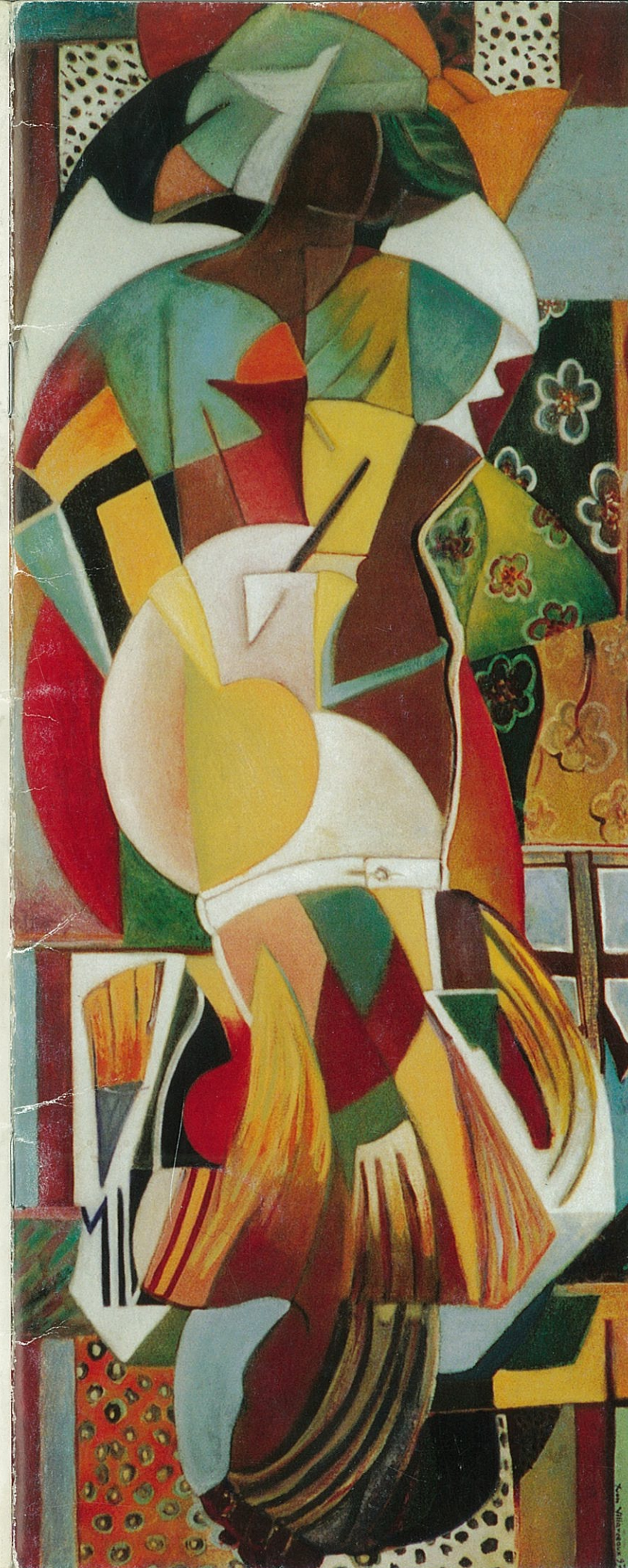


transforming
**the
image**

african canadian
visions
entering
the millennium



Thames Art Gallery
Chatham Cultural Centre
75 William Street North, Chatham, Ontario N7M 4L4



Thames Art Gallery



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Jim Adams

David Alexander

Buseje Bailey

Gordon Christopher

Michael Chambers

Ormsby Ford

Ali Hosein

Roberta Huebener

Artis Lane

Carlyle Matthew

Lloyd Pollard

Barbara Prézeau Stephenson

Yvon Villarceaux

David Zapparoli

July 5 to September 14, 1997



Thames Art Gallery
Chatham Cultural Centre

75 William Street North,
Chatham, Ontario
N7M 4L4

THE THAMES ART GALLERY is very pleased to be acting as host for *Transforming the Image: African Canadian Visions Entering the Millennium*. This exhibition helps to fulfil the Thames Art Gallery's mandate by providing art work that educates our community in the history, appreciation and practice of visual arts and promotes a greater understanding of artists from various backgrounds and cultures.

The paradigm of this exhibition is that we must dispose of the stereotypical "ethnic art" label that is and has been ascribed to art work from groups outside of Euro-Canada. Though their heritage is rooted in other countries, the artists who have created the works in this exhibition are very much a part of Canada's history and cultural mosaic.

