

**We** *GRAHAM FAGEN*  
**Have** *JOSCELYN GARDNER*  
**Met** *LEASHO JOHNSON*  
**Before** *INGRID POLLARD*

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# Foreword:

## Unfinished Conversations

—

**Veerle Poupeye**

*Executive Director, National Gallery of Jamaica*

**O'Neil Lawrence**

*Senior Curator, National Gallery of Jamaica*

The four artists and the works selected for this exhibition represent a conversation on the histories of slavery, the transatlantic trade, and its present-day implications. Each brings a distinctive perspective to this subject area, with work that was created in different locales, different media, and at different points in time.

**Born in Georgetown, Guyana**, London-based British artist, Ingrid Pollard, works mainly in analogue photographic media. *The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By* (2002) is the oldest body of work in this exhibition and consists of images of land, sea, boats and historical documents that subtly evoke the histories, visible and invisible, of Sunderland Point in northern England, which was once a thriving seaport in the Triangular Trade. The resulting narrative revolves around the story of Sambo, a young boy and servant, presumably enslaved, who travelled with the captain of the *Globe* from Kingston, Jamaica, who fell ill and died when he arrived in England. His death, it was believed, was from a disease he allegedly contracted in England to which he had no immunity; and acts as a metaphor for the fate of those who lost their lives and freedom as a result of their contact with European slave traders. Sambo was, according to local lore, buried at Sunderland Point in 1739.

Joscelyn Gardner, who is from Barbados, currently lives and works in London, Ontario, in Canada. She is represented by two full series of lithographs – *Plantation Poker* (2004), *Creole Portraits II* (2007) and a selection of lithographs from the *Creole Portraits III* (2009- 2011) series – which are exhibited as installations with other elements. In these prints, which conform to the conventions of natural history illustrations, intricate African braided hairstyles morph into the instruments of torture that were used during slavery. A more specific reference to sexual abuse is added in the imagery in *Plantation Poker*, where the triangular shape of the hair references female pubic hair. The lovely flowers in *Creole Portraits III* are plants that were used by enslaved women to secretly end unwanted pregnancies. While deceptively delicate and exquisitely beautiful, the prints powerfully invoke the dehumanizing cruelty of plantation slavery. Gardner's body of work is inspired by the infamous diaries of Thomas Thistlewood, a plantation overseer in Jamaica in the mid-18th century, who recorded with scientific precision his many forced sexual exploits and the cruel punishments he inflicted on the enslaved.

The Scottish artist Graham Fagen is represented by a multi-channel video and sound installation *The Slave's Lament*, which was also shown at the 2015 Venice Biennale. The work is based on a 1792 song written by Scotland's national poet Robert Burns, in which

an enslaved man in Virginia expresses his longing for his distant homeland of Senegal. Burns himself had been contracted to work as a book-keeper at a plantation in Jamaica several years before he wrote the song but never actually departed Scotland and his attitude towards slavery appears to have been ambivalent, caught between complicity and revulsion. In Fagen's interpretation, *The Slave's Lament* is performed by the reggae singer Ghetto Priest, a Rastafari, and this brings home the song's uncanny resonance with the lyrics of exile in classic reggae. Fagen's work also acknowledges the Scottish involvement in plantation slavery in the Americas, which may be relatively well-known in the Caribbean but is still part of the unacknowledged histories of Scotland.

The Jamaican artist Leasho Johnson is the youngest artist in the group and presents a visually and conceptually explosive mix of history and contemporary popular culture, with strong references to Dancehall and graffiti. Like the other three artists, he often uses historical source material – visual material in his case – but forces this into a dialogue with a repertoire of cartoon-like female and gender-ambivalent figures in various provocative poses, other recurrent characters such as fighting and copulating dogs, and sexual metaphors such as bananas, sugar cane, palm trees and fish. In some of his recent work, drowned bodies with provocatively placed palm tree extensions become sexualised tropical islands, reminiscent of the violent histories of the Caribbean archipelago. Johnson examines the politics of sexual objectification and the contradictions of gender and sexuality in contemporary Jamaican culture and not only points to the roots of these issues in the histories of colonisation, slavery, exploitation and social inequality, but also acknowledges their revolutionary, counter-hegemonic potential in the present.

These related but nonetheless strongly contrasting selections were made deliberately to encourage conversation, between the artists and the work itself, with the critical discourse and representational histories that surrounds those subjects, between the media used, and with the various audiences for this exhibition. The essays by Tiffany Boyle and Shani Roper in this catalogue were commissioned to contribute to this process and to add to its critical depth. "We Have Met Before" will also be our featured exhibition during the Edna Manley College's Rex Nettleford Arts Conference in October, which will provide another opportunity to extend the conversation, and the participating artists will be involved in a panel discussion and workshops with local art students and art professionals. The exhibition will be significantly reconfigured, with the work of other, Bahamian artists brought into dialogue with Graham Fagen's project, when the exhibition moves to the National Art Gallery of the Bahamas. The exhibition, with its concept of multiple shifting and evolving dialogues, may have further incarnations in other locations in the future.

The exhibition itself is the product of dialogue and collaboration. This started at Tilting Axis II in Miami in 2016, when Graham Fagen and Lucy Byatt approached us about showing Graham's *Slave Lament* project in Jamaica, and potentially elsewhere in the Caribbean, with the anticipated support of the British Council. It was immediately understood that this needed to be part of a conversation with local perspectives, and in dialogue with Annalee Davis and Juliet Dean of the British Council, the concept for the present exhibition was developed.

The subject area of this exhibition, and the conversations to which it seeks to contribute, are of course not new at all. They are common subjects in modern and contemporary visual art from the Caribbean and its Diaspora, as well as in other art forms such as dance, drama, literature and music. In the Jamaican context, the subjects hold a central position in Garvey and Rastafari culture, which has produced a recognisable African Zionist iconography that is prominent in the popular visual culture and the visual arts. The histories of slavery have also been very contentious as a subject area in Caribbean art and this is



particularly pronounced in public art, as was best illustrated by the intense controversy about Laura Facey's *Redemption Song* (2003), Jamaica's de facto Emancipation monument. This controversy raised many questions about the representational choices and the equally contentious issue of who can legitimately speak about this subject, and naturally these contentions are most pronounced when it involves official collective representations that are expected to have a definitive character.

"We Have Met Before" revisits this complex and contentious territory and implies that the subject area needs to be approached as part of an ongoing conversation, in which there is no final word and in which it must be possible for various perspectives to be expressed. The resulting conversations may be difficult but we believe that we must have them, as they are central to the histories that have shaped and continue to shape the contemporary Caribbean world, and we hope that this exhibition will contribute to this necessary process.

We wish to thank the British Council wholeheartedly for its support of this exhibition. We have benefitted from traveling exhibitions and staff development opportunities funded and organised by the British Council before, but this exhibition marks a new way of collaborating, as we have been partners in its development rather than recipients of a pre-existing exhibition project – a new model on which we hope to build in the future. We are particularly grateful for the support of Juliet Dean, Visual Arts Advisor, British Council Scotland, and Annalee Davis, Caribbean Arts Manager, British Council. We also need to thank the artists Graham Fagen, Joscelyn Gardner, Leasho Johnson, and Ingrid Pollard, as well as Stephen Murray. Finally, we should also acknowledge Lucy Byatt of Hospitalfield, an artists' residency programme in Arbroath, Scotland, who helped to initiate the dialogue regarding showing Graham Fagen's work in the Caribbean.

# Foreword: Challenging the Single Authoritative Narrative

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**Olayinka Jacobs-Bonnick**

Director, British Council Jamaica

The British Council is very pleased to partner with the National Gallery of Jamaica to present “We Have Met Before” – an exhibition of works by UK based artist, Graham Fagen; London based, Guyanese artist, Ingrid Pollard; Canadian based Barbadian artist, Joscelyn Gardner; and Jamaican artist, Leasho Johnson.

**Much has been said** about the “difficult conversations” that the work of these four artists will help to open up, and how the juxtaposition of their artistic outputs will contribute towards challenging a single authoritative narrative about the brutality of the transatlantic slave trade. However, this exhibition could be viewed not only as a precursor to a difficult conversation about our shared past, but also as a lens through which we can challenge the silence that continues to plague many. I invite you to consider the reality of human trafficking – both sex trafficking and labour trafficking, from which no nation on earth is currently immune. So, in addition to challenging a single authoritative narrative and being a difficult conversation, “We Have Met Before” is also a call to action, creating the opportunity to speak up and speak out. How are we challenging the widespread silence over modern day slavery and human trafficking? This exhibition constitutes a good point of departure.

