



Diaspora Vibe Gallery presents:

# Out Castes

*Crossing the line to the model majority: Contemporary Art of the Caribbean Diaspora*

Rosie Gordon-Wallace Founder/Curator

ART BASEL December 1-4 2005 / 3938 North Miami Avenue / Miami FL, 33127 / 305.573.4046

# Diaspora Vibe Gallery

Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator 501(c)(3)

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## Mission Statement

To promote, nurture and cultivate the vision and diverse talent of emerging artists from the Latin and Caribbean Diaspora through the artists in residence program, international exchanges, community and youth activities that celebrate Miami's rich cultural and social fabric.

# Diaspora Vibe Gallery

Featured "Out Castes" Artists

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\*Antonius Roberts

Ewan Atkinson

Juana Valdes

Caroline Holder

Erman

Luisa Mesa

Danny Ramirez

\*John Cox

Swati Khurana

\* *Visiting Artists from Nassau, Bahamas*

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## About "Out Castes" Rosie Gordon-Wallace

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Out Casts will bring together a diverse group of contemporary artworks that in one way or another responds and gives new substance to their definitions of being, feeling or understanding what it means to be "out Casts / out Castes." The Caribbean Diaspora wears this meaning on our stems.

The exhibition tracks the collective experiences of artists from different social systems and cries. Is the outcome different when you are from third-world to first world? Does the model majority have these feelings when the tables are reversed? Status of being labeled an alien, having a "green card" with all the fear that not having one conjures – leaves us knowing what being "outcastes" – feeling "out cast / out caste" really means.

These feelings are worn somewhat like clothing. They are not always apparent even to the person to whom they belong. The label also translates to membership in the class system that many immigrants are born into and remain attached to while living in the first world. The rituals of ethnicity and class many times conflict with the everyday living of immigrant life, and simply make zero sense to most onlookers from the first world.

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## About "Out Castes"...continued

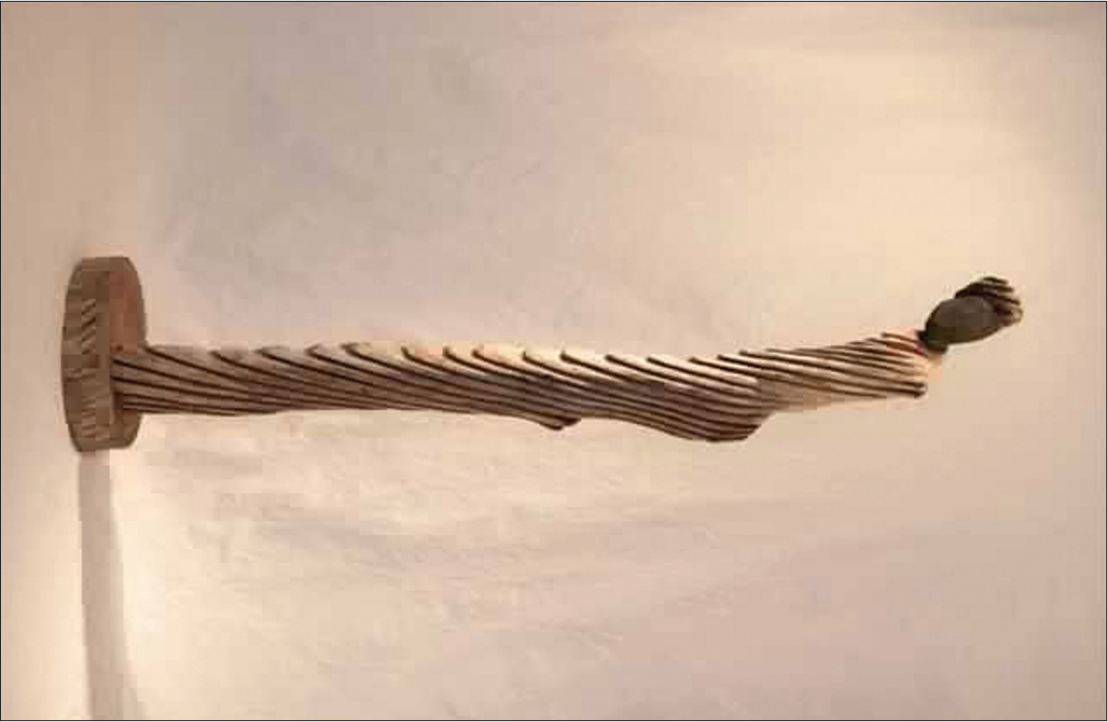
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There are consequences to the practices of many of the family rituals and often these are burdensome to the new generations born in the first world. Our discussions using art and conversations try to look at the customs practiced by some of our immigrant cultures. The issues that families living here have to confront, and the differences that exist with how immigrant families attempt to solve these issues have a lasting imprint on these communities.

