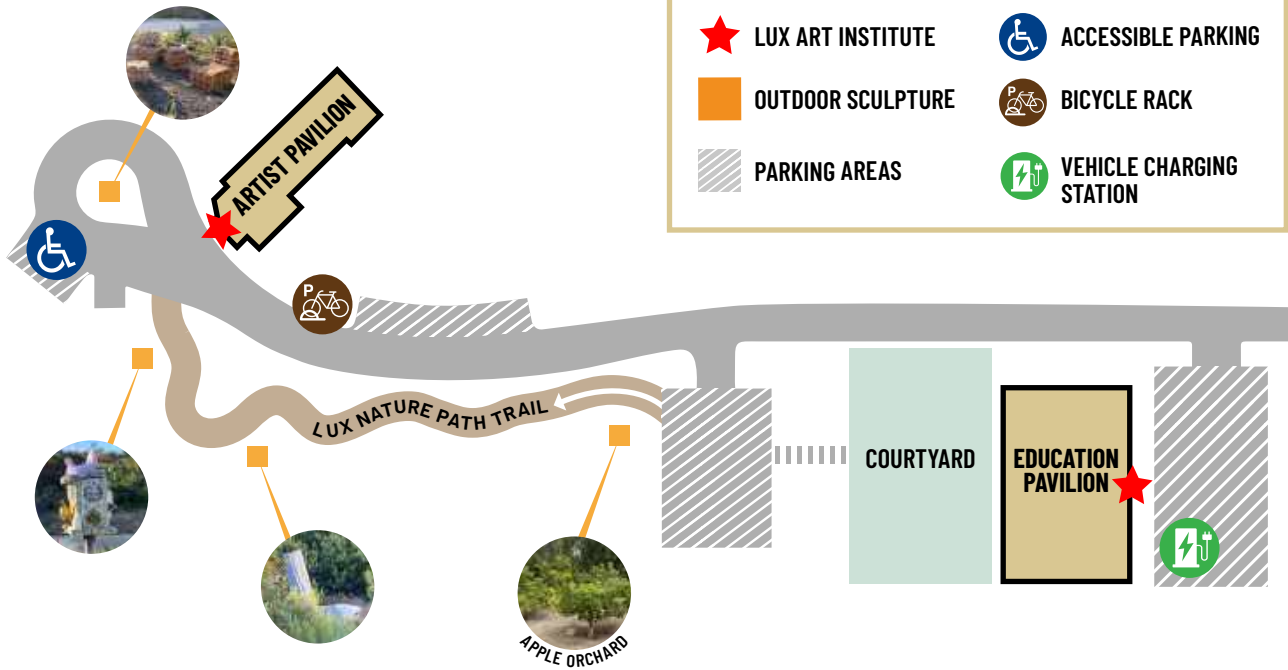




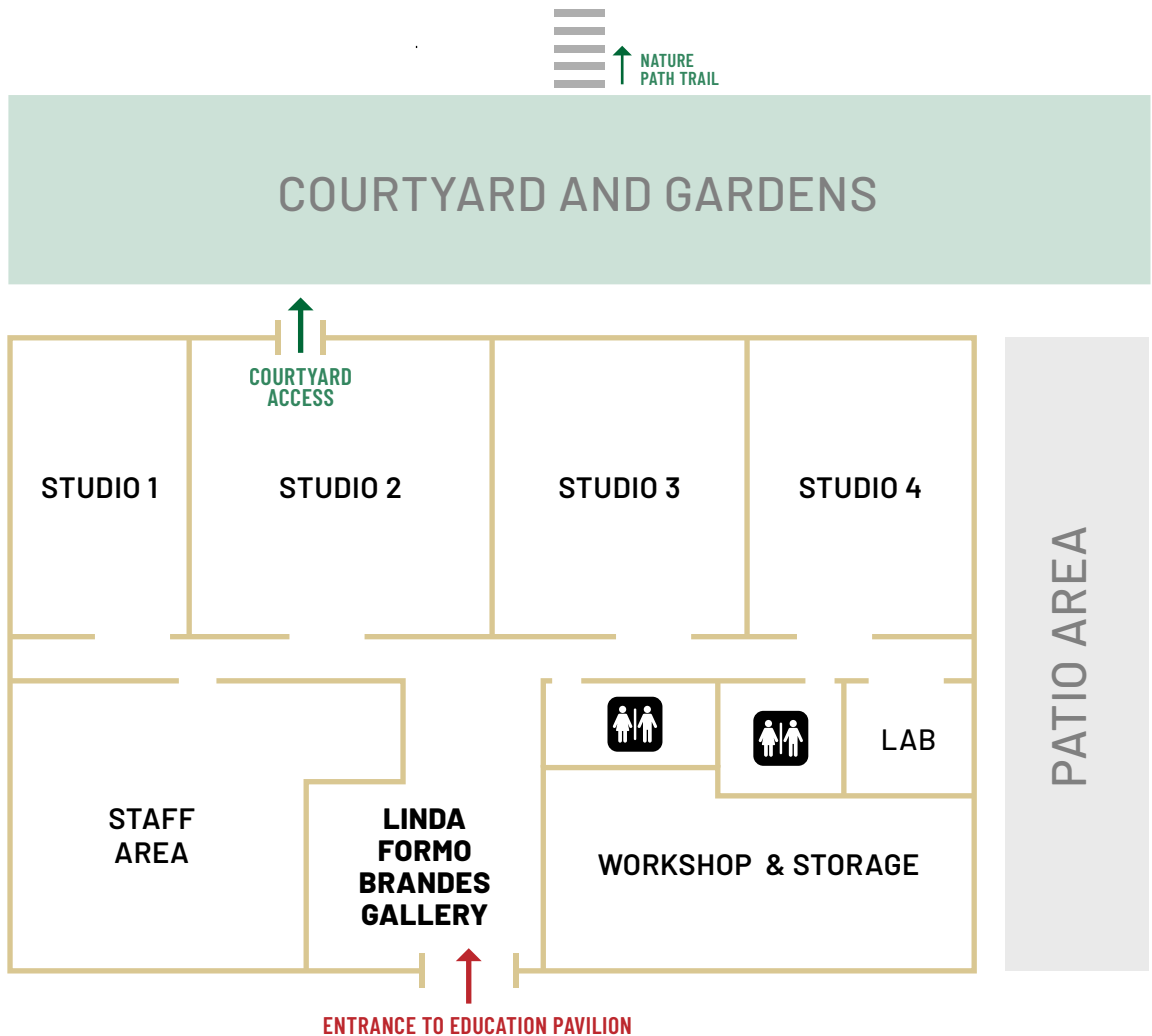
WELCOME TO LUX ART INSTITUTE

MUSEUM GROUNDS



EL CAMINO REAL

EDUCATION PAVILION





BELIZ IRISTAY is a Turkish–American artist working on the United States–Mexico border. As such her work is a representation of the identity created in the in-between spaces. Iristay creates installation work that critically examines the traditions in the cultures she has experienced, specifically as they relate to religion, gender, and custom. Her ceramics are created using Turkish and Mexican techniques and the clay is harvested from Mexican soil, representing two of her identities.

Iristay was born in 1979 in Izmir, Turkey and currently lives between San Diego and Ensenada, Mexico. She has recently exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; the San Diego Art Institute; SOFA Chicago; Miami Red Dot Art Fair Miami; and the Los Angeles Art Fair.

FEATURED ARTWORK



TRACING ACCULTURATION represents the artist’s journey, both physically and inspirationally, from east to west. The handmade Mexican adobe tiles are constructed from clay that Iristay harvested from her own land in the Guadalupe Valley. The mural takes us on a journey of influence and migration, starting in the east in China and moving west to the Middle East. The patterns we see explore the cultural exchange during the Silk Road period. Moving further to the left the Hagia Sophia, located in Istanbul, Turkey, rises out of swirling cloud patterns. The architecture is a representation of the transformation