinidad of this period. She was of Chinese descent and was endowed with natural skills for drawing and watercolor, which enabled her to work for the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture. She went to England in 1938 and studied at the Regent Street Polytechnic in London. She also sojourned in Italy. In 1943, she became the founding member of the Trinidad Art Society. She traveled to Peru in 1946 to study Inca pottery and in 1948 studied briefly under Max Beckman at St. Louis University in the United States. Beckman's influence would be decisive in the development of her mature style, which at times appears abstract but never reaches that level. Many of her paintings are imbued with cultural references, as one can see in those included in this exhibit: "Indian Festival" (1959) and "Spirit of Carnival." She was active in the local arts scene as a lecturer and art educator in secondary schools. Her ample brushstroke and bold use of color evince great character and determination, and continue to serve as a fundamental reference point for the development of a contemporary generation of professional artists in Trinidad.

Through the Trinidad Art Society, the talent of Carlisle Chang (1921-2001) was brought to the attention of the British Council (the office in charge of cultural affairs in the colonies), which awarded him a scholarship to study in England. Except for the few with means, a scholarship was the only hope for an aspiring artist in those days to obtain some formal art education. Apart from the efforts of the Art Society, there were no art schools in Trinidad.

Chang is indisputably the outstanding figure from what is known as the pre-independence generation, a group of artists who came of age around the mid-1950s. He is probably the most profoundly versatile and articulate artist Trinidad produced in the 20th century, and indeed the most universal of his generation. Chang developed an expression devoid of ethnic references, a position that has drawn some criticism from those who wanted him to be more committed. He was the first West Indies artist to receive an award at a São Paulo Biennial, and in 1967



SYBIL ATTECK Indian Festival

he received the Hummingbird Medal (a Trinidad and Tobago National Award). He was active in the country's artistic community, and his endeavors extended to writing and researching history, although few of his many papers were published.

Chang seemed to have so much on his plate, trying to do it all in an environment that lacked practically everything. His case is not unique in Trinidad or Latin America, but what is extraordinary is the excellence and professionalism with which he so brilliantly undertook so many different endeavors. His resourcefulness allowed him incursions into many related disciplines, including mural relief (not always as satisfying as his painting work), ceramics, and stage and costume design for Carnival. He was more than qualified to teach at the university level, but bureaucratic restrictions related to his lack of certification prevented him from ever doing so, forcing him to make ends meet by providing private instruction.

Chang's early work betrays his English schooling, which was rather timid in those days when compared to other schools in Paris, Italy and Madrid. His teachers were Keith Ford, Hans Tisler and John Piper. Post-war college art education in England was less concerned with producing artists than with endowing students with a technical capacity with which they might make a living. This was particularly the case if the student came from the colonies. Chang developed a refined and intense yet almost unemotional mode of painting, unusual among the other English Caribbean artists of the period.

Different in Chang is his perception, and the delicate but effective use he makes of the technical elements. He uses thin and transparent layers of paint, very much in the tradition of English landscape painting, and employs the theoretical principles of conventional artistic education. From his figurative and analytical period of the 1950s—characterized by total control of form, muted color and well-structured composition—he moved as trends almost obliged into a more international type of abstraction in the 1960s. But the demeanor of his abstraction is introspective. His themes, like most artists in Trinidad, were always taken from the environment around him. He avoided dramatizing the transcendental. It is clear that themes



CARLISLE CHANG Venezuelan Falooch



SYBIL ATTECK Spirit of Carnival



RALPH BANEY Family Group

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Trinidad is the southernmost jewel in the string of islands that stretch from the Orinoco delta to Florida and form the eastern boundary of the Caribbean Sea. It is only 11 kms off the coast of Venezuela. The much smaller Tobago lies off Trinidad's northeast coast.

The densely populated country, one of the youngest in the hemisphere, has an area of 5,128 square kms and a population of 1.3 million. Its capital is Port of Spain, originally Puerto España. San Fernando, the main industrial center, is the second largest city.