Transforming the Image is significant to the Thames Art Gallery and Kent County because it recalls the history and demographic presence of African Canadian heritage in this area; back to the times and experiences of the "Underground Railway", the Dawn and Elgin Settlement, Mary Ann Shadd and Josiah Henson.

This project could not have been accomplished without the co-operation and assistance of numerous people. I would like to thank Marva Ollivierre and CAN:BAIA for providing their resources and support. I extend my gratitude to Rosalie Smith McCrea for the insights she has provided and for her dedication to the project. I am indebted to all the artists for creating the work that made this exhibition possible.

I would also like to thank the Chatham Daily News for their contribution as lead sponsor to the exhibition and The Canada Council for the financial support which made this catalogue possible.

Carl Lavoy, Gallery Curator

CANADIAN ARTISTS NETWORK: BLACK ARTISTS IN ACTION (CAN:BAIA) made a decisive and significant move when they invited the Thames Art Gallery to participate in the CELAFI 1997 celebrations for African Canadian aesthetic awareness. This catalogue documents the exhibition and provides the first foundation of a link that has now been forged between sister organizations.

The importance of exhibitions such as this one should not be underestimated. It is a marvellous opportunity for professional African Canadian artists who have rarely been seen and critiqued on a consistent basis, and within group shows, to begin aesthetic dialogues with small, high quality, regional galleries, and with African Canadian historical institutions, those that direct them, and, contemporary communities surrounding them.

In short, it has been an experience of intensity and awareness for me, first, to have been asked to curate this exhibition, and second, to have been introduced, mainly for the first time, to a group of remarkable creative people.

I would like to thank The Canada Council for the insight they have shown by supporting this catalogue publication.

Rosalie Smith McCrea, Ottawa, 1997

FOR FAR TOO LONG, the works of African Canadian artists have been encumbered with an "ethnic art" label, giving the public little context with which to view and understand the creations of these powerful image makers. Creating such a contextual backdrop for exhibiting, viewing and understanding the art of our established "black masters" became a key focus for CELAFI 1997 (Celebrating African Identity: Entering The Millennium), and the exhibition invitation extended by the Thames Art Gallery in Chatham, Ontario provided the ideal opportunity.

"While imagery, technique and spirit of 'black art' may have a strong cultural voice, it is first and foremost art."

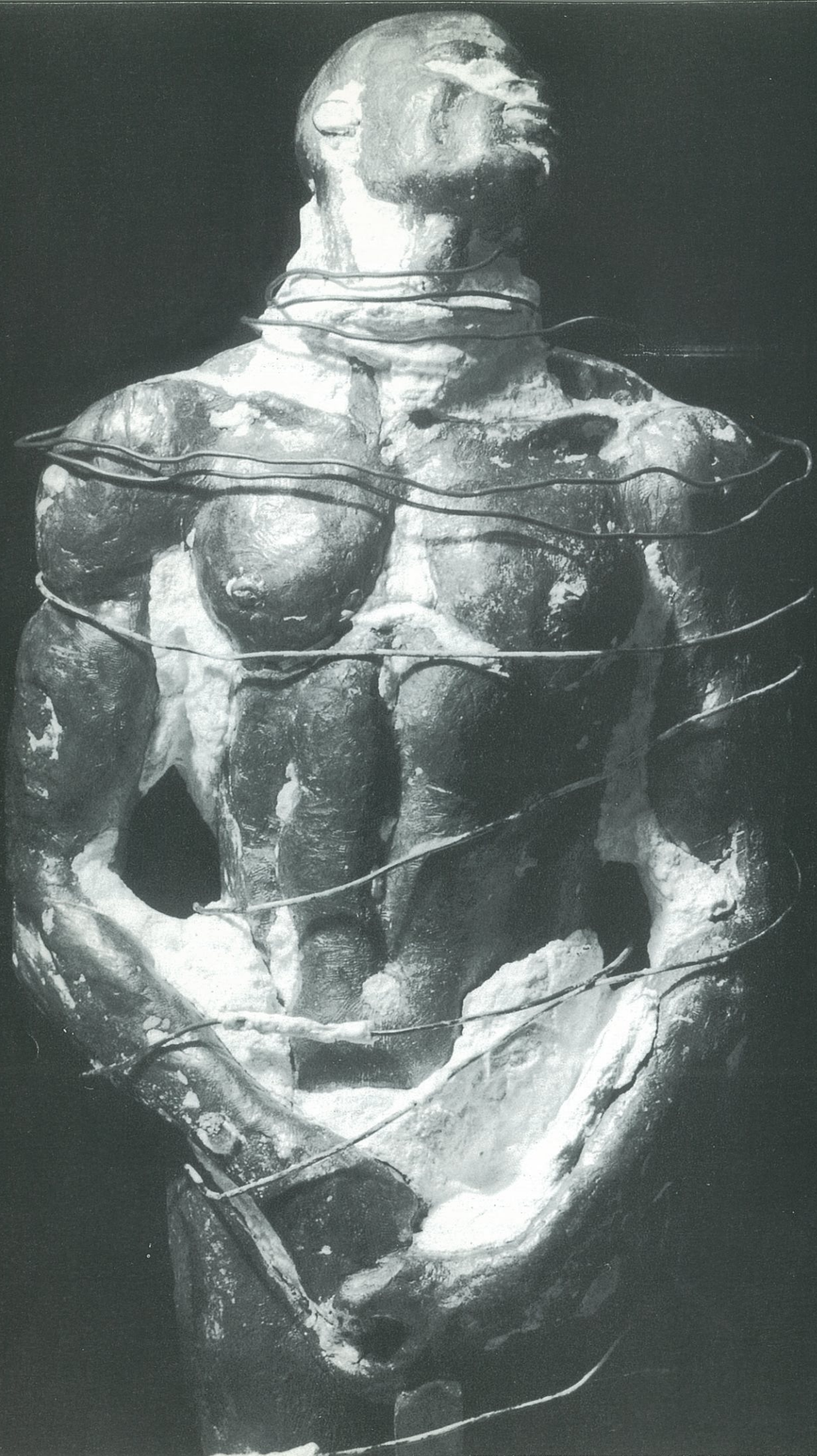
- Jim Adams, Visual Artist, Vancouver BC