There is also a more triumphant element to this exhibition – one that risks being forgotten amid its introspection. “We Have Met Before” places contemporary Caribbean art on display on its own terms, using its own iconography, its own aesthetic, and its own vocabulary. For too long, the international contemporary art world has ignored the genius of the Caribbean’s contemporary artistic languages, only accepting an intuitive or naïve narrative as autochthonous. Any diversion from this single authoritative narrative about what Caribbean art is, or is not, was merely considered as “derivative of” or “inspired by” – never “created by.” “We Have Met Before” is a beautiful, rich conversation of contemporary artistic discourse between the UK and the Caribbean – the end result is yet to come.

We thank the National Gallery of Jamaica, the Jamaican people and the artists, for collaborating with the British Council to create an opportunity to challenge the silence, to have difficult conversations and to yet still, to emerge triumphant. In the words of British author Graham Greene, – *“A story has no beginning or end: arbitrarily one chooses that moment of experience from which to look back or from which to look ahead.”*

# Introduction:

## We Meet on Caribbean Soil

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**Annalee Davis**

*Caribbean Arts Manager, British Council*

**Juliet Dean**

*Visual Arts Adviser, British Council*

As I've been suggesting, the backstory to this racial encounter turns on historical forgetfulness. This did much to organize indigenous responses to the dark-skinned migrants. Their histories, and their long historical entanglements with Britain, disappeared from daily consciousness. Who are these people? Where are they from? What language do they speak? And, above all, what on earth are they doing here? This constituted the dominant, repetitive refrain among white Britains. It represented a disavowal of collective force. It was this that impelled George Lamming in 1960 to coin his pithy provocation: 'We have met before.' His insistent plea for the British to remember who they were, and where they had come from, articulated a defining objective in the struggle for decolonisation in the diaspora.<sup>1</sup>

— STUART HALL

**Stuart Hall made these remarks** in the context of a conversation about historical forgetfulness in a chapter entitled "Journey to an Illusion" in his posthumous 2017 publication, *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands*.<sup>2</sup> While the Caribbean and the United Kingdom share a deep and complex history which is the result of a centuries old entangled relationship, our understanding of that association and the construction of narratives about this shared past vary, depending on which side of the Atlantic one sits. One goal of the British Council's arts programme in the Caribbean is to function as a catalyst to encourage new transatlantic conversations about this involved affiliation.

The exhibition, "We Have Met Before," a collaboration between the British Council and the National Gallery of Jamaica, brings together two British and two Caribbean artists, whose potent works invite us to examine, from divergent perspectives, how we (Caribbean and British people) met and came to know each other, across the watery divide and the centuries. All four artists in the exhibition eschew historical forgetfulness and denial, and, in different ways, implore viewers to look at and reckon with the unmatched nature of our alliances. Generating meaningful dialogue between the content and formal perspectives offered by each of the artists will hopefully raise new awareness of the shared historical legacies between Scotland, the wider UK, and the Caribbean, which includes giving consideration to the vestiges of the transatlantic slave trade.

While Caribbean historians have been examining the asymmetrical nature of this interwoven affiliation from local or regional perspectives since the 1930s and 40s, rather than from the imperial angle, it is only in more recent years (1960s/1970s) that their British counterparts have started to turn their gaze towards investigating the underbelly of the British Empire contemplating the colonized and differing models of social and economic history.

In an article titled “Jamaica: The country with more Campbells per head of population than Scotland” chief reporter for Scotland’s Sunday Herald, David Leask, wrote in an October 2015 article that, “The frequency of Scottish surnames is such that 60% of names in the Jamaican telephone directory are Scottish in origin.” He goes on to note how “The reasons for this surprising fact are not very well known in either Scotland or Jamaica, but perhaps that is because it is not entirely a comfortable story... of Scottish prisoners of war disembarked from a ship called The Two Sisters and began a new life as indentured servants on sugar plantations in Jamaica. It was only a year before that Jamaica had been captured from the Spanish and Oliver Cromwell saw the new colony as a useful opportunity to be rid of these Scottish prisoners who had been languishing in jails since the battles at Dunbar in 1650 and Worcester in 1651.”<sup>3</sup> Apparently, Leask tells us, Campbell is a more common surname per square acre in Jamaica than in Scotland.

Another 2015 article in The Herald offers a review of Sir Tom Devine’s book *Recovering Scotland’s Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection*. The journalist, Russell Leadbetter, in his review of the publication writes: “*For long decades, Scotland denied it had any role in such an inhumane trade. Academic neglect was mingled with public amnesia. We preferred to remember instead how Scots played an important role in the campaign to abolish slavery.*”<sup>4</sup>

In a chapter of the publication entitled, “Did Slavery Make Scotia Great?” Sir Tom argues in his book “that markets and capital from the Atlantic slave-based economies helped fuel the Scottish industrial and agricultural revolutions and so create the Scotland of today.”<sup>5</sup> A more recent *UK Guardian* article by Kehinde Andrews, UK based associate professor in sociology, asserts that “It is the height of delusion to think that the impact of slavery ended with emancipation, or that empire was absolved by the charade of independence being bestowed on the former colonies.”<sup>6</sup> a delusion that might be less about amnesia and more about erasure.

In a 2015 presentation to the Scottish Parliament, Sir Tom spoke about how the Scottish industrial revolution was partially fuelled by markets and profits derived from North American and Caribbean slavery.<sup>7</sup> He believes that Scotland, as a mature democracy, is now ready to look at its past and in doing so it needs to revise a distorted vision which tends to focus on the nation’s role in the abolition movement while erasing competing narratives such as enslavement and anti-abolition movements.

In June 2017, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles delivered the 7th Annual George Lamming Distinguished Lecture at the University of the West Indies in Barbados. Titled “Britain’s Perfect Caribbean Crime: Ignored Genocide, Faked Emancipation, Insincere Independence and No Reparations,”<sup>8</sup> this compelling and forcefully delivered speech, demonstrated how generations of African Caribbean people attempted to achieve reparatory justice in seven phases over the past two centuries. In contrast, it was not until 2007, that the UK marked the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 with a series of lectures and educational programmes. Subsequently, increasing numbers of British historians are turning their gaze to the details of this era.

Many people in Scotland believe that we are long overdue in having these discus-



sions – reinforced by the United Nations calling for a more thorough examination of the colonial history between Scotland and the Caribbean to be included in its educational and cultural initiatives. Many institutions are lagging behind, party to the erasure of less enlightened aspects of their history, thereby perpetuating myths about the enlightenment.<sup>9</sup> For example, an exhibition currently on display at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery titled “The Age of Improvement,” speaks to the transformation of Scotland between 1750 and 1850 with no mention of what was behind this change, namely the wealth made from the transatlantic slave trade, tobacco, and sugar. The exhibition brief states: “This display presents the face of this new society, where hard work and public spirit underpinned an age of improvement.” Rather than addressing the criminal trade in the exploitation of human beings, this exhibition refers to the kinds of values that the new middle class wanted its artists to represent – those of “industriousness, self-reliance and social responsibility.”<sup>10</sup> The Scottish National Portrait Gallery will be replacing this exhibition in spring 2018 with one that more accurately reflects Scotland’s colonial history including its role in the transatlantic slave trade.

In a recent conversation in Edinburgh, Sir Geoffrey Palmer, Scotland’s first black Professor, spoke about how cities such as Glasgow were able to flourish economically on the back of Scottish involvement in Scotland’s history in the enslavement of human beings and their trading of sugar and tobacco, which made Glasgow flourish economically, has been kept secluded.<sup>11</sup> Sir Geoffrey Palmer believes that when people know their history, they become better citizens and he contributes to growing this awareness by spending much of his retirement giving talks and writing on Scottish Caribbean history, which is virtually unknown in the UK; his voice is a vital force in growing national awareness around these issues.