Christopher Columbus arrived in Trinidad in 1498 on his third voyage to the New World. He found it inhabited by Arawaks and Caribs who had migrated from South America. Over the century that followed, the Spaniards colonized Trinidad and enslaved the Indians to work on their tobacco and cacao plantations. In 1783, Spain began to encourage the immigration of Roman Catholics, mostly French, from other Caribbean islands such as Grenada, which was ceded by France to Britain that year, and Haiti, where a slave revolt broke out in 1791. Trinidad's economy became mainly based on sugar and cotton produced on plantations worked by African slaves. Britain seized Trinidad in 1797 and obtained its formal cession from Spain in 1802. The abolition of slavery in 1834 produced a scarcity of labor that led, starting in 1845, to the immigration of indentured workers, mainly from northern India. Immigrants also included some Portuguese, Syrians, Lebanese and Chinese. Tobago was alternatively controlled by the Netherlands, France and Britain, which took it in 1814 and annexed it to Trinidad in 1889.

Trinidad and Tobago achieved independence from Britain in 1962 after the failed attempt at the West Indies Federation with nine other British West Indian territories. A member of the British Commonwealth, Trinidad and Tobago became a republic in 1976.

The population shows significant diversity. People of East Indian and African descent represent approximately 40 percent each; those of mixed race, 18 percent; whites, 0.6 percent; and others, 1.2 percent. Religious affiliation reflects that diversity: Roman Catholic, 29.4 percent; Hindu, 23.8 percent; Anglican, 10.9 percent; Muslim, 5.8 percent; Presbyterian, 3.4 percent; and others, 26.7 percent. English is the official language. Hindi and some French Creole and other languages and dialects are spoken in selected small communities.

The economy today is dominated by oil and gas production and refining as well as petrochemicals. Tourism is growing. Income per capita is \$9,500 (based on purchasing power parity). Trinidad and Tobago's per capita income is the eighth highest in all of Latin America and the Caribbean. In the Caribbean, only the Bahamas and Barbados have higher per capita incomes. Over the past decade, economic growth has averaged 3 percent per year and growth in per capita income around 2.3 percent. Exports of goods and services reached \$4.8 billion in 2000 and imports \$3.9 billion. Life expectancy at birth is over 74 years and literacy is virtually universal.

CULTURE

Although the Caribbean has been relatively successful in making the transition to a world of global production and trade, its history has been mixed in terms of economic and social development. The region has suffered from colonialism, genocide, slavery, racial conflict, neglected social and political needs, and revolution and dictatorship.

These experiences have influenced the perspectives not only of historians, sociologists, economists and political and religious leaders, but also writers, artisans, painters, sculptors and musicians. It is no accident that calypso, the best known of Trinidad's popular arts, was born among slaves as a form of social protest, much as reggae was in Jamaica a century and a half later.

Against this background, it is only natural that Trinidad and Tobago produced the philosopher and statesman Eric Eustace Williams (1911-1981), a world-class historian and social analyst who became the country's Prime Minister and led it to independence. His books included *Capitalism and Slavery*, a path breaking thesis on the economic rationale that defined relations between Europe, the Americas, the Caribbean and Africa. The country had another remarkable historian of a different political persuasion in Cyril Lionel Robert James (1901-1989), author of *The Black Jacobins*, a gripping account of the Haitian slave revolt that defeated Napoleon's best generals and established the world's first black republic.

Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul (b. 1932) is hailed as one of the great modern novelists in the English language. His first books—*The Mystic Masseur*, *Miguel Street*, *The Suffrage of Elvira*, and *A House for Mr. Biswas*—are poignant and humorous portraits of life in Trinidad. As has happened with many Caribbean intellectuals, Naipaul's emigration to the United Kingdom and his subsequent travels eventually shifted the focus of his work away from his homeland. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001.

Samuel Dickson Selvon (1923-1994) wrote bittersweet chronicles of the West Indian experience in Britain that include *The Lonely Londoners*. Other renowned Trinidadian writers are Alfred Hubert Mendes, Ralph de Boissiere and, more recently, Earl Lovelace, Merle Hodge and Vikiadhar Shiva Naipaul (brother of Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul).