of having first served as a church and later as a mosque. The Greek figures underneath the Hagia Sophia indicate the influences that cultures had on each other. Next is a depiction of Zumrud-u Anka, a creature from Turkish mythology that represents rebirth. Located closely to a man and a woman this imagery symbolizes Iristay’s personal love story that ultimately brought her to the United States and in the end across the border of Tijuana into Mexico. The mural is a mix of materials, patterns, references, and glazes that form a map of cultural tracing in the artist’s personal and artistic journey. ■



Snake Queen & The Bird

Hand cast, hand painted red clay from Guadalupe Valley, Mexico. 2020.



**In order from left to right
Nazar I, Nazar II, Hook, Hands
on Hips, Comb**

Ottoman forms in Mexican adobe painted with underglaze paints. 2020.



Tracing Acculturation

Mexican adobe, hand made, hand painted with ceramic glaze and ceramic decals. 2020.



Enculturation Red and White

Traditional Chinese porcelain ginger jar and cast of Mexican red clay from Guadalupe Valley, hand painted with traditional miniature style, underglaze ceramics paints with Chinese made ceramic decals. 2020.



Good Luck Kitten

Ceramic slip cast of Chinese lucky charm kitten cast in Mexican adobe brick. 2020.



Compass

Slip cast of traditional ottoman form in red Mexican clay with commercial white clay from the United States. 2020.



Casted in Ottoman I, II, & III

Ottoman forms cast in Mexican adobe brick, painted with underglaze ceramic paints and ceramic decals. 2020.