Many Caribbean artists have engaged directly or tangentially with the collective impact of the expansion of the British Empire into the Americas through the development of the plantation model, the transatlantic slave trade and colonisation. These interlocking components of a shared, complex past have been in discussion for quite some time now, a fact that might leave some people in the Caribbean questioning the value of bringing the works of British artists – who have only more recently been reckoning with their nation’s own past – to Jamaica, and later the Bahamas.

Bearing in mind Professor Sir Hilary Beckles’ statement that the Caribbean is at the seventh stage in the 200-year-old reparatory justice movement, while the UK is only now beginning to unpack its imperial history, the merit of an art exhibition of this nature might be its contribution to a shared discourse, challenging the model of a single authoritative story.

The overarching goal of the British Council’s arts strategy in the Caribbean is to develop an awareness of the UK arts within the Caribbean, to connect artistic excellence of the Caribbean with the UK, and to facilitate meaningful conversations through the arts by placing the works of UK artists in dialogue with that of their Caribbean peers. This exhibition provides Caribbean artists and audiences with an opportunity to communicate with their UK counterparts so that both might consider our shared realities, through different lenses and to move the conversation forward.

This e-publication, the second of three components, began with the documentation of Scottish artist, Graham Fagen’s trip to the Southern Caribbean in April 2017 when he was the external examiner assessing BFA students in the Visual and Performing Arts programme at Barbados Community College. He was subsequently visiting artist at Alice Yard in Trinidad & Tobago. “We Have Met Before” includes his work along with that of London based, Guyanese artist, Ingrid Pollard; Canadian based Barbadian artist, Joscelyn

Gardner and Jamaican artist, Leasho Johnson. The exhibition is accompanied by a public programme including a panel conversation at the National Gallery of the Jamaica and workshops offered to students at the Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts.

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1. *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands*, Stuart Hall, Duke University Press, 2017. pp 185.
  2. Ibid
  3. [http://www.heraldscotland.com/opinion/13839601.Jamaica\\_\\_the\\_country\\_with\\_more\\_Campbells\\_per\\_head\\_of\\_population\\_than\\_Scotland/](http://www.heraldscotland.com/opinion/13839601.Jamaica__the_country_with_more_Campbells_per_head_of_population_than_Scotland/) (Accessed August 6 2017)
  4. [http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/13800077.The\\_shocking\\_story\\_of\\_how\\_Scotland\\_grew\\_rich\\_on\\_the\\_slave\\_trade/](http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/13800077.The_shocking_story_of_how_Scotland_grew_rich_on_the_slave_trade/) (Accessed August 6 2017)
  5. Ibid
  6. Kehinde Andrews is associate professor in sociology at Birmingham City University. His research specialism is race and racism and he is author of *Resisting Racism: Race, Inequality and the Black Supplementary School Movement* (2013) and co-editor of *Blackness in Britain* (2016). "The west's wealth is based on slavery. Reparations should be paid," *The Guardian*, August 28th 2017. (Accessed August 28th 2017) <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/28/slavery-reparations-west-wealth-equality-world-race>
  7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7w8EjiUVbE> (Accessed August 6 2017)
  8. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5R1dVPn8wws> (Accessed August 6 2017)
  9. At the August 2016 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination stated in its concluding observations on the twenty-first to twenty-third periodic reports of United Kingdom stated the following: "Education 34. While noting the adoption of guidance on bullying and exclusion, the Committee remains concerned at continued reports of racist bullying and harassment in schools across the State party, as well as the disproportionate rate of school exclusion of pupils from Gypsy, Traveller, Roma or African Caribbean communities. The Committee also expresses concern at the lack of balanced teaching in the State party's schools about the history of the British Empire and colonialism, particularly with regard to slavery (arts. 2 and 5)."
  10. The Age of Improvement, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland. <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/exhibition/age-improvement>
  11. Sir Geoffrey Palmer was born in Jamaica in 1940 and migrated to the UK in 1955. In 2007 he published *The Enlightenment Abolished - Citizens of Britishness*, Henry Publishing, Scotland.

# Sister Sciences

## An Exhibition Text for “We Have Met Before”

National Gallery of Jamaica, 2017

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### Tiffany Boyle

*This text was prepared through conversations between each of the four participating artists, Shani Roper, and myself, taking place over three time zones.*

### Calypso

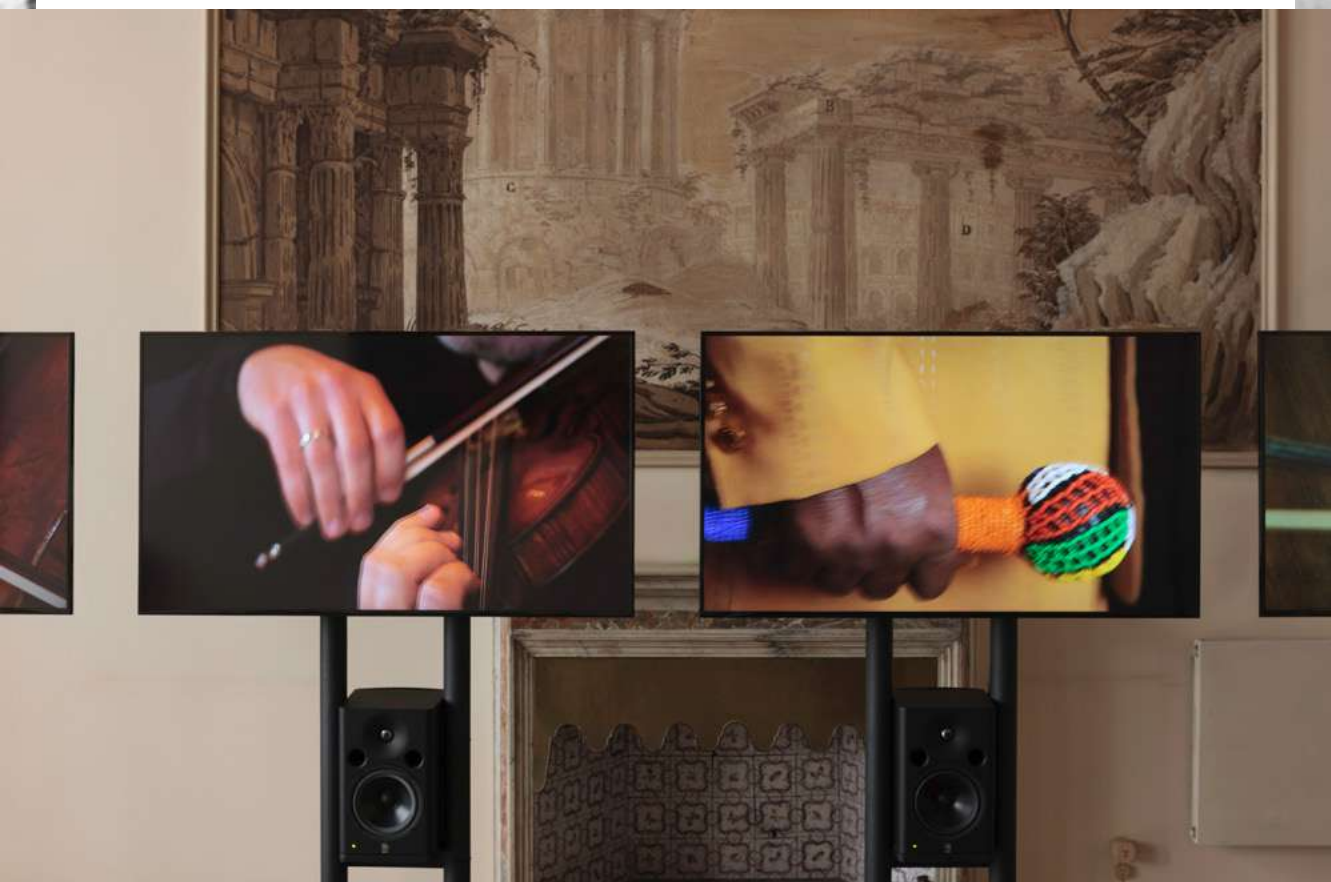
Around 1955, the Orcadian filmmaker and poet Margaret Tait (1918-1999) was given a stock of 35mm film by the British Information Office in Rome, where she was studying at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia. As recollected by her collaborator and fellow student, American filmmaker Peter Hollander, the office was making an Italian version of a film possibly titled *Jamaica*, in which there was a collage of cricket and calypso-playing scenes. However, the soundtrack reel was not to the quality required by the office, and their technician gave the film stock to Tait.