Trinidad's cultural diversity is seen in its popular festivals and celebrations, including Carnival and Divali. By far the most heralded, Carnival is a close relative of the ancient Roman celebration that has endured mostly in Catholic societies from Europe to New Orleans and Rio de Janeiro. Divali (or Dipavali, which means "row of lighted lamps") is the ancient Festival of Light in which Hindus celebrate the goddess Lakshmi Mata to signal the triumph of light, good and justice over darkness, evil and injustice.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO AND THE IDB

Eric Williams was a visionary who understood that the destiny of the former British West Indies was bound with that of the Western Hemisphere. He led the incorporation of the English-speaking Caribbean into the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Development Bank, of which Trinidad and Tobago became a member in 1967. The IDB eventually became the largest multilateral development partner of the Caribbean countries. Between 1970 and 2001, the IDB approved nearly \$1 billion in loans and grants for Trinidad and Tobago, including resources from the Inter-American Investment Corporation and the Multilateral Investment Fund, both members of the IDB Group. IDB funding was channeled to energy, transportation, education, health, urban housing and development, reform and modernization of the state, agriculture, pre-investment activities, sanitation, microenterprise, export promotion, and environmental protection. MIF grants have focused on regulatory reforms of utilities and financial services, while the IIC has supported financing for small and medium-sized companies.

CARLOS BREZINA

were just the motivation to contextualize a higher visual code, and to demand more from his own perception and enrich the perceptions of those around him.

Chang became the most sought-after artist for public and corporate commissions during the 1960s. His development as a painter ascended with the same stature one would have imagined for such a delicate sensibility. His reputation, however, was not enough to save his mural "Inherent Nobility of Man," commissioned in 1962 for Trinidad's International Airport but destroyed during expansion of the airport in 1977. The clumsy destruction of this important work was enough to halt his career, despite the artistic community's outcry and the public indignation it created. The controversy came only a year after the declaration of the Republic and during a period of unparalleled economic buoyancy that was the envy of the entire Commonwealth. The erratic and inconsequential nature of the whole affair sent a disturbing message to the cultural community, auguring more difficult times ahead.

Mohammed Pharouk Alladin (1919-1980) was another forerunner of mid-20th century art in Trinidad. He became active in Port of Spain around 1944 through the Trinidad Art Society, which helped him obtain a scholarship from the British Council to study at the Birmingham College of Arts and Crafts in England. He later earned a Masters degree at Columbia University in New York. He was committed to education, and for many years served as the director of culture at the Ministry of Education and Culture. Like many of his peers, he sympathized with those who favored more significant independence. In time, his work would explore other visual venues, such as the compositions of geometric character inspired in super-imposed palm tree leaves that he produced toward the end of his career.

The establishment in 1955 by Eric Williams of the People's National Movement (PNM) was a turning point in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. A new



M.P. ALLADIN Carnival

moment seemed to arrive as well for the arts. Williams was an extraordinary leader who was educated at Oxford in England and at Howard University in Washington, D.C. He became Prime Minister in 1962 and remained in office for 19 years. He advocated a form of empirical socialism, emphasizing education and social services, and controlled foreign investment capital. In the years prior to independence, Margaret Wyke had become a PNM senator and was able to formalize at the local government level the first scholarship program to support promising young artists.

The sculptor Ralph Baney (b. 1929) was the first artist in Trinidad to receive such a scholarship. After returning from England, where he spent five years (1957-1962) at the Brighton College of Art in Sussex, Baney felt that he had to give back to his people part of what he had received. Under the supervision of Alladin, for whose office he worked, he set up a space in his home town of San Fernando to allow for local artists to show their work. According to Baney himself, the success of his initiative diverted for a while the attention of the art scene from Port Spain to San Fernando—a sign both of how weak activity was in the capital, and of how eager those attracted to the visual arts were to go wherever the action was. At a time when being invited to an international event was in itself an overwhelming distinction, Baney was included in the 1967 and 1969 São Paulo Biennials and the Montreal Expo '67 in Canada. Eventually he pursued further studies at Alfred University in New York, obtained a Masters in Fine Arts at the University of Maryland in 1974, and then a Doctorate in Art Education in 1980.

The current exhibit includes "Family Group," a piece representative of Baney's early work, and a 1998 piece entitled "Standing Female Figure." Taken together, the two works make it possible to appreciate the transformation of Baney's work over the years.



