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Contact: Greg Svitil

gsvitil@oas.org

Tel. (202) 458-6016

www.museum.oas.org

Wrestling with the Image: Caribbean Interventions

On view January 21-March 10, 2011

Art Museum of the Americas

201 18th Street, NW Washington, DC 20006

Hours: Tuesday-Sunday 10 AM-5 PM

Friday, January 21 at 5:30pm:

Gallery talk and exhibition preview

Friday, January 21 at 6:30pm: Opening reception

Friday, March 4: student symposium on Caribbean art in conjunction with George Mason University and Caribbean in Transit Journal

March 1-10: Caribbean film series

The Art Museum of the Americas (AMA) announces the opening of *Wrestling with the Image: Caribbean Interventions*, an exhibition of contemporary art from twelve Caribbean countries. Featuring work by artists from the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago, the exhibition is curated by artist and curator Christopher Cozier and art historian Tatiana Flores.

Wrestling with the Image: Caribbean Interventions

presents works in a variety of media, including photography, video, painting, graphic arts, sculpture, and installation. The scope of the objects demonstrates how the region's contemporary artists are confronting stereotypes about the Caribbean without denying their own surroundings or rejecting the worlds in which they operate. Through investigations on history, tourism, globalization, popular culture, and gender, these artists urge us to reconsider our own expectations on how a Caribbean image should look.

Characterized by scholars as "the laboratory of globalization," the Caribbean is a multifaceted locale that transcends geographic boundaries. Its culture has European, African, Asian, Latin American, and Native American roots. It is not surprising, then, that several artists in the exhibition explore themes of



migration, the spread of culture, and global citizenship. For co-curator Christopher Cozier, “this is a conversation about movement in the Atlantic world—a dialogue about dispersal rather than displacement.” Many of the artists themselves no longer live in the Caribbean, residing in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Asia; nevertheless, their experiences are the result of complex historical, economic, and cultural processes that are part and parcel of what it means to be Caribbean.

Past and present, local and universal, and self and other are among the dichotomies addressed in this exhibition. Marlon James’ blunt and direct portraits depict young people who look like they could be from anywhere. Ebony Patterson’s provocative portrayals derived from Jamaican dancehall culture—with its ironic face bleaching and androgynous fashions—are equally global. By contrast, Joscelyn Gardner engages the historical archive. Her series of hand-painted stone lithographs *Creole Portraits III* pays tribute to faceless women victims of slavery by depicting a typical African hairstyle juxtaposed to an iron collar. Among other images conjuring colonial history is Nikolai Noel’s drawing *Toussaint et George*, in which Haitian liberator Toussaint L’Ouverture and George Washington seem to stare each other down on equal footing.

In John Cox’ paintings of boxers, the notion of the prize fighter as confident and infallibly masculine is turned on its side. The works introduce unresolved tensions by depicting subjects fighting against their doppelgangers or striking their own faces. Heino Schmid challenges that status of the image as a conveyor of meaning. In the case of his *Temporary Horizon* video, two glass bottles momentarily keep one another standing, but then fall. A man’s arms and waist appear on screen, and he puts the bottles back into place. They fall again, and the anonymous man’s Sisyphean task continues.

As a group, the works in the exhibition demonstrate the dynamism and creativity of the current generation of Caribbean artists. According to co-curator Tatiana Flores, they also “allow us to reflect on our own assumptions and preconceptions regarding the meaning of place, the articulation of difference, and the construction of past and present. Whether they challenge, delight, frustrate, or disgust, these images provoke a reaction.”

Wrestling with the Image: Caribbean Interventions includes work by John Cox, Blue Curry, Kishan Munroe, Heino Schmid, (The Bahamas); Ewan Atkinson, Joscelyn Gardner, Sheena Rose, Tonya Wiles (Barbados); Santiago Cal (Belize); Pauline Marcelle (Dominica); Roshini Kempadoo, Hew Locke (Guyana); Jean-Ulrick Désert, Barbara Prézeau-Stephenson (Haiti); Charles Campbell, Keisha Castello, Marlon James, Ebony Patterson, Oneika Russell, Phillip Thomas (Jamaica); Terry Boddie (Saint Kitts and Nevis); Nadia Huggins, (Saint Lucia); Holly Bynoe, (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines); Sri Irodikromo, Patricia Kaersenhout, Marcel Pinas, Dhiradj Ramsamoedj, (Suriname); Nicole Awai, La Vaughn Belle, Marlon Griffith, Jaime Lee Loy, Richard Fung, Abigail Hadeed, Nikolai Noel, Rodell Warner, and Natalie Wood (Trinidad and Tobago).

Wrestling with the Image: Caribbean Interventions forms part of the *About Change* emerging artists’ program, an initiative of the World Bank in partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank, the OAS, and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat. *About Change* is a series of juried exhibitions of contemporary art from Latin America and the Caribbean that will take place throughout 2011 and 2012 at different venues in Washington, D.C., including the World Bank, the Art Museum of the Americas, and the galleries of the Inter-American Development Bank. It has been organized by the World Bank Art Program under the auspices of the World Bank Vice Presidency for Latin America and the Caribbean Region. This exhibition is the OAS’ first cultural event to celebrate 2011 as the Inter-American Year of Culture.