The Chatham area of Southwestern Ontario, a disembarkation stop on the historic "underground railroad", is rich in African Canadian history. The Thames Art Gallery is the ideal location for a visual art exhibition that addresses the cultural contributions of African Canadians, and an apropos site for starting the process of "transforming the image", vision and perception of "black art".

CAN:BAIA (Canadian Artists Network: Black Artists in Action) found in the programming priorities set by Thames Art Gallery, Chatham Cultural Centre Board of Directors, a similar emphasis on broadening the public's awareness of the art created by Canadian artists. From this similarity of programming purpose and mutual sensitivity to our collective heritage, the collaboration "Transforming the Image" was born.

The works assembled by guest curator Rosalie Smith McCrea for this milestone CELAFI 1997 exhibition shatter preconceived notions and present a prolific challenge to mainstream concepts of "high art". It also, as we enter the new millennium, rightfully asserts the African Canadian artists' place in Canadian art history.

Marva Ollivierre, General Manager, CELAFI



*changing form,
condition
and character*

THE FOURTEEN ARTISTS in the exhibition *Transforming the Image: African Canadian Visions Entering the Millennium* were chosen to celebrate CELAFI/CAN:BAIA's second International Festival and Conference highlighting African Canadian identity, aesthetics and culture. The two significant features defining the choice of selected artists were the established nature of their art-practices, and the methodical preoccupation with works in series, and hence, the process of *metamorphosis, mutation and transformation* inherent in their practices and in this exhibition.

The artists represented here are characterized by unique visions and a commitment to artmaking. This has allowed them to recycle found materials, and reassemble or recreate new statements that are contextualized by a series of issues and themes. These issues include: theories on gender; race and identity politics; "hybridity" as a defining moment for African diasporic American cultures in the "New World", that is, Trans-Atlantic Slavery and the "Middle Passage"; tradition and symbol in the form of the mask; the sculptural fragment, or, the male human body as a metaphor of modernity; icons within popular culture; and the power of memory, landscape and myth. In short, these visions are a blending of African, and/or Indigenous and Euro-Canadian traditions, and the reclaiming of lost identities and histories. As we approach the new millennium, the confidence in themselves as serious professional artists, together with the content directions in their work, provide us with energy and hope for the new age. In the discussion to follow, I shall consider some of the changing forms, conditions, and character imbedded in some of the themes mentioned above that have informed the works of these artists over the past decade, and, in whose works we now behold images that have been transformed into new, vital aesthetic objects beckoning us to the millennium ahead.