WILLIE CHEN Village Shacks



SONNYLAL RAMBISOON Swinging



NINA SQUIRES Panorama

Nina Squires (1929) came to the visual arts as a result of life's circumstances. She had trained as a librarian in Trinidad through the British Council before moving to London in 1951. Money was short during the post-war years, and she had to work a variety of jobs to make ends meet. She met Jamaican painter Gloria Escofaree, who introduced her to the city's art galleries, but it was Barbadian sculptor Karl Broodhagen who convinced her to attend night classes at the Hammer-smith School of Arts and Crafts, where she studied under the British portrait painter, Ruskin Spear.

Upon her return to Trinidad in 1955, Squires began painting seriously. Her first painting was awarded a prize in the Alcoa competition, one of several cultural programs sponsored by multinational corporations throughout the hemisphere. The winning entries configured an exhibit that traveled to 14 Caribbean countries and was later presented in New York and Washington, D.C. She later became the Cultural Specialist at the U.S. Embassy in Port of Spain, a position she held for 22 years.

Recognizing that Trinidad had not a single commercial art gallery, Squires opened her own, Nina's Art Gallery, in 1961. (Some years later, Sybil Atteck and Carlisle Chang opened their own as well.) Squires continued to promote art and in 1986 was instrumental in convincing the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago to purchase a set of paintings by Atteck. "Spirit of Carnival" is one of those works. Squires recommended Rambissoon for the graphic portfolio of Cartón de Venezuela, and established an exhibition space at the embassy where young artists such as Christopher Cozier were able to show their works. Squires was included in the delegation representing Trinidad and Tobago at the São Paulo Biennials of 1963, 1973 and 1975.



LEO GLASGOW The Palms



ISAIAH J. BOODHOO Rain



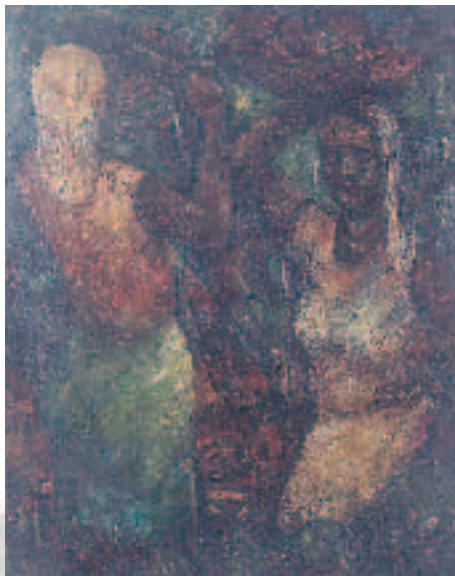
ISAIAH J. BOODHOO A Landscape with Trees

Following her retirement from the embassy, Squires moved to the United States, where she has continued to paint and document the development of the arts in Trinidad. Her strong stained glass-like style has remained unchanged throughout the years, with an uninhibited personality and a straight, linear and rhythmical structure.

Isaiah James Boodhoo (1932) was also a beneficiary of a PNM scholarship to study at Brighton College, from where he returned in 1964. In 1968, he became acquainted with abstract expressionists and pop artists while attending Indiana University. His work has journeyed from the more or less uniform representational style of the 1950s to abstract, and then back to figurative. His painting is emotional, lyrical at times, and has a high literary content. During the past 20 years, when the East Indian community in Trinidad and Tobago has gained so much political and economic power, he has been able to develop a loyal and admiring public, and is one of the few artists from the islands who has been financially successful.

Many of the artists from Trinidad and Tobago during this period participated in a number of regional and international events and continued to be honored for their work. In addition to showing at the São Paulo Biennials and the Alcoa and Esso art competitions, several of the artists were invited at one time or another to exhibit at the Organization of American States in Washington, D.C., under the sponsorship of the OAS Visual Arts Program, which enjoyed particular prestige during the 1950s and 1960s.