Cundina Brick

Hand cast Mexican adobe brick with the artist's porcelain cast lips. 2020.

EVENTS & PROGRAMS

LUX OPEN HOURS

Thursday, Friday and Saturday

from 2pm-5pm by reservation only at luxartinstitute.org

■ **Beliz Iristay Virtual Reception & Artist Talk**

Have questions for the artist? Join us for this event!

Sign up for this virtual event at luxartinstitute.org/events

Friday, September 25, 2020, 6pm-7pm



1550 South El Camino Real,
Encinitas, CA 92024

760-436-6611 // info@luxartinstitute.org

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JAMAICAN BORN ARTIST COSMO WHYTE grew up in Montego Bay, Jamaica’s tourism capital, and immigrated to America to attend college. He is currently based in Atlanta, Georgia and Montego Bay, Jamaica. Cosmo Whyte’s work is strongly rooted in his personal experience: he draws on Jamaica’s rich cultural history and his own migration to examine the impacts of migration on both an individual and a nation’s identity.

While experiencing these artworks, consider these questions:

- What do you see that references ideas of belonging and migration?
- What ideas does Cosmo question through his work?
- What does home mean to you and what elements of home do you carry with you?

FEATURED ARTWORK

SOLE IMPERIAL references Jamaican sound system culture. Sound systems are a set of speakers built into towers. These systems are an integral part of Jamaican street culture, with a tower standing on many street corners competing for the most recognition and the biggest parties. Starting as early as the 1950s sound systems were vital to neighborhoods, bringing revenue through both ticket sales and the participation of local vendors. Sound systems continued to influence culture and music all over the world.

The sound systems are named and are known in their own rights, beyond the DJ that activates them. One such system is *Sole Imperial*, which was a sound system in a neighborhood where Whyte’s mother and uncle grew up. Whyte constructed *Sole Imperial* to imitate the speaker towers that to him “were so ubiquitous in Jamaica,” that he thought of them as “Jamaican totem poles.”

Whyte activates *Sole Imperial* with sound scapes, which he calls fieldnotes. In the fieldnote heard in the gallery Whyte interviews his uncle, who in the 1960’s was involved with Jamaica’s sound system subculture. His uncle talks about the role of sound systems in local ecosystems. Whyte’s uncle specifically talks about the sound system in the neighborhood where he grew up, called *Sole Imperial*. He furthermore talks about the importance of distortion used in dub music. The interview is accompanied by a distorted sound scape in reference to that conversation.

This is how Whyte views *Sole Imperial*: “This speaker system is not an actual cultural artifact, it is a simulacrum. By creating a representation, I am engaging in an ongoing reconciliation between cultural memory and cultural identity, and the reality of my personal change due to my own migration.” ■



Sole Imperial. Plywood, 12 speakers, 3 horns, 15 tweeters. 102"x72"x48". 2019.



ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE COSMO WHYTE

GALLERY GUIDE



Promis(ed) Land

Neon sign, canvas backdrop, reclaimed shipping pallets, 4 bicycle wheels, steering wheel, 5 speakers, 3 car batteries.

A Jamaican sound cart, a superficial landscape, and an inaccessible neon sign create an installation through which Whyte questions how access to migration and tourism impact cultural experiences.



Sole Imperial

Plywood, 12 speakers, 3 horns, 15 tweeters. 102"x72"x48". 2019.



Keloid Drawing #1 and #2

Charcoal on paper. 53" x 144". 2015.

In this self-portrait the abrasions on the charcoal drawing refer to keloid scarring and the memories and stories represented in those marks.



The Enigma of Arrival in 4 Sections. Section 3: Disembarkment

(Arriving Oct. New Edition)
Airline chair, fabric, plastic, Dutch ovens on shipping pallet. 2020.



Nocturn in Blue and Gold

Charcoal and mix media on paper. 84"x86". 2019. Courtesy of Richard & Susan Arregui.

Whyte works from archival photographs of carnival to think about how different diasporic communities have taken on the tradition of carnival to create new mythologies.



No Longer Yours

Charcoal and mixed media on paper. 50" x 76". 2019. Courtesy of the Buttgenbach Foundation.

We Buy Gold alludes to what initially brought explorers to Jamaica -the search for gold.