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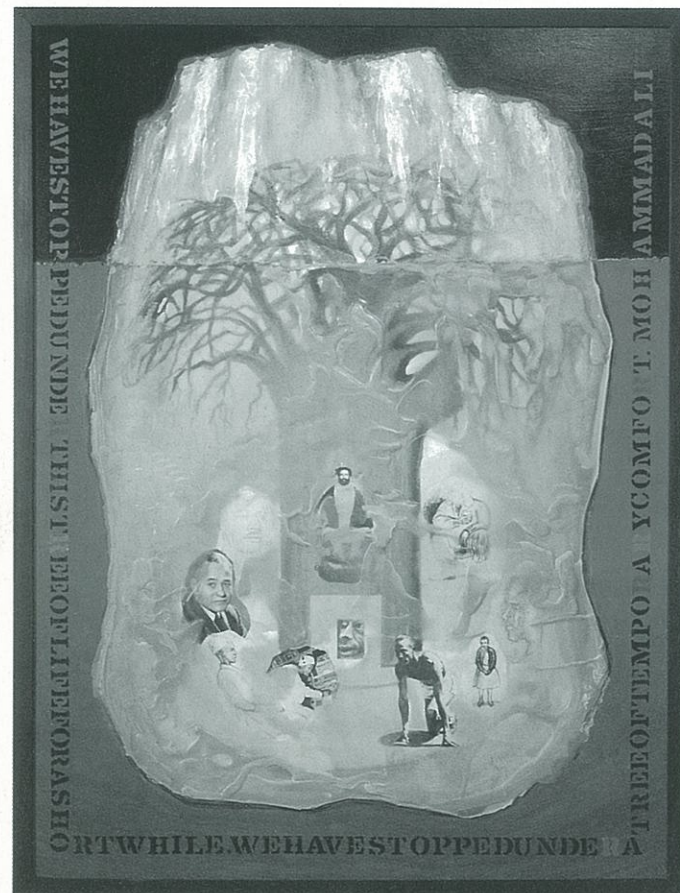
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During the past decade, **Jim Adams** has turned away from flight related images (the aeroplane) that were worked through in series for about fifteen years, to themes comprising the local landscape, figurative painting and sculpture. The pictures chosen to represent him were produced with the local landscape category in mind. The two works explore two aspects of this category. In *July Storms*, the artist presents a paradox on one strand of the local suburban landscape (the White Rock/South Surrey area) that is a commentary on the ambiguities within human life (earth) juxtaposed with the immensity, magnificence or the threatening weather of natural life (sky). *July Storms* is typical of other pictures in the series in which the artist has concentrated on the sky, which occupies about two thirds of the canvas surface. In a sense, we are made aware of the subtle undercurrents separating yet connecting

earthly and cosmic life. In *Isle of the Dead*, Adams draws attention to the humour, symbolism and modern usages by art historians and market driven entrepreneurs of the ancient architectural symbol of the pyramid. Repeated architecturally in its many variations in modern Western culture, such as I.M. Pei's Louvre Pyramid, or the pyramidal shaped Luxor Hotel with its hyped signage in Las Vegas, Adams' two pictures are concerned with the physical and emotional "states" of the environment, and the human condition within it, be they sublime or kitsch.¹

David Alexander, a native of southern Ontario, has works that, over the decade, have evolved out of his private philosophical and spiritual quests. This "philosophical edge" connected to this aesthetic program has, in part, been the reason for the artist to desire the "holding-on-to" of the past in the form of memory, or to precious natural objects in nature which he has either "captured, preserved or trapped" in the media of encaustic or paint. As in nature, where material forms have been fossilized over time in ice, amber or geologically decayed strata, Alexander seeks to preserve the past, the good in nature in general, and in the values and sayings within his family's geneological heritage in particular. His manipulation of the encaustic process

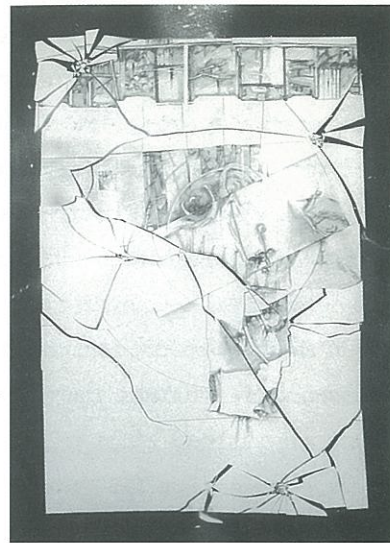
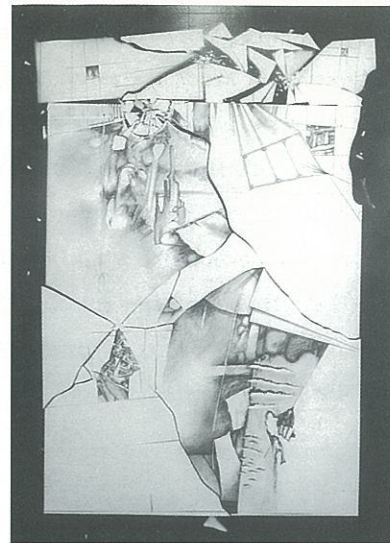
enables him to offer his preserved, captured or trapped work of art as a kind of "tithe", thus engaging the viewer in a subtle visual "conceit". His images recall memories that have been "preserved" from death and silence, in order to be remembered and commemorated.