Out castes: our attempt to navigate and understand the invisible rules of the model majority, are conversations we have had during this year among ourselves as diasporic families in the art world. Our discussions of integration into mainstream artistic communities have varied out comes. Our methods used to survive have varied out comes. Our resolve to endure and succeed have majority consensus within the diasporic communities, and our individuality in bearing witness, sharing and documenting our stories become our message to all.

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Antonius has participated significantly in the development of Art Education and National Art Gallery/Museum programs and institutions in the Bahamas. He has been awarded a Life Time Membership by the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas for service to and ongoing support of the National Art Gallery, from 1996 to 2004. A Recipient of a Commonwealth Of The Bahamas Silver Jubilee Award, The Cacique Award, and The Delta Sigma Theta Award, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to National Development in Art, he has also taught art at the local high school and college level for over eighteen years. In 1983 The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Antonius Roberts for outstanding and dedicated service in furthering the cultural and social heritage through development of The National Festival of The Bahamas for the role he played in organizing the first Junior Junkanoo competition for high school children. On December 16th, 2004, The Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture presented Mr. Roberts with an Award of Appreciation and the Junior Junkanoo parade of 2004 was held in his honour.

**ANTONIUS ROBERTS** / *Woman* / Wood / 2005

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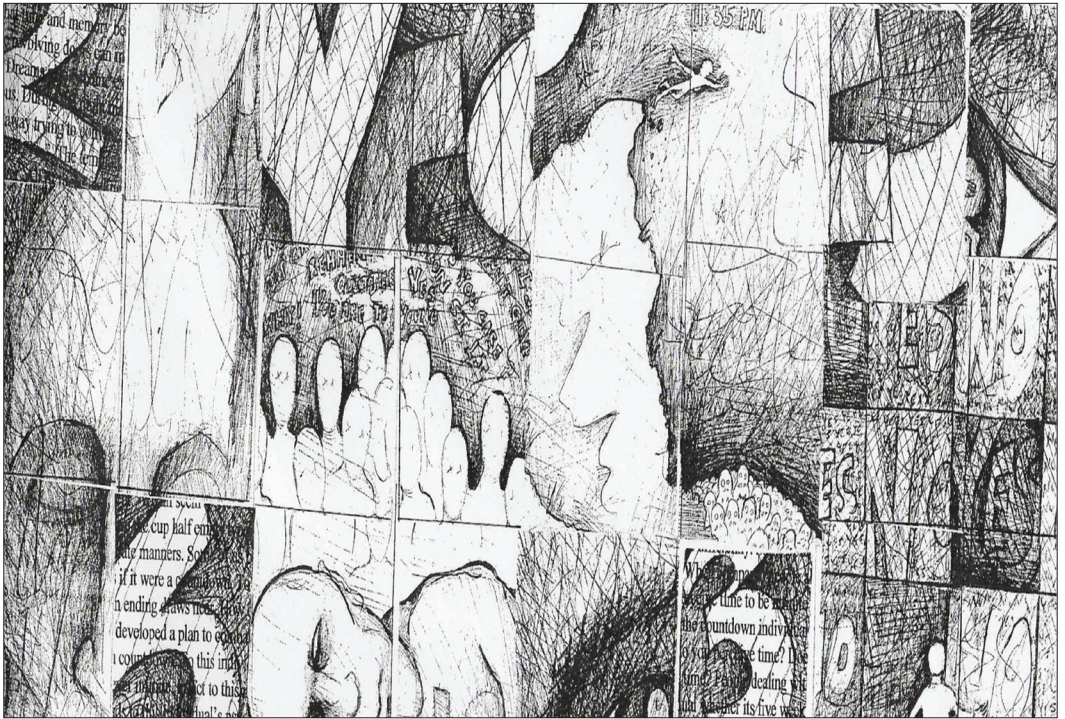
Despite occasional lip service to the “less is more” theory and years of relentless girl's-school brain-washing as to the vulgarity of excess, I cannot escape my long-standing conviction that more is, in fact, better. This, combined with a sheer inability to let well enough alone, has led to a body of work where forms originally simple in concept may be deconstructed, complicated and reassembled before evolving into multi-faceted canvases for dense, black and white drawings.