There were no fees for foreign students at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, however, film stock and laboratory access were costly additions, and Tait (along with Hollander and Argentinian Fernando Birri) found access to 35mm equipment processes almost impossible to attain. Instead, they collaboratively worked with 16mm film outdoors and, circumventing the need for a camera at all, hand painted film stock. Tait was already aware of the possibilities of hand-painted films, through a commission from documentary filmmaker John Grierson (working for the British General Post Office Film Unit) of an “abstract colour film” from Len Lye, resulting in the 1935 short *Colour Box*. As well as influencing Tait’s approach to colour, she also noted of Lye’s films that “something about editing to a musical beat or using a musical length to determine an in-film length was in accord with some thoughts of [her] own at that time.”<sup>1</sup> Coming across this quote, I was reminded of art historian Eddie Chamber’s description of a moment from the mid-1970s to early-80s when “a number of young Black-British artists of the second generation, for a while at least, regarded themselves as pro-

Margaret Tait, Stills from *Calypso* (1955), handpainted 35mm. Courtesy of Margaret Tait and LUX, London.

ducing a visual equivalent of reggae music [...] characterised by the strident social, spiritual and political narratives it communicated.”<sup>2</sup> Although aware that the impetus behind Tait and this second generation of Black-British artists are very much separate, there is a synergy in the formal strategy of visually interpreting music and what it facilitates that I believe warrants some exploration here.



It is difficult to say how familiar Tait might have been with the musical montage included within the reel; she did not travel to the Caribbean in her lifetime, and in some respects, this unfamiliarity can be seen when comparing *Calypso* to her later hand-painted films set to Scottish reel dance music. In these, her knowledge of the music and corresponding dances lends much to the form her painted gestures take. Whilst remaining physically present in Italy throughout her creation of *Calypso*, Tait entered into a transatlantic dialogue with the music contained on the filmstock, giving it a visual form in her distinct lexicon. Having been described as “sister sciences,” the intersections between visual arts and music are many, but it is something specific within the genres of calypso, dub reggae and dancehall, which in this pairing I think holds significance for thinking through particular works present in the “We Have Met Before”<sup>3</sup> exhibition. I came across Tait’s *Calypso* by chance in the National Library of Scotland’s Moving Image Archive catalogue,<sup>4</sup> after viewing footage of Edric Connor performing as part of the 1951 Festival of Britain programme in the Scottish town of Cumnock. Becoming temporarily obsessed with watching and rewatching Tait’s visual interpretation of the musical score, I began to think through this film in an attempt to better understand how the works and practices represented within “We Have Met Before” visually give form to the dialogue between the artwork and afore-

Graham Fagen, *The Slave's Lament*, five channel audiovisual installation, Venice Biennale, 2015. Courtesy of the artist.

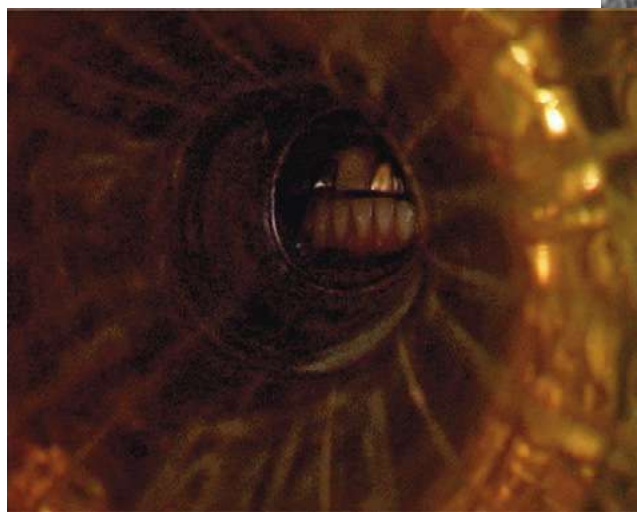


mentioned musical genres.

*The Slave's Lament* has its roots in three of Fagen's previous moving image works: *Radio Roselle* (2002), *Auld Lang Syne c/w The Slave's Lament* (2005) and *Downpresserer* (2007). In the first, musician Ghetto Priest initially sings Robert Burns' "Auld Lang Syne" over an older recording, through a phonograph horn, before moving into the lyrics of *The Slave's Lament* in a production studio setting. The "c/w" of the title refers to the marking out on vinyl records of the B-side recording, indicating "comes with," "coupled with," or "combined with." While replicating a standard way of labelling in the music industry, here it speaks to the supposed gap between Burns, traditional Scottish music, and dub reggae, none of which would usually be "combined with" each other. *Downpresserer* was filmed with a trio of local musicians in Savanna-la-Mar, Jamaica, which would have been the first landing point for Burns, had he set sail from Scotland to work on the plantations, as was his intention on three separate occasions during his lifetime. The musicians perform a freestyle version of *The Slave's Lament*, with the sandy beach and blue waters as their backdrop. I think, however, that *Radio Roselle* is the work which bears the most pertinence here, summarised by writer Duncan McLaren as "a radio station fictionally located on a ship in the middle of the Atlantic whose play-list consisted of reggae songs and Burns poems, alternately."<sup>5</sup> The turntable and speakers, books and records, rum and beer, are set up in the corner of a living room. On the wall behind the DJ hangs a glittering silver and gold ship, its signals unable to transmit below the water's absorbent surface.

The juxtaposition that appears present in the jump between tracks is less than it actually seems, and I am reminded of this when watching *The Slave's Lament*, as simultaneously across the five-channels, the violin and cello appear on screen with Ghetto Priest's beaded voodoo stick, brought into the production studio for positive energy and, through touch, to contain the group's collective spirit and energy. The syncretic musical performance that is created subsequently harmonises, literally, between instruments of European origin, dub music's recognisable motifs and Ghetto Priest's unforgettable voice. Both those involved in the production of the piece and audiences have commented on the familiarity of the melody to which Burns' lyrics are set, with composer Sally Beamish describing that "in fact Scottish traditional music can often have resonances with other cultures. Gaelic psalms have much in common with Middle Eastern chanting. And *The Slave's Lament* itself has the same opening phrase as the Catalanian "Song of the Birds," which in turn evolved from Moorish singing."<sup>6</sup> The title of this exhibition, "We Have Met Before," seems to speak to this sense of historical familiarity, echoing into the present. Eddie Chambers' description of a "visual equivalent" is entirely fitting here: Fagen's piece a visual and acoustic testimony to Scotland's role in the transatlantic slave trade, and the ensuing amnesia around its deep involvement. The musical score, its performance, and the visual and acoustic space which it occupies within the gallery setting melodically interlaces musical styles and corresponding histories, musicians and instruments, tools and strategies.

At first glance, the work of Fagen and Johnson does not seem to share more than the employment of the sound system speaker as a motif and vessel. In both Fagen's *The Slave's Lament* and Johnson's *Belisario & The Soundboy*, the speaker is physically present: Fagen's channels out audio rhythms and the otherworldly



Graham Fagen. Still from  
*Auld Lang Syne c/w The  
Slave's Lament* (2005). video.  
Courtesy of the artist.

boom of the bassline, which refuses to be confined to the gallery space. Theorist and writer Kodwo Eshun wrote in his seminal book *More Brilliant Than The Sun: Adventures In Sonic Fiction* that “the bass holds the space,”<sup>7</sup> and in the exhibition it not only holds it, but envelops the viewer and reaches out to the other works. Similarly, Johnson’s past installations have featured a speaker – florescent red in colour – and I at first reach for adjectives such as “mute” to describe this, in the sense that it is not playing out music for us to hear. In fact, it is through the subversion of this auditory role that its meanings reveal themselves and ask for reflection, offering up a kind of mirror. In a similar vein, Johnson’s earlier speaker paintings use the speaker cone as something between a blank canvas and readymade, utilising the tools of dancehall as a means to deconstruct its actions. In correspondence with Johnson, the artist describes his desire to urge reflection “on living in Dancehall,” and the importance of not having sounds “as the hypnotic rhythms mask out the clarity that I want to engage with my audience.”<sup>8</sup>