David Alexander *Palaver* 1996



Jim Adams *July Storms* 1996



Gordon Christopher *The Imitation of Life No. I, II, III, 1994*

Exploring a different media, **Gordon Christopher** echoes like concerns. In the 1980s, his preoccupation with windows was explored in large colourfield serigraphs that were syntaxed by soft, organic photographic areas of relief produced in multiples. These works were "meditative in nature, representing, among other things, my life activities at the time; [and] my inward looking through the practice of Transcendental Meditation and Yoga".² The works in this exhibition represent an exploration of the external world, in both thought and method. *The Imitation of Life* series is a response to the fragmented nature of society and how it shapes one's thinking and doing generally. *Sentinel I* explores materials that aid direct expression. The work investigates, with more complexity, the motif of the window; what it conceals as well as reveals.

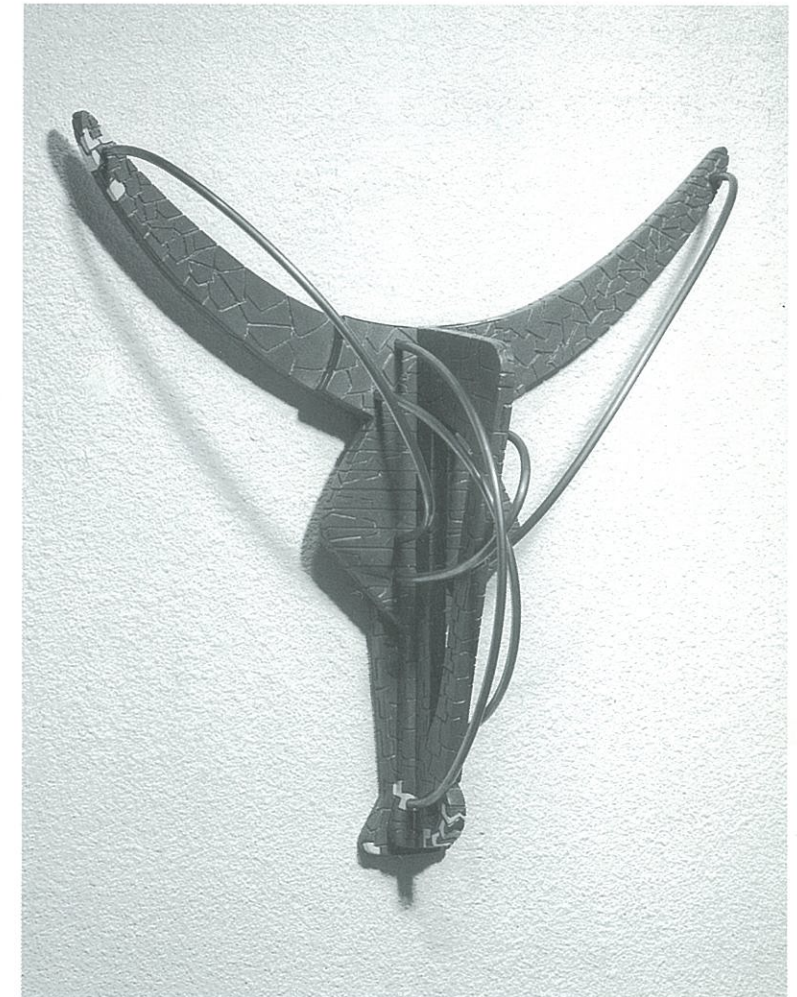
An artist who has examined, and continues to explore, the tensions between the West's scientific and technological culture (represented by digital and photographic imagery), and contemporary homogenizing culture, between reason and the implacable urges of the irrational, is **Ormsby Ford** from Québec. Ford's use of diverse techniques and media allow for the making of an art that is iconic and narrative in disposition, while being shaped by layers of earth colours and textural formation.