EVENTS & PROGRAMS

■ Art Exploration

An opportunity to discuss Cosmo's work with others!
Sign up for these free, virtual discussions at luxartinstitute.org/classes
Saturday, October 10, 11am
Thursday, October 21, 5pm
Monday, November 2, 12pm

■ Cosmo Whyte Virtual Opening Event

Friday, September 11, 6pm -7pm

■ Cosmo Whyte Studio Series

Have questions for the artist? Join us for this Studio Series!
Sign up for this virtual event at luxartinstitute.org/events
Friday, October 9, 7pm-8pm

■ On AiR with Cosmo Whyte

Sign up at luxartinstitute.org/art-access
Thursdays at 2pm PT

LUX OPEN HOURS

Thursday, Friday and Saturday
from 2pm-5pm by reservation only at luxartinstitute.org



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ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

COSMO WHYTE

LUX
ART INSTITUTE

IN STUDIO

October 1, 2020 through November 7, 2020

ON EXHIBIT

September 12, 2020 through November 7, 2020

**SEASON 14:
A NEW TERRITORY**





FRONT:

Sole Imperial. Plywood, 12 speakers, 3 horns, 15 tweeters. 102"x72"x48". 2019. Courtesy of the artist and Anat Ebgi Gallery.

OPPOSITE:

Promis(ed) Land. Neon sign, canvas backdrop, reclaimed shipping palettes, 4 bicycle wheels, steering wheel, 5 speakers, 3 Car Batteries. Dimensions vary. Courtesy of the artist and Anat Ebgi Gallery.

CONTENTS



Foreword
by Andrew Utt, Lux Executive Director



Cosmo Whyte: Black Is Not a Monolith
by María Elena Ortiz, Curator, Pérez Art Museum Miami



An Interview with Cosmo Whyte
by Guusje Sanders, Lux Associate Curator



AROUND 50,000 YEARS AGO, our human ancestors migrated across the world, forging new lands and new communities. It is believed that all humans now alive are derived from this migration. It is a testament to the resilience of human nature towards survival and acts as a unifier of all of us—one human family on Earth. Being so close to the San Diego/Tijuana border crossing makes the concept of migration all the more relevant in our daily lives. As an organization in a bi-national region, it is our responsibility to respond to the community that we serve. We support migrants locally and globally in their endeavors to seek out a better life and recognize their struggles and advances towards building that new life in a new place.

Just after joining Lux in the summer of 2019, I recognized the need to build conceptual rigor into our programs, empowering the public to learn and evolve their way of thinking about the world. With migration as such an important topic, both locally and globally, it was evident that we needed to explore the complexities of this topic in a more substantial way. By thematizing our program across an entire Lux season, we were able to dedicate our team and resources to provide the continuous and long-lasting educational programming that would constitute a depth of engagement in this theme.

We are pleased to present our first thematic season, titled *A New Territory*, which explores migration within our region and across the world. The artists chosen for Lux's residency program represent a wide array of experiences and cultural backgrounds. It is essential that the program we produce embodies the power of art to guide knowledge and critical thinking about our world. We commit ourselves to offer a megaphone to our artists so they may transmit their messages. This is the epitome of contemporary art—to present and engage the public in ways that inform, sustain knowledge, and generate action.

The team at Lux, through months of conversations and collaborations, have developed a season to remember, with the partnerships, programming, and physical and virtual engagement that Lux has become known to exalt. We thank the Buttgenbach Foundation for their continued exhibition support, the City of Encinitas, the City of San Diego, the County of San Diego, the California Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Sahm Family Foundation, and the hundreds of members who sustain us each year.

As we look back at our world's history during our Migration Season we work to uncover and share stories of migration in order to better understand how identities are shaped. Each of our Artists-in-Residence will bring a unique perspective on how time, place, and circumstance transform lived experiences. Cosmo Whyte's work is a captivating introduction to *A New Territory* as he considers how migration disrupts identity, connecting it to his own experience as a Jamaican immigrant. Whyte dives into what concepts of memory and belonging mean in the Jamaican Diaspora.

We look back on our personal histories to help us learn from the mistakes of our past and evolve towards a unified community. This year, let Lux Art Institute help you connect with others and envision a collective future for all. ■

Andrew Utt
Executive Director
Lux Art Institute

Cosmo Whyte: Black is Not a Monolith

MARÍA ELENA ORTIZ

Curator, Pérez Art Museum Miami



NO LONGER YOURS is an exhibition highlighting the works of Cosmo Whyte, whose intimate and poignant artistry seizes on Jamaican music, Caribbean landscapes, personal mythologies, alongside images of Black oppression. His multidisciplinary works start as an exploration of his Caribbean origins, continuing into a wider investigation about the complexities of the Black diaspora. Whyte's visual imagery of everyday objects is indebted to his upbringing in his native Jamaica, a continued source of inspiration. He creates installations, sculptures and two-dimensional works that illustrate the Black experience as a multilayered system. Influenced by the writings of Stuart Hall, Whyte's works do not essentialize Black culture as one totalizing concept; rather, he presents it as an amalgamation of various contested identities. Whyte, now living and working in the US, uses symbols from his Caribbean childhood, immigration, images of police brutality, and the British monarchy, whose colonial legacy is still felt in Jamaica. Alluding to Edouard Glissant, Whyte declares the multiplicity of his identity, and his right for opacity. The artist references cultural specific motifs related to the Black diaspora, but does not use art to reveal everything about himself through representation. In *No Longer Yours*, this strategy results in a series of heartfelt works that express Whyte's intersectional identity, embodying that Black is not a monolithic condition.