I work primarily in clay, fluctuating between the functional, the potentially functional and the ceramic object. Currently fascinated by the concept of potential utility even with forms too elaborate to be considered for practical use, I am also intrigued by all techniques of making, and my pieces may hand built, thrown, slip-cast or any combination of the three. I came to sgraffito after working for a long time in color with underglaze and maiolica. The technique really resonates with me because of its potential to be stunningly simple or ridiculously complex, because of its graphic and printmaking qualities, and because of the mental challenge of working in the negative. Also as a method which involves scraping away a surface to reveal concealed layers, it is practically and metaphorically well suited to one who cannot leave well enough alone.

**CAROLINE HOLDER** / *Raisin in Milk* / Ceramic / 2004

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In our daily routine of life the essence of time plays an essential part in society. We are awoken by the sound of our alarm clocks letting us know that it is time to get out of bed. We are constantly looking at our watches in order to arrive to work on time. We rush in and out from elevators before the doors close avoiding the embarrassment of arriving late to that very important meeting. We are hypnotized by the large clocks in our Doctor's office as we wait endlessly to be called. Calenders remind us that enough time has passed by to make us one year older. Generally time is infinite to the common citizen.

Nonetheless it is the perception of time which makes every second of every minute differ from individual to individual. The perception of time is actually a very interesting concept. We all seem to view time differently. Some of us are the half cup full type and others are the half cup empty type. When compared people also view or perceive time in two separate manners. Some of us perceive time to be infinite while others perceive time as if it were a countdown. To the countdown individual hours and minutes compile while an ending draws near.....

**DANNY RAMIREZ** / *The Countdown* / Ink Drawings, Soundscape Installation / 2005

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## SET 36

bear	July	friend	round
pear	August	shoe	wedded
tear	September	wedding	bridegroom
wear	October	small	feather
swear	November	tomorrow	everywhere
	December	the	is

- A**
1. A - guest is a holiday month.
  2. J - get going, eight days later.
  3. It is wrong to swear, but it is OK to say how long, how many days.
  5. Christmas is in December.
  6. What a gem - it still is!
  7. What are you going to wear - art?
  8. The wedding was about a week - a giant.
  9. Is my pencil thin - feel it!
  10. I have looked everywhere.

### B

1. FR--N-
  2. -EA-H-R
  3. P--R
  4. -R-DG-
  5. R--ND
- Always good to have.  
Very, very light.  
Sweet, with plenty of juice.  
Gets you across the water.  
This is what a ball must be.

### C

1. Mother is taking me to her friend's wedding tomorrow.
  2. I cannot wear this dress. There is a small tear in it.
  3. These shoes were new last November or December.
- July, August and September are the best months of the year.
- The groom is a friend, but he does not like pears.