Maskmaking that echoes features of African diasporic culture has played a significant role in the practices of African Canadian artists. Two multi-media artists in this exhibition, **Buseje Bailey** and **Carlyle Matthew**, have carried it further by their integration of certain Euro-North-American postmodern elements. African masks were often created by combining different material elements from diverse sources in order to embody and represent the form or spirit of the dead. The mask could have the hair of a buffalo, the teeth of a carnivore, the body of a snake, and the face of a man. The special status and character of the mask depended on the different types of material used in its

construction. Fiber, fur, metal, wood, seeds, feathers and leaves have all been combined to create exceptional masks in various African tribes. When worn and danced in during initiation rituals, it is believed that the wearer/dead spirit can swim, fly and move, thus unifying several levels of emotional, spiritual and experienced life.³ In the classical European theatre tradition, the mask concept has often carried metaphorical roots when applied to the notion of persona. This implies the notion of the total personality being presented to the audience, above and beyond the actor who wears the mask. Again, this practice is rooted in magic ritual where masks became independent object/beings who possessed the man or woman who assumed them. Maskmaking therefore allows artists to discover a fuller, more integrated experience of reality. It implies, as well, a way of transcending the bondage of the ego in order to communicate with those in the present and the past.

For the past eight years, Bailey has been exploring the image/artifact of the mask. In her *Masks* installation, Bailey not only is the model for her masks, allowing for private thoughts and facades to rise to the surface, but her visage has become the medium or site through which she is being gazed upon by the viewer as she, the creator of her masked image, attempts to communicate with past ancestors. The names for her masks have been taken from traditional Yoruba deities that she has allied with the names of female family members. Bailey has muted the traditional African symbolic meaning and usages of the mask in favour of seeking to please her aesthetic sensibility and to satisfy her presentation of them.⁴

Carlyle Matthew's *Masks*, on the other hand, have shifted from three-dimensional works in wood and stone recalling Caribbean and Greek mythology in 1987, to masks carved from wood, highlighted with brass, copper and other metals. Underlying much of Matthew's practice today, as observed in the exhibition, is his earlier reference to the "Maasai Bull" and his attempt to go beyond the physical appearance of an object in search of essential spiritual qualities. Matthew writes that "the mask is not the object in itself, but a medium for the spirit within".⁵

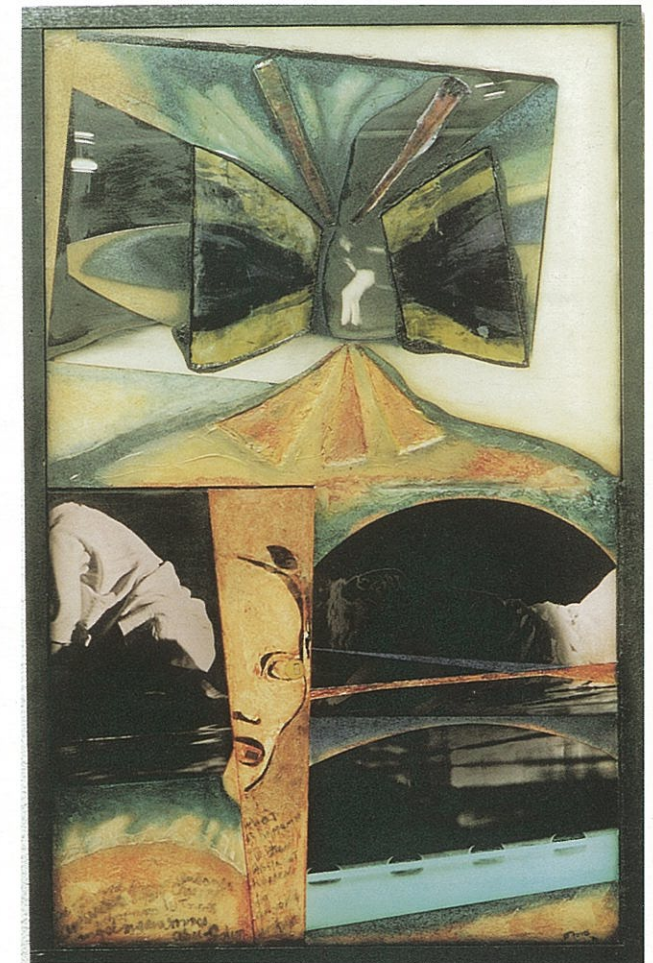


Carlyle Matthew *Mask Enigma 1996*



His masks have been transformed in several physical ways between 1987 and today, from traditionally oriented objects into works that accentuate actual spaces within the mask to convey the spiritual presence inherent in the creation. These changes have had more to do with the accessibility and use of modern materials and tools; for example, the use of sheet metal and tools for cutting and engraving. They function now as constructed, assembled objects that can be read as theatrical "props"; catalysts or vessels for communicating. In a subtle way, they also assume some element of carnival culture (Matthew was born in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad where he became familiar with folkloric tales in the "Shango Yard").