The period when Trinidad and Tobago moved to become a newly independent republic coincided with the international abstract movement in the arts. However much they might have been briefly influenced by this trend, Atteck, Chang,



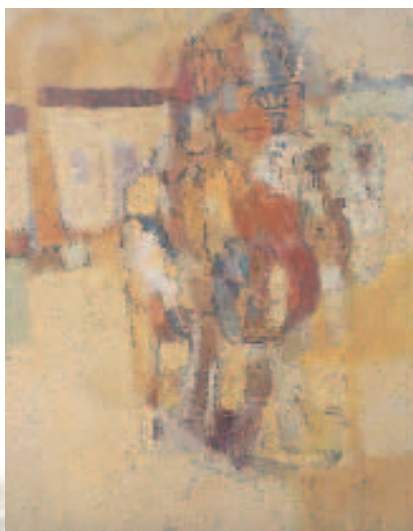
ALEXIS BAILLIE Cocoa Pickers

Alladin, Baney, Squire, Boodhoo and their contemporaries did not make any fundamental changes to their work. Most soon returned to figurative work.

Meanwhile, a slightly younger generation that had come up somewhat in the shadow of these artists began to gain more attention. These include the painters Leo Glasgow (whose style is the closest to Chang), the batik artist Althea Bastien (1933), and printmaker Sonnylal Rambissoon (1926-1995). At this juncture there was something of a diversification of the artistic disciplines, as well as the beginning of serious collecting. Government and businesses—including the Trinidad and Tobago Central Bank and the Trinidad Hilton Hotel—began to incorporate art into their environments and show support for the islands' vibrant and determined artistic community.

Appreciation of the visual arts in Trinidad, however, did not advance as fast as other more materially oriented undertakings. Making a living as an artist continued to be (and still is) difficult, except for those who produce the kinds of images for purchase by tourists. Concessions often had to be made in order to receive commissions, and even commercial art galleries turned to promoting decorative art in order to survive.

In the years following independence and prior to the birth of the Republic in 1976, there was a rejuvenated and militant feeling of awareness about cultural ancestry. This awareness was taken up most outspokenly by the younger generation, in particular those of African descent. Events in the United States no doubt had an impact throughout the Caribbean region. Although Trinidad had evolved into a multicultural society, unrest there in 1970 made evident the black population's desire to grab a larger share of power.



ISAIAH J. BOODHOO Hosay Drummers

LEROY CLARKE

In the years following independence, Trinidad and Tobago became more keenly aware of being a multicultural society. There was growing interest in cultural ancestry, particularly among islanders of African descent. Black Trinidadians began to demand greater participation in the country's political and economic structure, a movement with which some artists openly identified. LeRoy Clarke (1938) was among them, and he became one of the most visible figures of the period.

At the end of the 1960s, Clarke realized that the time had come to reformulate the aesthetics of art in Trinidad. Much more was needed to develop an art that was rooted in fundamental aspects of the country's day-to-day life, much of which had to do with African traditions.

"A place exists not only in the mind, but when it is described and the descriptions are preserved," stated Clarke. "Trinidad has been around for almost 500 years, but we have no recollection of ourselves. We have no archives of any kind in Trinidad, and the same applies to culture. Culture appears and disappears, like Cazabon. I think it is part of the enigmatic quality of the atmosphere here. The country as a cultural entity is just beginning to materialize in the work of some contemporary artists and writers. That is why it is so difficult to live and work in Trinidad, and why it takes a great deal of self-reassurance to stay, as I have done."

This new cultural awareness spurred by independence led many artists including Clarke to search for new horizons in the United States instead of making the traditional pilgrimage to England. The United States had recently begun to adopt new social codes regarding racial integration and human rights. Clarke discovered the work of such artists as Wifredo Lam and Roberto Matta not in Latin America but in New York. They exerted a marked influence on him and spurred the search for African ancestry so important to him personally, and so critical to break-



LEROY CLARKE Labyrinth of Yet in Wait

ing the stylistic hegemony of his predecessors. The influence of Lam and Matta on Clarke's painting can be detected in both the formal and conceptual. Over the past decade, he has evolved into more symbolic imagery, something he feels is lacking in Trinidadian art.