### Give Me A Little Dub Music<sup>9</sup>

The use of echo, reverberations, and panoramic delay are key features of dub music, alongside its central tenet: mixing. Before the genre, its creators, fans, and sound systems travelled physically or via radioplay beyond Jamaica, it was already simulcasting its sounds, rhythms and bass outwards. Whilst I normally think of musical composition as following a (linear) score, it seems to me that the feedback loops contained within dub music’s echoes, reverberations and delayed utterances speak to the cyclic motion of Kamau Braithwaite’s “tidalectics,” theorised around the eternal movement of the planet’s oceans and seas.<sup>10</sup> I think again of the circular cone of the speaker, its vibration, and the space devoted around the speaker to its presence – normally for the practical reason of protecting our eardrums. However, in the gallery space, when being asked to look at the speaker’s working parts by Johnson, or to be positioned between speakers in Fagen’s work as the panning highlights sounds in one ear at a time, there is a transformation in how we might understand it as a vessel. Perhaps this is a purposeful “misuse,” speaking to Eshun’s idea that “far from needing theory’s help, music today is already more conceptual than at any point this century, pregnant with thoughtprobes waiting to be activated, switched on, misused.”<sup>11</sup>

Ingrid Pollard’s series “The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By” (2002) brings together eleven black-and-white photographic images of Sunderland Point, in Lancaster, on the northwest coast of England. In the eighteenth-century functioning as a busy port trading with the Caribbean and Americas, the remaining village is the location of Sambo’s Grave, 1739 – a burial on unconsecrated ground. Local narratives describe Sambo as a slave or cabin boy, brought from the Caribbean by the captain of the ship – his death attributed to many different potential causes. The site is often cut off by flooded marshland at high tide by the encroaching ocean waters. Printed onto canvas, the photographic emulsion slips between the warp and weft, some details of the image disappearing with it. The series does not show the grave itself, but the empty landscapes and a panoramic view out to the offing. The title refers to the boy in the present tense, looking beyond his burial site to understand the ways in which he remains alive and with us. In conversation, Pollard mentions a local calypso tune, sung in commemoration of Sambo by local school children. It is difficult to



Leasho Johnson, speaker paintings, “Back A Road” installation, National Gallery of Jamaica, 2014. Courtesy of the artist.

imagine a calypso song as a solemn hymn or memorial, and equally to imagine something more upbeat being used in remembrance.



Ingrid Pollard, "The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By," photographic emulsion on stretched canvas, 83 x 32cm, (2002).  
Courtesy of the artist.

In closing, I cannot anticipate in this text, prepared in advance of the exhibition's opening, the ways in which the sound and imagery of the selected works will interact with the gallery space, audiences, and each other, offering up for navigation song and quiet reflection. However, I do hope that the musical references embedded within the works will act as a common denominator – something shared, familiar and inherited – as much as the locations from which each artist speaks are met by the ocean's tides.

1. Winn, J.; *Preserving the Hand-Painted Films of Margaret Tait*, Masters Thesis, University of Lincoln, available: [http://eprints.lincoln.ac.uk/2004/3/josswinn\\_dissertation.pdf](http://eprints.lincoln.ac.uk/2004/3/josswinn_dissertation.pdf)
2. Chambers, E.; *Roots & Culture: Cultural Politics in the Making of Black Britain*, I. B. Tauris: London; New York, 2017 pg. 93
3. The exhibition is a four-person show, bringing together the work of Graham Fagen, Ingrid Pollard, Joscelyn Gardner, and Leasho Johnson. Due to the focus on the intersections with the specific artworks selected for the exhibition with music, I will primarily be discussing the work of Fagen and Johnson, with some reading around the historical context of Pollard's photographic series.
4. *Calypso* can be viewed in full on the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive: [http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/6226?search\\_term=calypso&search\\_join\\_type=AND&search\\_fuzzy=yes](http://movingimage.nls.uk/film/6226?search_term=calypso&search_join_type=AND&search_fuzzy=yes)
5. Duncan McLaren, "Graham Fagen," *MAP Magazine*, 2006, Available: <http://mapmagazine.co.uk/8736/graham-fagen/>
6. Graham Fagen, email correspondence, 26.07.2017
7. Eshun, K.; *More Brilliant Than The Sun: Adventures In Sonic Fiction*, Quartet Books: London, 1998, p. 63
8. Leasho Johnson, email correspondence, 01.08.2017
9. "Give Me a Little Dub Music," Michael Smith, published in: Markham, E. A.; *Hinterland: Caribbean Poetry from the West Indies and Britain*, BloodAxe Books: Newcastle, 1990, p. 290-291. Recordings and a performance of this can also be found online on platforms such as YouTube: <http://bit.ly/2vSMYzd>
10. I would like to credit poet and researcher Lou Smith's article, forwarded by Ingrid Pollard, for making me aware of Braithwaite's concept of "tidaletics." Lou Smith, "Beyond, Out at Sea, A New Day Dawns: Memory and Identity In Ingrid Pollard's 'The Boys Who Watches Ships Go By,'" *EnterText 10*, special Issue on Caribbean Literature and Culture: "Opening Out the Way(s) to the Future," London: Brunel University, 2013.
11. Eshun, K.; *More Brilliant Than The Sun: Adventures In Sonic Fiction*, Quartet Books: London, 1998, pg.3

# We Have Met Before: Transatlantic Dialogues through the Arts

—  
Dr. Shani Roper

**Art plays a crucial role** in engaging complex histories of slavery and, in what follows, I look at the work of four artists from different parts of the Atlantic who are exhibiting their work in Jamaica to determine the role of art in on-going dialogues and struggles for reparative justice. As part of this engagement, I locate my assessment within the current work being done by the CARICOM Reparations Commission, and similar bodies in the Caribbean. Activism for reparatory justice requires a multidisciplinary approach to unpacking historical amnesia. Public history education through the arts is one such method to engaging the public on sensitive topics like histories defined by trauma such as slavery. In this short piece, I begin with the work done by the Reparations Commission and then locate the work of four artists – Ingrid Pollard, Graham Fagen, Joscelyn Gardner and Leasho Johnson – within a broader historical narrative. It is my hope that in your own interaction with this exhibition, “We Have Met Before,” it will reveal the synergies between the past and the present and how they continue to indirectly affect our lives.

In 2014, the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC), released a 10-point plan “to achieve reparatory justice for the victims of genocide, slavery, slave trading and racial apartheid.” The CRC premised its list of demands on the political and economic legacies of slavery, colonialism, and anti-black racism. Europeans perpetuated these myths of white superiority. In return, European economies expanded as many migrated to the West Indies in search of wealth and land. The wealth extracted from colonial expansion is clearly illustrated by the distribution of the British Parliament’s distribution of £20 million compensation to slave owners in 1833. From disbursements of £10 to £10,000 slave owners of the poorer and wealthier classes secured compensation for lost property. While British expats living in the West Indies received compensation, such monies did not remain in the Caribbean. In fact, the money re-circulated in the British economy through investments in trade, industry, philanthropy, and the arts. The enslaved received no compensation and spent an additional four years working as apprentices before attaining legal freedom in 1838.

Despite release from bondage, the formerly enslaved struggled to survive because the white community dominated the economy through their control of land and trade. The tight control that former masters held over the colonies’ political institutions, including, restrictive qualifications for voting and holding political office, also meant that the descendants of the enslaved were excluded from full and equal participation in their societies until independence. Even after the colonies gained independence throughout the 1960–1980s, the legacy of British colonial rule cast a long shadow over Caribbean nations



that continue to struggle with inadequate economic investment, debt burden, and insufficient public health and education system. While some European nations acknowledge that slavery was immoral, many more refuse to publicly acknowledge their own role in the history of slavery and racial oppression, and are invested in ignoring evidence throughout their cities and towns of the importance of slavery in building their nations.

The work of the CRC is important, as there exists in the Caribbean a complex relationship with our past, more specifically our legacy of slavery, violence, and trauma. Since the rewriting of Caribbean histories by Caribbean born and grown historians between the 1940s and 1970s, the scholarship continues to produce a broad body of work that centres the experiences of the enslaved, rather than white oppressors, and the complex socio-cultural and economic motivations that shaped our post slavery, colonial and postcolonial experiences. Many in Jamaica, for example, resist a narrative of blackness deeply intertwined with poverty, despair, and weakness. The public's refusal to acknowledge much of this history and its impact has resulted in a failure to recognise the ways in which we appropriate slave and colonial narratives, values, and laws to continue our control of black bodies in our everyday lives. In other words, by failing to work through and acknowledge our historical trauma and to unpack gender and class politics as a black majority society and region, we are constantly engaged in an effort to re-enslave and regulate ourselves using the tools bequeathed by our white former oppressors.