The mask titled *Mask Enigma* was carved to represent "the little understood spirituality of our Universe, of God and that of the materiality of our being and surroundings. In this mask, I have used the symbol of the Jig Saw puzzle to convey the idea of difficulty in trying to piece together a universal quiz. The lilac colour for me represents that of mystery and spirit. The looping bands of copper tubing represent the 'mask over mask' and presents an even greater puzzle to the viewer. The concept of 'mask over mask' is that even when one thinks one has understood the underlying mask (puzzle), there are other dimensions and greater mysteries of that mask to be understood. The parallel tribal incisions on the face of this mask are used chiefly as a bridge to the past".⁶ Matthew adds that the most important transformation in his masks are their uses. As a contemporary Canadian artist, these aesthetic objects are not concerned with traditional African functions, namely, fertility rites, initiation ceremonies, dance performance, or dances before the hunt. Not only have the masks as objects been transformed, but the reasons for making them have changed as well. In the present contexts, they have become receptacles for "ideas for concern; and impetus for thought and discussion; objects to evoke particular moods".⁷



Ormsby Ford *One Worthwhile Non* 1996

The explorations of the male and female body, whether in fragmented or whole forms, have been major sources of inspiration for **Artis Lane**, **Lloyd Pollard** and photographer **Michael Chambers**. The most established artist in the group, Artis Lane was born in North Buxton, a nineteenth century Canadian community built by ex-slaves from the United States and one of the final destinations on the "Underground Railroad". Her academic training began at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto and ended at the University of California, Los Angeles.



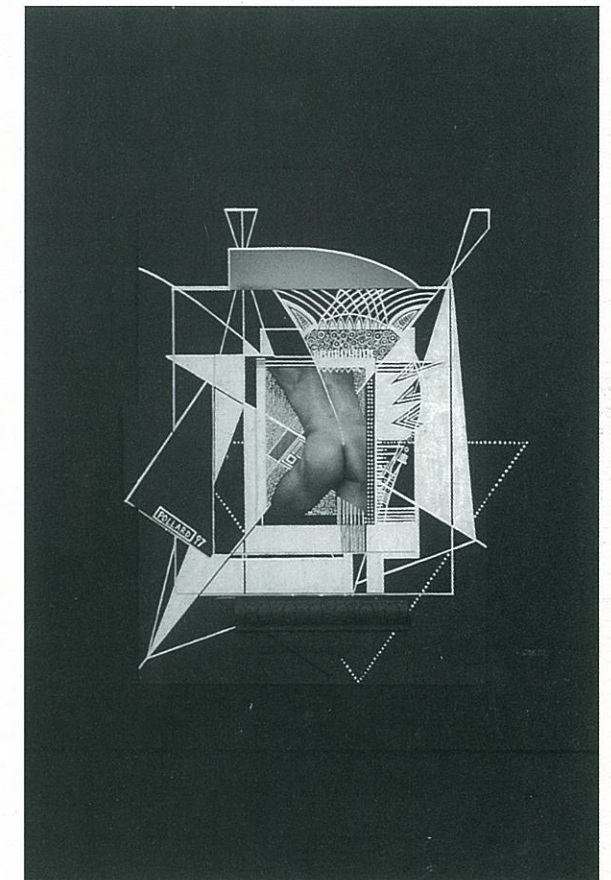
Michael Chambers *Boat - The Middle Passage* 1993/1994

Today, her works are in prestigious private and public collections in the Americas and abroad. She is the only artist in this exhibition whose work is represented in the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington.