Somehow, Trinidadians descending from Indian and Indo-Asian ancestry came to be similarly inspired. Boodhoo, the artist who still attracts the larger constituency among East Indians, seemed to discover social commentary as a viable vehicle to regenerate the language of painting. Perhaps not coincidentally, his time in the United States coincided with that of Clarke.



LEROY CLARKE What the Work Secretes



LEROY CLARKE We Who Will Greet You

THE LATEST GENERATION

In the 1990s, a newer generation of artists such as Wendy Nanan (1955) and Christopher Cozier (1959) and his wife Irénée Shaw set new directions for the visual arts and ushered the arts of Trinidad and Tobago into the 21st century. Nanan's piece selected for the exhibition, "Idyllic Marriage" (1997), makes reference to her East Indian heritage and its inherent social codes. Her works often make use of such materials as papier mâché, brass and copper, and she frequently uses unconventional formats that balance both earthly and spiritual notions.

Cozier obtained a Bachelor's degree at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore and a Masters from Rutgers University, where he also studied art criticism. His two drawings selected for this exhibition were made at different times and reflect different approaches. "Man Running" (1997) served as the precursor of "Sound System," a multimedia project presented in Rotterdam last year. "Voice" (2000) is a lithograph produced during Cozier's three-month stay at the Bag Factory in Johannesburg. South African journalist Alex Dood writes that Cozier "addresses issues such as poverty, political and spiritual domination...and seething resentments arising out of our dark histories...Beyond the bold and often messy aesthetics of reactive anger, his subtle images invite you into a space where he asks pointed but humble questions about humanity, about where you stand, or fall."

Irénée Shaw has developed a series of self-portraits to explore her cultural climate. "As a Caribbean person and in light of our historical circumstances, the assertion of my own narrative and presence is important...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 reality often disintegrates and we find ourselves in a unique contemporary space."



IRÉNÉE SHAW Self-Portrait



WENDY NANAN Idyllic Marriage



CHRISTOPHER COZIER Voice



CHRISTOPHER COZIER Man Running

CARNIVAL

For almost half a century, Trinidad and Tobago's famous Carnival has been an extraordinary yearly event that schedules the behavioral calendar of a great segment of the population. As a socio-cultural manifestation, Carnival is impossible to overlook in terms of being a collective expression of Trinidadian society. The celebration is a societal vehicle through which the people of the islands can express their culture, often reflecting expectations and feelings that would be difficult to express individually.

French immigrants who brought the Roman Catholic adaptation of the original pagan festival probably introduced the customs of Carnival to Trinidad. Carnival is officially celebrated between the Sunday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, making it Trinidad and Tobago's Mardi Gras. However, celebrations of all kinds begin a month earlier as artists, designers, musicians and people from nearly every other walk of life prepare for the event. Carnival combines performing (music, mime, speech and dance) and visual arts (shape, form, color, structure, design).

Despite the great success of Peter Minshall, who has been able to stage his monumental presentations at the Pan-American and Olympic games as well as the São Paulo Biennial, not everyone agrees with the direction that Carnival has taken.



PETER MINSHALL
Papier-mâché carnival masks

"Carnival polarizes the energy of the visual arts," maintains LeRoy Clarke. "For that reason, popular taste has not been able to move forward but rather laterally, creating a deceiving feeling that nothing else is necessary, and that visual education needs no other challenge."

Carnival is particularly tied to music. Like many rhythms that had their roots among marginalized populations—the tango in Buenos Aires and jazz in New Orleans, for example—calypso originated in the West Indies at the end of the 18th century among slaves who improvised French Creole songs. Calypso gained recognition in Trinidad as a national art form at the end of the 1940s. Carnival and the activities surrounding it depend on calypso for the Road March, the main procession that is the focus of the event. The instrument so important to calypso—the steel pan—originated in Trinidad when musicians began using the bottoms of oil barrels to improvise a marimba-like sound. At Carnival, entire bands of steel pans accompany the floats.

This exhibition includes a steel pan, cement figurines that illustrate the evolution of the instruments, and masks associated with Carnival celebrations, all from the collection of the National Museum.