Belonging to a new generation of Caribbean artists creating works that address the connections of the islands to regional and international art movements, Whyte references different art histories. Cementing his role as an international artist, his installations and sculptures combine strategies from conceptual art, arte povera, and assemblage with his own Caribbean roots. He collapses artistic canons to portray the range of his identity. As Erica James comments, "Caribbean art then is a rejection of singularity and assumptions of wholeness or definitiveness in art-historical discourse, and presents instead a nuanced

consideration of aesthetics."¹ Whyte uses everyday objects found or bought with rudimentary qualities. Borrowing from the Duchampian transformation of everyday objects into ready-mades, Whyte takes found airplane seats, speakers, photographs, and other materials to challenge Caribbean stereotypes. Here, the artist is interested in re-signifying Caribbean material culture into the realm of high art. At first glance, his assemblages appear uncanny, juxtaposing impoverished materials with unrelated objects. With this gesture, however, Whyte creates thought-provoking sculptural compositions that push the viewer into uncharted territory through new associations related to the Black experience. Similarly, to Jamaican artists like Nari Ward from an earlier generation, Whyte's artistic strategy is to provide clues to the viewer without insisting on a didactic or a representational approach, leaving the work with open-ended interpretations. Challenging a picturesque and pragmatic approach that has stereotyped Caribbean art practice, the artist opts for using conceptual and installation strategies that can portray the complexity and ambiguity of the intersection of Caribbean identity, immigration, and the Black diaspora.

The Enigma of Arrival in 4 Sections. Section 3: Disembarkment (2020) is a large sculpture composed with an assemblage technique, in which Whyte combines what appear to be unrelated materials. The work includes a series of found airplane seats, broken plates, plastic tablecloth, chintz floral fabric, and a shipping plate. Placed on a shipping plate, three airplane seats are covered with a bright blue and pink floral fabric. The artist placed a plastic covering on top of the fabric—signaling to Caribbean households. It is common in some of the islands to cover tablecloths with a plastic sheet to protect the fabric. These

Nocturn in Blue and Gold. Charcoal and mix media on paper. 84"x86". 2019. Courtesy of the artist and Richard & Susan Arregui.

1 James, Erica M., *Sun Slashed*, Sun Slashed, Prestel Publishing 2015 p. 30

Caribbean motifs of home and domestic spaces are juxtaposed with the airplane seats, suggesting the process of migration. By covering these traveling seats with a precious, domestic fabric, Whyte converts them into family heirlooms. This artistic gesture is significant in its recognition of how the migratory experience, most often by plane, is passed generationally through families in the Caribbean. In the sculpture underneath the seats, there is a series of broken plates, signaling again to the domestic setting, but also to how immigration is an experience that breaks one's identity. Here, Whyte takes on a personal narrative to enunciate his migratory understanding—a moment of disruption that for Whyte is an unfinished and continuous process. By mixing plastic tablecloths, shipping pallets, and airplane seats, Whyte displays dialogic strategies and hybrid forms essential to the diaspora aesthetic.² Focusing on conceptual means, the artist assembled a sculpture that illustrates in a non-didactic way the dynamics of immigration in Caribbean environments. Commenting on a diasporic story, *The Enigma of Arrival in 4 Sections. Section 3: Disembarkment* combines both notions of *Caribbeanness* and immigration realities, proposing a longing, familiar, and dislocating experience.

In his artistic practice, Whyte pushes against Caribbean stereotypes, questioning illustrations of the region as an idyllic paradise for the consumption of tourism. Caribbean artists, along with Black artists, often are expected to portray conventional depictions of themselves or their cultures. Addressing the challenges of representation that pigeonhole artists, art historian Krista Thompson once commented, “picturesque images of the islands indelibly marks the visual imagination of the region so much that many people believe that the islands can only enter representation through a predefined representational lens.”³ Whyte's installation entitled *Promis(ed) Land* (2017) presents an exploration of notions of place, yearning, and simulacrum. Composed of three elements, this installation shows a large-scale backdrop of a beach scene. This image is used in photographic studios in Jamaica for tourism purposes. The image has a bright, kitschy style embodying the regional stereotypes. On the side of the beach backdrop, there is a neon sign advertising visas, passports, and green cards, signaling how locals are often looking for ways to migrate away from the region. Whyte uses words as images to illustrate a sense of desperation in immigration. In front of the beach scene, there is a replica of a Jamaican pushcart—a mobile device used by local amateur DJs to promote their music and sell mixtapes. The pushcart has a soundscape composed of The Jeffersons TV sit-com theme