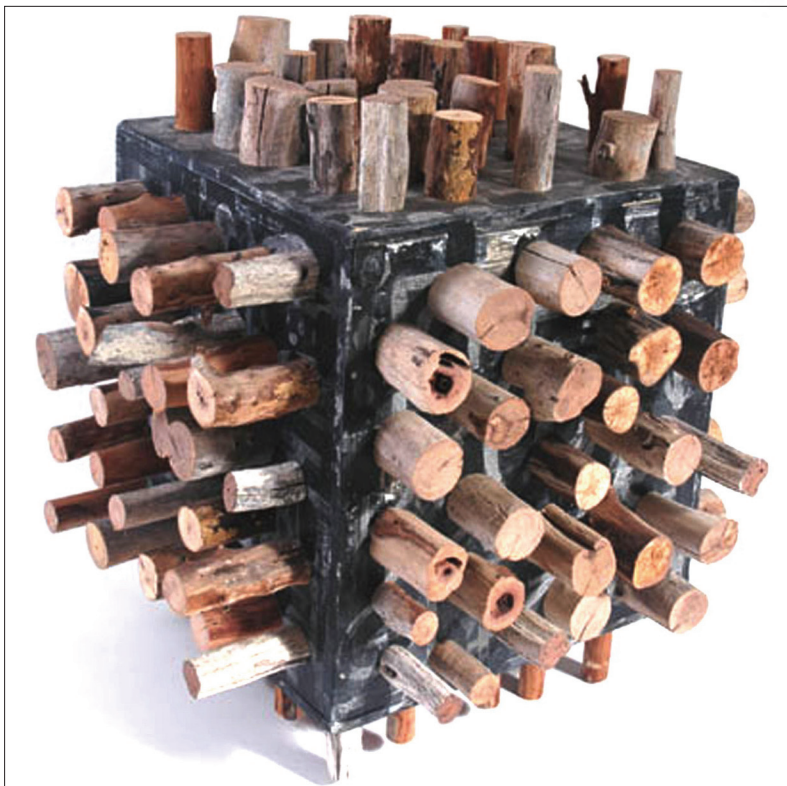
The relationship between personality and personal space has always fueled my work. The spaces that we create to hold ourselves and the objects that we gather are a reflection. We decorate. We attempt to define our own limits with these spaces. We are contained as much as the space allows, we decide which boundaries are solid and who we allow to trespass. In the Caribbean our combined aesthetic is gathered from sources as diverse as the people that populate the region. What factors have tied us to our identity? What choices have we been able to make in creating this aesthetic?

This work attempts to investigate identity, as it relates to the room, the objects that decorate a room, and to sources that may influence these decisions. How do we learn to build these boundaries? Questioning the role of education as a source provider becomes vital. Pages from post colonial text books, also decorated and modified, become alternative spaces. I play each character. Through them I explore my own questions about identity, its influences and its limitations. How these two kinds of space inform each other, how the source material may lead to expectation, or exactly how each character is behaving within their space remains ambiguous, merely suggesting the possibility that answers exist.

**EWAN ATKINSON** / *I Cannot Wear This Dress* / Digital Imaging / 2005

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I try to approach my work with a sense of curiosity in my surroundings free from culturally imposed obligations that come with being a "Bahamian Artist". Playing off cultural stereotypes about Caribbean Art is pivotal to how I see my work progressing in the future and finding its place within the trends of regional contemporary art.

Formal qualities exist in the work using graphic and cultural symbols that are intended to parallel images found in the media as well as in nature. The context of my work can be derived from anything from pure text to pure pattern. The narrative is formed through metaphors that translate from the raw material to the social statement.

**JOHN COX** / *Society* / Mixed Media / 2005

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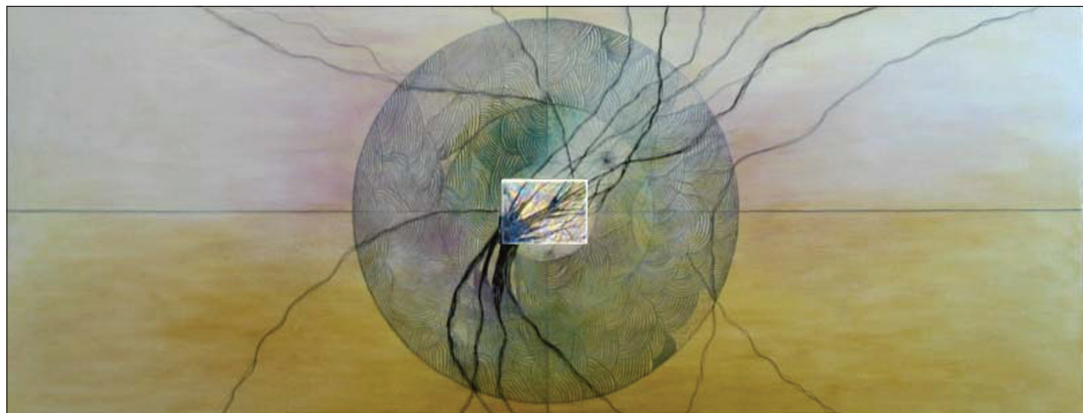