This exhibition, "We Have Met Before", seeks to provide a space for dialogue for the shared legacies of slavery between the Caribbean and Europe. More importantly, the exhibition encourages musings about the role of the past in shaping our everyday consciousness. "We Have Met Before" puts four artists (three of Caribbean descent or ancestry and one of European descent) in dialogue with one another to explore our shared history of slavery and trauma. Their work exists as part of a larger effort in Europe and the Caribbean to challenge contemporary national narratives that underrepresent, dismiss, and/or silence the role of slavery in shaping societies. These four artists – Joscelyn Gardner, Leasho Johnson, Graham Fagen, and Ingrid Pollard – unearth silences around slavery and gender, the legacies of trauma, and the impact of gender politics on social norms in an attempt to navigate the historical amnesia that shapes both Caribbean and European societies. The premise of this exhibition is that the development of the Caribbean and Europe are deeply shaped by these shared histories. Throughout this article, I focus on the intervention that these artists make through their interpretation of historical events as opposed to their artistic methods or techniques. For me, the artist's gaze, more specifically their relationship to the events being engaged, is essential to understanding the ways in which they interpret and represent trauma, unearth silences, and challenge national and local narratives. As a consequence, I am working through the ways in which the arts can facilitate and/or navigate the question of transatlantic dialogues.

Ingrid Pollard is an Afro-Guyanese artist who migrated to England and who uses photography to unearth the silenced black presence in English landscape. Key to her work is the notion that memory lingers by marking the landscape in subtle ways. The focus of the piece, *The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By*, is the unconsecrated grave of an enslaved boy named Sambo, who died in 1736, a couple days after arriving in Lancashire, England from the West Indies. On the trip, he served as a servant to the captain, but neither the name of the captain nor the ship survived the test of time. His body was buried at Sunderland Point. Currently, the site operates as a tourist stop frequented by school children who leave toys near the burial site as a form of engagement with the past. Pollard, however, does not focus on the toys left behind but rather on what is missing from the landscape. Her photographs convey the melancholy of a desolate landscape devoid of the true context

of Sambo's grave: the history of the slave trade in the city of Lancaster.

According to Lou Smith and others, the City of Lancaster was Britain's fourth largest port trading with the West Indies and between 1750 and 1790, merchants based in the area engineered the forced transportation of over 24000 Africans across the Atlantic to the West Indies and America through the networks established by the imperial trade in slaves. Sambo's grave is that lingering reminder of city's intimate relationship with the British imperial economy that connected Europe, Africa and the Americas through the Atlantic Ocean. By centering Sambo's grave and his memory, she forces not only a reengagement with the past but reveals how trauma creates fissures in the landscape, even amidst public disavowal of historical relationships. Through her interpretation and engagement with the landscape, Pollard encourages us to question the things we take for granted within the physical spaces in which we live and operate.

Similarly, Graham Fagen's work challenges existing notions and icons of Scottish identity by exploring the transatlantic connections that permeate the Scottish landscape. These connections are often hiding in plain sight, ignored and forgotten. In the exhibition, Fagen's creative reinterpretation of the past begins with an engagement with "The Slave's Lament" – a poem attributed to the Scottish National Bard, Robert Burns. The artist sees himself as someone whose identity has been shaped by his interaction with Caribbean migrants living in Scotland and England as well as his love of punk rock and reggae. In our conversation, Fagen revealed that *The Slave's Lament* was not one of Burns' more popular works, as it is often not taught in schools. Despite this, the poem's existence forces us to ask under what context did Burns write *The Slave's Lament* and what does this tell us about Scotland's historical relationship with the transatlantic trade in slaves and the imperial economy?

Dated circa 1792, *The Slave's Lament* is written from the perspective of an enslaved person taken from Senegal to work in the state of Virginia. The writing of the poem coincides with the early years of the anti-slavery movement in Britain. Fagen's research revealed that Burns booked tickets to work in the Caribbean, but never actually made the journey to the region. Even if Burns' interaction with slavery occurred solely in Scottish ports, it is clear that there existed in the public's imagination some notion of the hardships experienced by enslaved Africans. In Fagen's piece, Jamaican born reggae artist, Ghetto Priest, sings the lament, accompanied by musical instruments. The juxtaposition, I think, would be more striking to a European rather than Caribbean audience, but I think Fagen's intention is to force a conversation about the absence of the discussions about the Scotland's role in slavery as well as the influence of the Caribbean migrant community on Scottish culture and identity. Like many European nations, Scotland has either failed or forgotten its role in the transatlantic slave trade, and Fagen's work is an attempt to encourage this discussion in the community.

Joscelyn Gardner's work is influenced and shaped by the Thomas Thistlewood diaries. Thomas Thistlewood (1721–1786) arrived in Savannah-La-Mar, Jamaica, from England in 1750, and began his search for a fortune by joining the sugar plantation complex. He became an overseer on a sugar plantation called Egypt. Thistlewood eventually went on to own property, Breadnut Penn, in Westmoreland, as well as slaves. Thistlewood's story does not differ from the numerous other white men who journeyed to the Caribbean in search of wealth, pleasure, and adventure. What makes Thistlewood significant, however, is that he kept a diary for the entire time he lived and died in Jamaica – producing a collection of 37 diaries spanning 36 years, from 1750 to 1786. These diaries include, in great detail, the systematic rape and torture of enslaved black women living on his Penn. More importantly, these diaries are essential to our understanding of slave society. They

provide consistent and constant insight, as well as access, into the daily interactions between the black oppressed majority, especially women and their white male oppressors. Thistlewood's diaries stand in stark contrast to contemporary writings by upper echelons of Caribbean white society such as Edward Long and Bryan Edwards, who speak in less graphic terms about gender and sex, or reveal even less about their own role in the sexual exploitation of enslaved women. Thus, these diaries tell us much about class differences in slave societies: for a white man with limited wealth and political access, all of Thistlewood's sexual attention focused on black as opposed to white women.

As an artist and a white Barbadian whose genealogy dates back to the seventeenth century, Gardner approaches the diaries from a unique socio-historical position. In the seventeenth century, Barbados made the significant socio-cultural shift from white indentured labour to black enslaved labour, thus reinforcing racial difference between the white poor community and the enslaved black community. For the poor white community, just like in the American south, power became enshrined in racial difference that did not always correspond with economic privilege. White women played an important social and economic role in maintaining racial and economic difference in slave societies. According to legislation, slave status passed from mother to child and, as such, black women's bodies became the marker through which black identity was defined and shaped. In her groundbreaking work, "Gendering of Racial Ideology," Jennifer Morgan argues that, from as early as the sixteenth century black (African) women's bodies were always defined and judged in relation to white (European) women's bodies. Whereas white women were represented and defined as asexual, fragile, Christian, and controlled, black women's bodies were defined as hypersexual, fertile, passionate, and in need of control and regulation. Enslavement therefore became the path to controlling black passion and harnessing black fertility and sexuality. To preserve this difference, both white men and women were complicit in using white women's sexuality and identity in maintaining the institution of slavery. In their role as mothers, they socialised white children; as daughters, they married white men so that land remained in the hands of the white community, and, as slave owners, they maintained the boundaries between white and black. Gardner's gaze on the women who were raped and tortured by Thomas Thistlewood must be read and interpreted within this complex history of race, gender, and womanhood in Caribbean slave societies.

In her *Creole Portraits I – III* Gardner seeks to challenge this legacy of white control over black bodies by paying tribute to the women who were victims of a system that needed their bodies to function, but did not value their humanity. For many, the victims of slavery are faceless, nameless, and silenced but, through Thistlewood's diaries, we see women who resisted, who succumbed, who manipulated in an effort to survive. These women, like the *mimosa pudica*, (colloquial terms are Shame Old Lady/Touch Me Not) may retreat in the face of violence and oppression but always rose, where possible, to fight another day. Gardner harnesses the silence by using different African hairstyles, rather than faces, to represent each woman and to signal their individuality, while at the same time juxtaposing this with the tools of torture that sought to control and regulate their bodies. By memorialising these women, Gardner attempts to reassert their voices and their identity in the face of historical amnesia and the rejection of the trauma and violence that is the legacy of slavery, which continues to shape our everyday lives.