2 Hall, Stuart. “What Is This “Black” in Black Popular Culture?, Source: Social Justice (Spring-Summer, 1993) p. 110

3 Thompson, Krista A., “No Abstract Art Here: The Problem of the Visual in Contemporary Anglo-Caribbean Art” *Small Axe*, Number 23 (Volume 11, Number 2), June 2007, p. 121

song, “Moving Up” and other recordings manipulated by the artist. Nevertheless, in the soundscape the only discernible words are from the popular song, specifically the phrase, “we finally got a piece of the pie,” which repeats every hour. The pushcart has been personalized, as it is common in Jamaica. Whyte decorated this cart with the colors of the Pan-African flag: red, black, and green. On the side of the cart, there is a phrase that says “the well-travelled negro,” another motif signaling the Pan-African movement led by Marcus Garvey.

In *Promis(ed) Land*, Whyte uses installation and conceptual strategies to portray inherent tensions in the Caribbean, which connect to the struggles of the Black diaspora. First, he presents the beach scene as a stereotypical image that saturates the region. For Whyte, the Caribbean is not a picturesque place or quasi paradise environment, rather a place of tension where informal economies often emerge and collapse. The pushcart becomes a symbol of this—an object which is precarious in its

“ **WHYTE TAKES ON A PERSONAL NARRATIVE TO ENUNCIATE HIS MIGRATORY UNDERSTANDING— A MOMENT OF DISRUPTION THAT FOR WHYTE IS AN UNFINISHED AND CONTINUOUS PROCESS.**

typical usage, made locally with discarded materials. Conversely, it is through reggae, dub and other music genres that some Jamaican communities have been able to provide a better life to their people, as well as a way to celebrate their prolific culture. The pushcart is decorated with symbols of the Black diaspora, highlighting how the struggles felt in the Black communities in Jamaica are connected to a wider history of racial oppression in the West. In the neon sign, Whyte uses the powerful words that allude to immigration to show how within this tense Caribbean environment, there is always a desire to migrate. Certainly, the work is imbued with a degree of irony, as the words “visa, passport, and green card” are paired with the theme song of The Jeffersons. Even if one migrates to the centers of the West, being in the US or Europe does not mean that the struggle dissipates, especially if your skin is black. On the contrary, one must continue the fight at times forming alliances with other Black communities, similar to what the Pan-African

movement attempted to do. *Promis(ed) Land* is composed of charged elements with deep resonance in Caribbean and Black communities. Their arrangement promotes a thought-provoking analysis about the histories of colonialism, desire, movement, and oppression that continue to affect people of color.

No Longer Yours highlights how carnival is inspiring to the artist, providing a space for exploration. Whyte is particularly interested in the historical, social and popular aspects of carnival—a social event that is deeply ingrained in Caribbean people around the globe with roots in enslaved societies. In *Nocturne in Blue and Gold* (2019), the artist presents a striking and mysterious drawing of a contemporary carnivalesque scene. Using an archival image taken at the West Indian American Day Carnival in New York, Whyte depicts a scene where a person is lying on the floor, who appears to have two heads and is holding books. In conversations with the artist, he has mentioned that he often imbues his compositions with figures that portray his own mythology. This character could potentially be a representation of that mythology. The charcoal image is mostly in black-and-white, blurring the boundaries between night and day and creating an enigmatic atmosphere. The person on the floor is surrounded by a multitude of people, who seem to be dancing or standing. One person specifically is near the figure on the floor, leaning forward into them with what seems to be a golden string or rope. This motif refers to the gold that Europeans were seeking when they started to colonize the Caribbean. In the drawing, the carnival participants' bodies become central figures in the composition, as their flesh and physiques dominate the image. It is hard to discern what exactly is happening in the image, illustrating an introspective approach towards portraying carnival. On the upper part of the drawing, there is a black, thick and horizontal line with swatches of blue. The line has the words “Western Union,” the company that many immigrants use to wire money to their families back in their countries of origin. By incorporating the name of the company Western Union, the artist points to how the people in the drawing could potentially have migratory backgrounds or a relationship to migration.