In this my third site specific instillation, as before, I set out to express an emotion visually, by inventing an atmosphere of a strange, staged setting. This fictionalized setting is fractioned and leaves room for interpretation while using references of thematic concentrations such as "family," which I have been working with throughout my body of works. I fabricated the components: multiple pairs of earthenware shoes, over a period of seven months in 2005. The hand-built footwear: women, men, child sizes and styles infused with wear, imperfections, individuality and other human characteristics, were created using three methods: hand constructed from memory, casted on people's feet or constructed using clay slabs and patterns taken from deconstructed, out casted, found and donated original shoes. They were all white glazed/ under glazed and fired several times. The writing on the wall, this time using an electronic LED sign, continues my using text as texture, layering, messaging and manipulating the viewing experience.

**ERMAN** / *The Last Mile* / Ceramic / 2005

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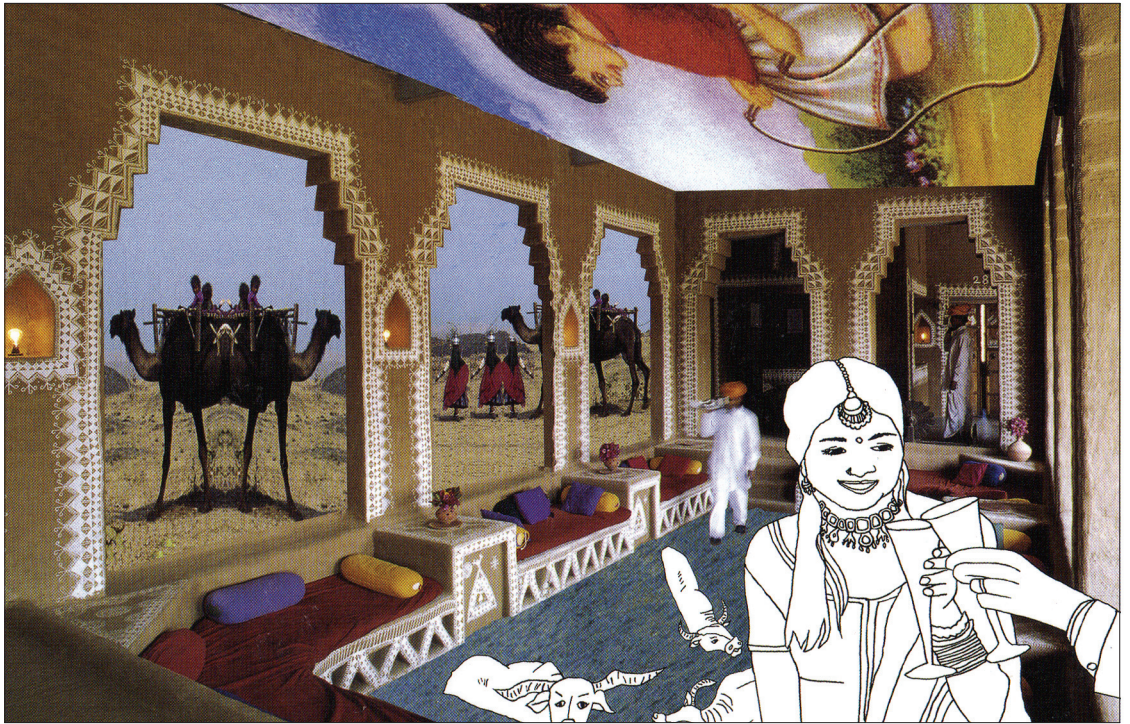
My lifelong interest in the unmanifest or invisible portion of our existence is the inspiration for my work. What we are, who we are and why we are, has forever intrigued me. The practice of repetition in my drawings is a tool I use to connect with my internal self. This practice of repetition, serves to bring forth unconscious psychic material, thus blurring the limits of the conscious and unconscious mind; it brings the dream-like imagery of the pre-rational mind to meet the intellect, opening the ego to self-knowledge, creativity and intuition. Carl Jung who called it "Active Imagination" used this tool. Connecting those usually separated compartments of the mind brings self-confrontation, self-expression and finally individuation... a term used by Carl Jung to express the process of self-realization.