In the years after slavery, the white elite fought to maintain control of black bodies and, by extension, their labour. They continued the narrative that black people were hypersexual, amoral, and irresponsible and therefore needed white guidance to become civilized members of society. As members of the black community acquired wealth, they assimilated different social norms. New social mobility required the rejection of Afro-Ja-

maican dialect as well as socio-sexual, religious, and cultural practices. It not only demanded a rejection of all things African and sexual, but it also required relocation to more conservative spaces, away from the influence of the black majority. Conflict over gender and sexuality are grounded in these historic colonial narratives on black inferiority.

Leasho Johnson's work intervenes in this discussion by focusing on sexuality and gender politics in Jamaica today. Johnson grew up around tourist and music industries in western Jamaica. His art and, by extension, his gender politics, challenge existing notions of sexuality and respectability politics, both of which are integral to class identity among the educated and conservative classes in Jamaican society. Johnson uses iconography from dancehall, often defined as a hypersexual and misogynistic space, to transcend class-based geographical boundaries shaped by contemporary understandings of respectability. Using his signature orange ceramic representations of the female form, his pieces *Cocktails* and *Pum Pum* mocks contemporary notions of sexuality and asks us to think critically about the relationship between geography and explicit expressions of Jamaican women's sexuality. This discourse continues to be timely in light of the rise of the activism protecting victims of sexual violence, children, and LGBTQI rights. Groups like the Tambourine Army, WE-Change and others challenge gender roles, conservatism and sexual violence. Our failure to challenge the inconsistencies in our discourse on sexuality only leads to the perpetuation of cultural practices that marginalize women and other sections of Jamaican society.

Through their work, each of these artists creatively interrogates complex histories of slavery, trauma and gender politics. This exhibition, like the CARICOM Reparations Commission, demands a re-engagement with the past to empower our daily lives. Gardner and Ingrid Pollard unearth the fissures of traumas within the desolate landscapes to highlight their relationship with the past while, at the same time, giving a voice to forgotten and dismissed victims. Both Fagen and Johnson ask us to think critically about national and cultural narratives on identity and gender politics. Together, these pieces placed in dialogue with each other, affirm that we have met before and that our past, even when silenced, continues to exist in the fissures within the landscape.

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1. David Muhammad, "CARICOM's 10-point Programme for Reparations for Slavery for African People" [http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/World\\_News\\_3/article\\_101422.shtml](http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/World_News_3/article_101422.shtml) (accessed August 28, 2017)
  2. Caribbean historian and first Prime Minister of Trinidad, Dr. Eric Williams was first to make the argument this argument in his text *Capitalism and Slavery* (University of North Carolina Press, 1944). Research is ongoing and a database is currently maintained by the University College of London titled *Legacies of British Slave-ownership*, which traces the ways in which slave owners used and invested the compensation received. See <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>
  3. See Hilary Beckles, *Britain's Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide* (University of the West Indies Press, 2013)
  4. Verene Shepherd expounds on this argument in "Slavery, Shame and Pride: The Marking of the Bicentennial of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Trade in Africans in 2007," *Caribbean Quarterly* vol. 56 #1/2 (March – June 2010) pp 1 – 21, 2
  5. Lou Smith, "Beyond the Horizon, Out at Sea, A New Day Breaks: Memory, Identity in Ingrid Pollard's *The Boy Who Watches the Ships Go By*" in "Special Issue on Caribbean Literature and Culture: 'Opening Out the Way(s) to the Future, Sandra Courtman and Wendy Knepper, eds. 10 (2013), 6 – 24, 9
  6. See Jennifer Morgan, "Some Could Suckle Over Their Shoulder: Male Travelers, Female Bodies and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500 – 1770," *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 54 # 1 (Jan 1997) pp 167 - 192
  7. Quite a few works examine Caribbean societies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the case of Jamaica see Brian Moore and Michelle Johnson, *Neither Led Nor Driven: Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica 1865 – 1920* (University of the West Indies Press, 2010)
  8. For an overview on Caribbean Sexuality see Jenny Sharpe and Samantha Pinto, Sweetest Taboo; Studies of Caribbean Sexualities: A Review Essay, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2006, vol. 32 no. 1, pp 247 - 274



ARTWORK by

# GRAHAM FAGEN



**Graham Fagen is one of the most influential artists** working in Scotland today. His work mixes media and crosses continents; combining video, performance, photography and sculpture with text, live music, and plants. Fagen's recurring artistic themes, which include flowers, journeys, and popular song, are used as attempts to understand the powerful forces that shape our lives.

Fagen studied at The Glasgow School of Art (1984–1988, BA) and the Kent Institute of Art and Design (1989–1990, MA), and is senior lecturer at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design in Dundee.

In 1999 Fagen was invited by the Imperial War Museum, London, to work as the Official War Artist for Kosovo, and since then has exhibited widely both in the UK and abroad. Exhibitions include “Golden Age”, Institute of Contemporary Art, London (1999); “The British Art Show” (2000); “Zenomap”, Scotland + Venice at the 50th Venice Biennale (2003); “Bloodshed” at the Victoria & Albert Museum and “Art of the Garden”, Tate Britain (2004); Busan Biennale, South Korea; and the Art and Industry Biennial, New Zealand (2004).

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Fagen's work reflects the artist's interest in the Caribbean which began with his listening to reggae music as a young man growing up in a housing estate in Scotland. He was also interested in the 18th century poems of the Scottish poet, Robert Burns, who penned *The Slave's Lament* and *Auld Lang Syne*. As Erica James (Associate Professor at Yale University) writes in her essay *Graham Fagen 200* (for *Next Level – The Glasgow Edition* 2007), “Growing up in Scotland, Fagen learnt to recite Burns' poems, commuting them to memory alongside lyrics penned by Reggae poets such as Gregory Isaacs, Bob Marley, and Peter Tosh. Music was making the distance between the cultures seem less fixed and insurmountable. The concerns expressed in the poetry and the lyrics had similar urgencies that seemed to upset neat assumptions of ideological and spatial differences.” James continues, “The images redress, rewrite and re-imagine what is accepted and “known” about connections between Jamaica and Scotland and the African Slave Trade, from Fagen's particularity. The band he photographs is not a typical tourist band, but one chosen by him to perform Burns' *Slave Lament* to a reggae beat. They do not laugh with him, but with each other. He is not a part of them, but maintains a conscious and unpretentious formal distance. The link being made is not visual but ideological and cultural.”



ARTWORK *by*

# JOSCELYN GARDNER



**Barbados-born artist Joscelyn Gardner** (MFA) moved to Canada in 2000 and now teaches at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario. She has held solo exhibitions in the USA, Canada, Spain, and various Caribbean islands; most recently, “Staging Mary Prince” at the Bermuda National Gallery (2016). Her work has been shown in numerous international biennials in South and Central America and Europe as well as in curated group shows in several prestigious museums. International awards include the Grand Prize of the 7th International Printmaking Biennial (Quebec, 2011). Her work is held in several public collections worldwide. It can be viewed at [www.joscelyngardner.com](http://www.joscelyngardner.com).

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Drawing on a family history in Barbados that dates from the 17th century, I use a postcolonial feminist methodology to probe colonial material culture found in British / Caribbean archives in order to explore my (white) Creole identity. Specifically, I aim to articulate the intertwined historical relationship shared by black and white women in the Caribbean by recognizing that under patriarchy and colonialism the lives of all Caribbean women have been shaped by “mastership”. My project also aims to address the repression and dissociation that operate in relation to the subject of slavery and white culpability.

Working primarily with printmaking (stone lithography) and multimedia installation (video and sound), my work ruptures patriarchal or colonial versions of history by re-inserting the voices / images / traces of the women omitted from this history. I attempt to “speak the unspeakable” by retrieving atrocities that lie buried in our collective memory in order to reconcile the past with the present and move toward a metaphorical healing of historical wounds. By focusing on women’s lives, I identify geographical / historical / cultural / racial / class differences that have united / separated women in the wider postcolonial world.