FÉLIX ANGEL
CURATOR



VINCENT POMPEY AND RAPHAEL SAMUEL
Concrete figurines depicting variations of the steel pan

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

*From the Collection of
the National Museum of
Trinidad and Tobago*

Michel Jean Cazabon
Coast of La Brea
Undated
Oil
19.5" x 16"

Michel Jean Cazabon
Asphalt Lake
Undated
Watercolor
22.5" x 16"

Michel Jean Cazabon
Sunset Rural Landscape
Undated
22.5" x 16.5"

Michel Jean Cazabon
River Scene, Trinidad
Undated
21" x 15"

Michel Jean Cazabon
Cambridge Street, P.O.S
Undated
21" x 15"

Michel Jean Cazabon
River at St. Anns
Undated
21" x 15"

Michel Jean Cazabon
Pines House
Undated
21" x 15"

Michel Jean Cazabon
The Cottage, St. Anns
Undated
21" x 15"

Michel Jean Cazabon
House in Trinidad II
Undated
21" x 15"

Michel Jean Cazabon
Rural View from Sea
Undated
21" x 15"

Nina Squires
Panorama
1971

Acrylic
29.5" x 40.5"

Isaiah J. Boodhoo
Hosay Drummers
Undated
Oil
32.25" x 27.5"

Jude Richardson
Blue Roof
1991
Oil
35.75" x 24"

Wendy Nanan
Idyllic Marriage
1990
Mixed
72.2" x 24.5"

Marguerite Wyke
Steel Drums
Undated
Print
23.5" x 18"

M.P. Alladin
Carnival
1956
Acrylic
42" x 52.5"

Sybil Atteck
Indian Festival
1959
Oil
43.5" x 54.5"

Carlisle Chang
Venezuelan Falooch
1955
Oil
32.5" x 40.5"

Alexis Baillie
Cocoa Pickers
1962
Oil
39.5" x 44.5"

Willie Chen
Village Shacks
1962
Oil
27.3" x 32.8"

*The property of artist
LeRoy Clarke*

LeRoy Clarke
We Who Will Greet You
1995
Oil
30" x 30"

LeRoy Clarke
What the Work Secretes
1995
Oil
36" x 36"

LeRoy Clarke
Labyrinth of Yet in Wait
 1990
 Oil
 66" x 84.5"

*From the Collection of the
 Central Bank of Trinidad
 and Tobago*

Isaiah J. Boodboo
Rain
 c. 1995
 Oil
 35.5" x 41.75"

Isaiah J. Boodboo
A Landscape with Trees
 1966
 Oil
 29.5" x 35.5"

Sybil Atteck
Spirit of Carnival
 c. 1975
 Acrylic
 66.5" x 29.5"

Leo Glasgow
Caribbean Landscape
 1991
 Oil
 48" x 36"

Leo Glasgow
The Palms
 c. 1985
 Oil
 23.5" x 31.5"

Carlisle Chang
Woman with Chickens
 c. 1975
 Oil
 23.5" x 35"

Ralph Baney
Family Group
 c. 1965
 Wood
 39" x 9" x 7.5"

Sonnylal Rambissoon
Swinging
 1967
 Etching
 15.5" x 21.25"

*The property of artist
 Christopher Cozier*

Christopher Cozier
Man Running
 1997
 Mixed media
 Approx. 5 x 6 feet

Christopher Cozier
Voice
 2000
 Mixed media
 Approx. 6 x 5 feet

*From the collection of the
 Inter-American
 Development Bank*

Christopher Cozier
About Balance
 2001
 Silkscreen
 27 3/4" x 39 1/4"

*The property of artist
 Irénée Shaw*

Irénée Shaw
Self-Portrait
 2000
 Oil on canvas
 31 7/8" x 31 7/8"

*Carnival related items from
 the Collection of the National
 Museum of Trinidad and
 Tobago*

Carnival items
*Papier-mâché masks
 by Peter Minshall and
 concrete figurines depicting
 variations of the steel pan
 by Vincent Pompey and
 Raphael Samuel*
 Undated
 Mixed media

*The property of artist
 Ralph Baney*

Standing Female Figure
 1998
 Walnut and rope
 Height: 48"

*The property of artist
 Nina Squires*

Ginger Lillies
 1971
 Oil on masonite
 28 1/2" x 24"

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