At present – as I continue to explore the theme of the mandala – I am experimenting with light-boxes. The parts of the boxes that I choose to illuminate, serve as a metaphor for the process of self-discovery. The light, when placed in the center of the mandala, is symbolic of the journey to our own center. By creating smaller, off-center circlets within the larger circle, I am expanding on the traditional design of the mandala, both internally and externally. The concept of "a mandala within a mandala," or "microcosm within a macrocosm," alludes to our own existence as parts of a larger whole.

**LUISA MESA** / *Connected* / Mixed Media / 2005

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In the collage series 'Malabar Beach House Bride', I digitally collaged hand-drawn tracings of my own traditional Hindu wedding photos with found images of sumptuous imperial architecture, ethnic-chic interior design, and animal coloring books. These elements are constructed to create disorienting spaces of captivity and domesticity for the figures of the bride as she is contained within interior spaces. Under the glossy and ironic aesthetic of consumer-age pastiche lies a darker world of entrapment.

This series, in both concept and process, continues a major theme of my work--the line between the familiar and the exotic, using the Hindu bride a decadent and recognizable symbol of India. The contrast of the sophisticated, computer-generated images with the crude hand-drawings adds to the garishness of the composition. This visual disjunction also mirrors the dichotomous ideas around India, which operates simultaneously as the site of ancient civilizations and artisanal handicrafts and as the braintrust of migrant computer technicians and multinational call centers.

**SWATI KHURANA** / *Bathing Buffalos* / Digital Print / 2005

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Juana Valdes was born in Cuba and came to the United States with her family in 1971. Ms. Valdes' childhood/adolescent experience, which informs her work, is of leaving Cuba and growing up in the United States. One of her first experiences in the arts took place when she assisted the sculptor Christo with the installation of the Surrounded Island project in the Florida Keys. This experience, at a very young age, influenced her views on art and the process of art making. Her work is presently on view at The Berkshire Museum in the group exhibition "Presence of Light" curated by Kathleen Gilrain and at the Miami Art Central as a part of the Oscar Cintas Legacy. Juana Valdes work was included in the exhibition The Caribbean Abroad: Contemporary Artists and Latino Migration at the Newark Museum. The exhibition explored topics of migration from a historical context. Her work for this exhibition used visual imagery of water to refer to the geographical experience of coming from an island.

**JUANA VALDES** / *The Journey Within* / Porcelain / 2002-03

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## Thank You

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There are many to thank in planning and execution of this exhibition. First I want to thank the artists whose creative talent, intelligence and energy make the show possible. The board of directors who are devoted to the many tasks all year. The grantors that fund our projects. The sponsors and friends and family who encourage us to continue by attending our exhibitions all year. An ambitious project such as this takes months and requires an amazing team effort amongst the various art professionals. My thanks to Wanda Texon, Onajide Shabaka, Dr. Maria de Jesus Cordova, Kalia Brooks, Dawn Davis, our critical thinkers who continue to document our stories. Toby Thompkins, Carole Ann Taylor, Carl and Toni Randolph, Inez Cortes, Robbie Bell, Richard Williams, Tracy Slater Rigaud, Melissa Wildman, Charisse Grant, for their support "at the drop of a hat" during this our most defining year. To all I have forgotten to mention my sincere thanks. The numerous meetings and discussions were organized with assistance from Ayanna Jolivet Mccloud, Rodney Jackson, Roy Wallace and Stella Gonzales.

As we offer viewers of this exhibition a snapshot of contemporary diasporic artists' experiences and artistic practices, I look forward to the continuing dialogue this will engender and am hopeful that we will continue to act as a platform for examining unfolding developments in the Carib-



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## Thank You...continued

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bean and immigrant communities.

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