ARTWORK by

# LEASHO JOHNSON



**Leasho Johnson's recent exhibitions** include "Belasario & the Soundboy," his Debut solo, "Jamaican Pulse" at the Royal West England Academy (Bristol, UK), "Jamaican Routes," Punkt Ø Galleri F15 and Momentum (Moss, Norway), "FLOAT," Transformer (Washington, DC), "The National Biennial," National Gallery of Jamaica (Kingston, Jamaica) and "Masculinities IV," National Gallery of Jamaica. He was recently awarded the Davidoff Initiative Artist Residency at Residencies Unlimited (New York) and recently completed residencies at Bluecoat (Liverpool) in partnership with NLS and RWA, as well as Caribbean Link, Atelier's 89 (Oranjestad, Aruba). He has been an invited panelist for The Caribbean Queer Visualities Symposium at Yale University presented by Small Axe (Connecticut), as well as for Transformer's Framework panel at Art Museum of the Americas (Washington, DC). His work has been reviewed in the *Washington Post*, *Caribbean Beat*, *ARC Magazine* and the *Jamaica Observer*. Johnson received his BFA in Visual communication & graphic design from the Edna Manley College of the Visual & Performing Arts.

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Dancehall culture in Jamaica is of interest to me as a space exempt from many of the colonial and religious strictures that are considered important in mainstream Jamaican society. Through frequent visits into this urban space, Dancehall revealed itself to me as a space that defies gender, religious and sexual norms...a place of contradictions where queerness and homophobia can coexist, and where women empower themselves through sex. Though Dancehall and its attitudes largely define Jamaican identity in the world at large, there is still mystery and a lack of understanding of Dancehall, even within local mainstream society. My current body of work elucidates the hidden wildness behind this aspect of Jamaican culture, while attempting to process these contradictions and my own place in Jamaican society as a gay man from rural Jamaica.

My current body of work utilises characters I've created (Pum-Pum), it is used as a parody that imitate and exaggerate the male and female gender roles found in the Jamaican Dancehall. I use imagery that is grounded in traditional realism juxtaposed with stylistic cartoons, playing on the differences between the two styles. I use various media and formats such as ceramics, mixed media, murals, street art, graphic design and found objects. I like to take notions of low art or colloquial customs and interject them in spaces that deem them out of place, to challenge perceptions of high art, as well as classism.





ARTWORK *by*

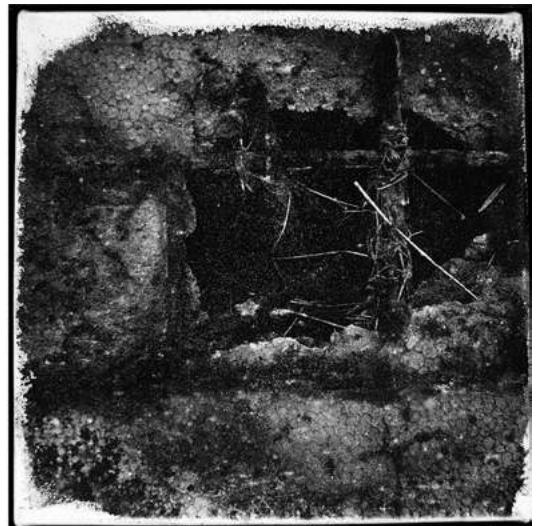
# INGRID POLLARD



**Dr Ingrid Pollard played an important role** in early 1980s photography, documenting black people's creativity and presence in Britain. Pollard became known for her photographic series questioning social constructs such as Britishness and racial difference. While investigating race, ethnicity and public spaces she has developed a body of work juxtaposing landscape and portraiture which provide a context for issues of migration, family and home. With a training in film and video narrative plays an important aspect of her work as does the materiality of photographic process within image-making, utilising of the from Victorian photographic process, images on wood and slates, artist books and most recently the use of still image within video. Her work is included in major collection internationally and nationally in Tate Britain Victoria & Albert Museums in the UK.

## ARTIST STATEMENT

A series of photographic canvases describes the shifting landscapes and histories of a quiet coastal village. The viewer enters into a world of imagination, memory, and narrative created by images of land and sea. Sunderland Point, through its involvement in slave trading in the Americas and the Caribbean, became one of the busiest ports in northern England in the eighteenth century. Today, the quiet coastal village of Sunderland Point is the site of Sambo's grave, where he was buried in 1739. According to one of the local traditions, a sea captain returning from the Caribbean brought him as a boy to the village.



# List of Artworks

## Graham Fagen

*The Slave's Lament* (2015), 4-panel video installation, 14 minutes 27 seconds

## Joscelyn Gardner

Creole Portraits II: "A Collection of Singular & Scarce Creole Portrait Heads to perpetuate the Memory of the WOMEN of EGYPT ESTATE in JAMAICA" (2007), wall installation with stone lithographs on frosted mylar and vinyl wall elements, 9' x 15':

*Old Moll* (2007), stone lithograph on frosted mylar, 36" x 24"

*Accubah* (2007), stone lithograph on frosted mylar, 36" x 24"

*Egypt Susanah* (2007), stone lithograph on frosted mylar, 36" x 24"

*Coobah* (or *Molia*) (2007), stone lithograph on frosted mylar, 36" x 24"

*Margaritta* (2007), stone lithograph on frosted mylar, 36" x 24"

*Nago Jenny* (2007), stone lithograph on frosted mylar, 36" x 24"

*Quasheba* (2007), stone lithograph on frosted mylar, 72" x 24"

3 text panels, lithograph on frosted mylar each 6" x 24"

*Creole Portraits III*: "bringing down the flowers..." from a suite of 13 lithographs (2009–2011):

*Hibiscus esculentus* (*Sibyl*) (2009), hand-painted stone lithograph on frosted mylar, 36" x 24"

*Eryngium foetidum* (*Prue*) (2009), hand-painted stone lithograph on frosted mylar, 36" x 24"

*Veronica frutescens* (*Mazerine*) (2009), hand-painted stone lithograph on frosted mylar, 36" x 24"

*Manihot flabellifolia* (*Old Catalina*) (2011), hand-painted stone lithograph on frosted mylar, 36" x 24"

*Trichilia trifoliata* (*Quamina*) (2011), hand-painted stone lithograph on frosted mylar, 36" x 24"

*Convolvulus jalapa* (*Yara*) (2010), hand-painted stone lithograph on frosted mylar, 36" x 24"

*Plantation Poker: The Merkin Stories* (detail of wall installation) (2004), stone lithographs / vinyl on frosted mylar wall installation, 3' 2" x 15' (16 panels at 18" x 18", 9 panels at 18" x 6")

## Leasho Johnson

*Land of Big Hood & Water* (2017), wall installation: acrylic and vinyl, variable dimensions

*Cocktales & Pum-Pum* (2017), installation: acrylic paint, fake hair, polymer resin, rum bottles, speakers, white earthenware, vinyl, wood, variable dimensions

## Ingrid Pollard

*The Boy Who Watches Ships Go By* (2002), suite of 11 photographs, photographic emulsion on stretched unbleached canvas, three 12" x 32" and nine 12" x 12"

# About Partners



**The British Council** is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. Using the UK's cultural resources we make a positive contribution to the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

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**The National Gallery of Jamaica**, which was established in 1974, is the oldest and largest public art museum in the Anglophone Caribbean.

The National Gallery of Jamaica (National Gallery) holds a comprehensive collection of early, modern and contemporary art from Jamaica along with smaller Caribbean and international holdings. A significant part of its collections is on permanent view. The National Gallery also has an active exhibition programme, which includes retrospectives of work by major Jamaican artists, thematic exhibitions, guest-curated exhibitions, touring exhibitions that originate outside of the island and, its flagship exhibition since 2014, the *Jamaica Biennial*, which has an international profile. The National Gallery offers a range of educational services, including guided tours, lectures and panel discussions, and children's art programmes and also operates a gift shop and coffee shop.

The National Gallery is located on the Kingston Waterfront. Since July 2014, the National Gallery also operates a branch, National Gallery West, at the Montego Bay Cultural Centre. This branch offers regular exhibitions and related educational programmes.

The National Gallery of Jamaica is a division of the Institute of Jamaica, Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment, and Sport. [NGJ Website](http://ngj.org)



# Credits

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Ministry of Culture, Entertainment, Gender and Sport.*