In *Nocturne in Blue and Gold*, Whyte's use of photography conveys his attention to reinterpreting images and a deeper analysis of carnival in contemporary culture. In this case, he reconsiders a real carnival image to create a work imbued with mystery and political implications. The people of color that appear in the drawing, who were inspired by the original photograph of a real life event, engage in carnival to express their culture freely without police or social oppression. The drawing creates a conceptual parallelism between the origins of carnival and its contemporary manifestations, specifically in Black communities. With origins in Africa, Europe and Southeast Asia, carnival emerged in enslaved Caribbean communities



Sole Imperial. Plywood, 12 speakers, 3 horns, 15 tweeters. 102"x72"x48". 2019. Courtesy of the artist and Anat Ebgi Gallery.

during the late 18th century as a way to express subversion towards the established order.⁴ Carnival was the only moment that enslaved people could dance and celebrate in the streets, expressing their culture. In contemporary society, carnival retains its resistance tactics, becoming a site where people engage in social critique, even when carnival occurs outside of the region. For example, the Leeds West Indian Carnival (the oldest in Europe) is known for creating parades that comment on police brutality and international conflicts.⁵ When Whyte includes “Western Union” in *Nocturne in Blue and Gold*, the artist signals how carnival continues to be a social resistance tactic for Caribbean communities living in migration, as perhaps one of the places where they can celebrate and elevate their culture in public.

No Longer Yours provides a close look into Whyte's oeuvre. Depicting the multiplicity of his identity, his multimedia works are inspired by Caribbean stories, images of Black protest, and Whyte's emotional negotiations with his migratory experience. Building on the legacies of installation practices, conceptual art, Caribbean and Western art history, Whyte creates his own mythology. He captivates the viewer by creating unexpected and free associations with unrelated objects. His visual imagery portrays the material understanding of diasporic passages bringing forth his experience into his works. ■

4 Marshall Zobel, Emily, Max Farrar, and Guy Farrar. “Popular Political Cultures and the Caribbean Carnival: Carnival is a Rich Resource for Cultural Resistance as well as Pleasure.” *Sounding: A Journal of Politics and Culture*, Issue 67 (Winter 2018): pp.34-49

5 Ibid.



No Longer Yours. Charcoal and mixed media on paper, 50" x 76".
2019. Courtesy of the artist and the Buttgenbach Foundation.



An Interview with Cosmo Whyte

INTERVIEWED BY: GUUSJE SANDERS, ASSOCIATE CURATOR AT LUX

■ **What medium did you start with and what influenced you to branch out to other mediums?**

I started with drawing. From a young age I was always drawing. I always thought of it as the preparation step towards painting, but I never fully enjoyed the painting process as much as the drawing process. I remember at one point William Kentridge came to give a talk at my school and he talked about the same kind of trajectory where he would draw in preparation for painting. He would struggle with the paintings and one day he was just like, "Why don't you just draw?" and that was an epiphany for me. Drawing is a valuable medium in and of itself.

I branched out because I am also keenly aware of the limitations of each medium and I always ask myself what is the best way to actualize this idea, is it drawing, is it sculpture, is it performative photography?

■ **A big part of your conversation is centered around nation building and identity construction, and how these two ideas are impacted by migration. With the large amount of emigration in Jamaica and the deportation of Jamaican diaspora, famously exemplified by the Windrush Scandal, how do you address the ideas of nation building and identity construction in your work?**

What is fascinating about Jamaica and the Caribbean at large is that we are all, whether or not we have the privilege of leaving the place where we were born, interacting with migration in some shape or form. I'm talking about contemporary migration, such as a family member that we know of who lives abroad. There are as many Jamaicans living on the island as there are in the wider diaspora. So there's always a sense of being connected to more than one location. That created a dynamic in which nationalities are fluid. It's not bound to just you living in that location, you're connected, you're tethered, or you're anchored to Jamaica, whether or not you physically live there anymore.

This is widely understood and accepted, from the government down to the people in the streets.

■ **So do you look at Jamaican identity more as a culture versus a nationality in some way?**

It goes back and forth. Nationalism, I find, is extremely rigid. Especially how it is talked about, for instance here in the US. It relies on a certain level of homogeneity. Even in the naturalization process they ask you to disavow your former nationality and I remember during that process thinking that is absolutely impossible. Why would I want to do that? Migration is always going to disrupt that identity. It's a negotiation between you and the context you find yourself in, the person you're talking to, and the institution you're dealing with. It's always fluid. What I find in Jamaica is that there is way more allowance for flexibility. It's understood that I can inhabit multiple different identities.

■ **With Jamaica being such a young nation and dealing with so much migration how do you think that the concept of nation building is impacted by migration? Also thinking about criminalization of immigration and deportation of Jamaican diaspora.**

I am really hesitant to go too deep because I feel that not being a sociologist I cannot speak in full length, but I do know it creates a lot of interesting dynamics. For instance, beyond the negative stigma that people who have been deported are given, there is also the issue that many of them have grown up or spend their entire lives somewhere else. So their connection to Jamaica is diasporic. They were born in Jamaica as children but lived their adult lives elsewhere, in a large case in England. So when they come to Jamaica it is a place that they're completely foreign to. How does the government and the society integrate those folks into the whole?

The thing I could say about nation building is nationalism always presents itself as static whereas cultural identity is never in a process of being completed and is always responding to something. That is a challenge when you have immigrants coming in because that changes things so rapidly.

■ **You mentioned the element of kitsch quite a bit in relation to the doilies, ceramics, and fabrics. In consideration of nation building, do you feel like the element of kitsch is a colonial leftover or reclaiming of the domestic space?**

It is a little bit of both and I could speak specifically from growing up in Montego Bay in Jamaica, which is the tourism capital. There are specific aesthetics I can speak to like the architectural aesthetic of kitsch that takes on this kind of colonial quaintness, but kitsch can operate in many different subgroups. There is

a kitsch that is very specific to dancehall culture. There is a kitsch that is specific to tourism, which I've always found was a way of reinforcing this imagination of paradise. Of the greatest escape for the European body to come to and reinforces old colonial tropes.

When they [kitsch] enter into domestic space, I think they take on their own life. They get layered to the point where you can look at doilies and you can recognize the colonial retention or they can be read as a colonial/postcolonial symbol, but they also exist on other levels. They become other things within that space. For instance, doilies specifically become a way of marketing value within domestic space.

■ **You described the abrasions in your charcoal drawings as keloid marks. Could you describe the thought behind those marks?**

Keloids are a buildup of scar tissue in the skin. I remember growing up I would always be climbing trees, just getting into all kinds of mischief, and coming back with all of these scars and bruises. My mother would always caution about keloids and so it's always something that fascinated me. As a young child I never viewed the scars as this kind of blemish on my skin. I could remember that particular adventure from that particular scar. So my relationship to scarring on the body was informed from that early experience.

Then I started looking at different ethnic groups within the nations of Africa and how they use scarification as a way of identifying. Or even in black fraternities they build keloids as a way of referencing affiliations. So I started thinking about scarring in a more expanded way than just a blemish on the skin. In the context of the drawings they become a way of documenting history and in some cases literally documenting the moments of completing the drawing. In other cases, especially when recontextualizing an archival image, it becomes an intervention into that historic moment.

■ **With English being the official language and Patois being the national language of Jamaica, how does your use of Patois contribute to the conversation around nation building and construction of identity? Especially thinking about the movement to validate Patois as a language of artistic expression.**

For me it was a way of positioning Patois on the same level as English, and trying to break down that kind of hierarchy between high and low language dialects. The other thing too is embedding within the work something that someone from the Diaspora can immediately recognize. It is being cognizant and intentional that regardless of where I am in the world; Jamaicans are embedded



Keloid Drawing #1 and #2. Charcoal on paper .53"x144. 2015.
Courtesy of the artist and Anat Ebgi Gallery.

in my audience. I could be showing in Norway and someone from Jamaica comes to see the show and just get it.

■ **You talk about ritual and pageantry in your work. Could you talk a little bit more about how you connect rituals such as carnival, to colonial, and postcolonial identities?**

Carnival has its roots in critique of both our colonial system and the slave plantation economy system. Over the years the genesis of carnival has been lost or is not as highlighted. I was drawn to carnival more as this kind of longing for something that I saw on a regular basis while in Jamaica and could take it for granted because it was always there. Once you're removed from that context, you're like, "Oh, man, I miss that".

As the political landscape became more xenophobic, I started to wonder what does it mean to gather in a space? What does it mean for an immigrant community to gather and declare themselves present and partake in rituals? In contemporary carnival discipline you have all these different islands and nationalities coming together with their different rituals and mythologies. I feel that these are fresh grounds to create new mythologies and that's what's far more interesting to me. The gathering of people and the merging of mythologies from different nations. I'm always thinking about that context, particularly in the US whether it's in Miami or New York, and the political landscape that tanks the meta narrative that hangs over the whole thing.

■ **Sound systems is another big part of your narrative in your exhibition at Lux with both *Sole Imperial* and *Promis(ed) Land* in the show. Sound systems are a major influence in the music scene and street culture in Jamaica and the rest world. How do you approach sound systems in the conversation of nation building and diasporic identities?**

What has been iconic within the various elements of Jamaican music is how it has traveled across the world and how it has influenced and has been influenced by contact with other

forms of music. I think it narrows the movement of people. I also think about how there's something quite beautiful about the sound system. About the desire for people to create. It's almost like the creation of a voice box and how that has traveled across the ocean. Growing up I always saw them as ubiquitous, they were more than just the sound system towers. For me they were the equivalent of our totem poles.

■ **How do all these concepts tie into cultural memory?**

The construction of the speaker systems and *Promis(ed) Land* are not actual cultural artifacts, they are simulacrums. They are engaged in this idea of cultural memory and trying to recreate the thing. I view all the drawings as an ongoing reconciliation between cultural memory and cultural identity, and the fact that I am changing due to my own migration. While I am not the subject in each one of these drawings, it is my reflection on these Western bodies moving through these different landscapes. ■



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