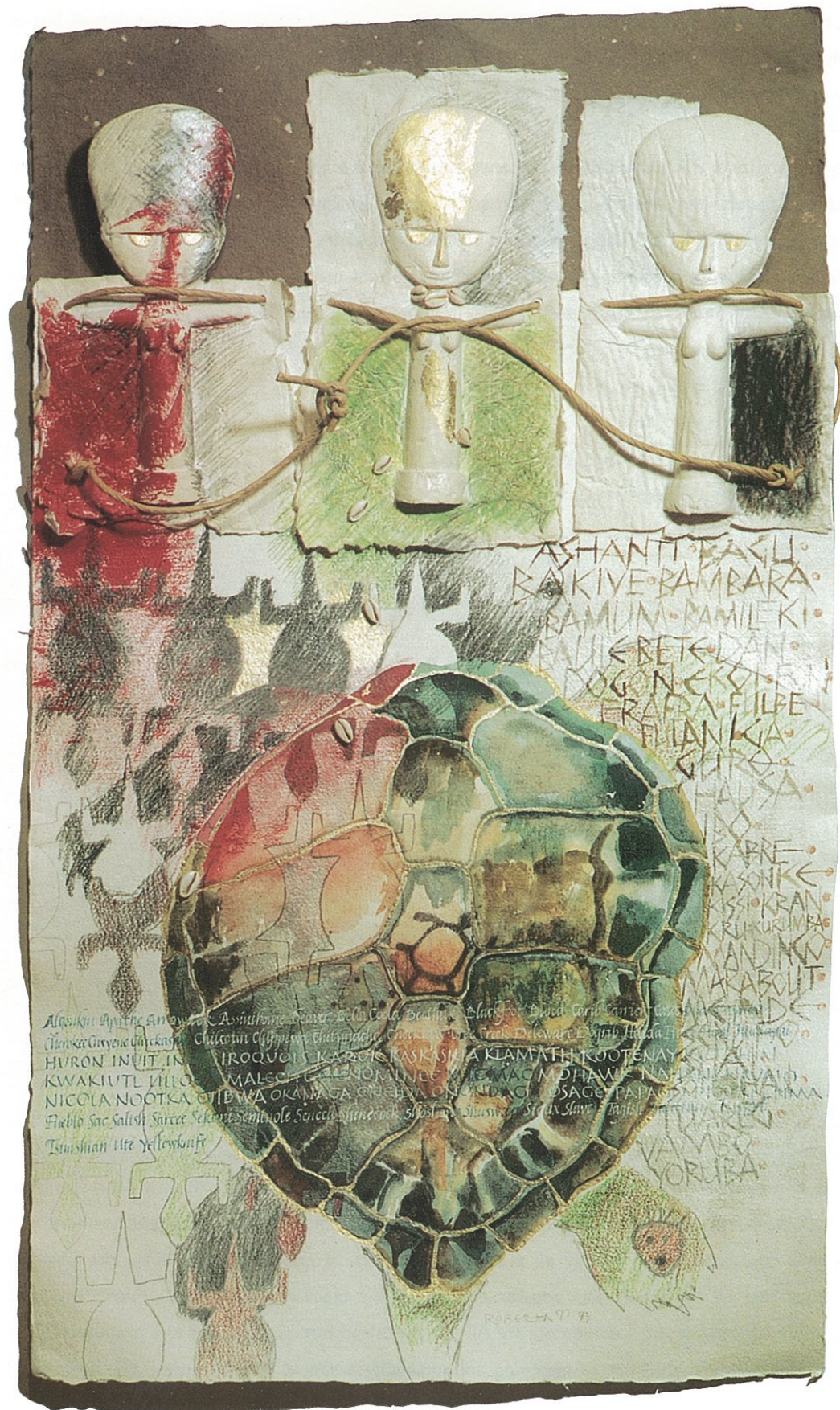
Like several artists in this exhibition, Artis Lanes' sculptures are informed by her private spiritual and philosophical beliefs. Her latest body of works (*Emerging* and *Emerging into Spirit*) is part of a series which she began around 1990. Lanes' aesthetic philosophy appears now to harness the male anatomy, in particular, as a site for presenting us with her soliloquy on the dialogue between the pain of mortality, suffering and death, and its opposite, desire; desire for regeneration and spiritual transcendence. In this, she defies and discontinues Western iconographical models and meanings behind the fragmented body, which from the late eighteenth century came to symbolize social and psychological modern experience - a shattering of connections, a loss of wholeness, and a "doing away" with altogether of certain values.⁸ She deconstructs Eurocentered notions of what kinds of art have been made to be thought of as "classic". Her corpus of works uses African, and African American subjects and styles which symbolize universals common to the diverse human condition.

In *Boat - The Middle Passage*, Michael Chambers directs the viewer's gaze onto the nude body, a site for Chambers associated with the "purest form of expression, energy and the human spirit".⁹ Often choreographed, this image plays on the historical past of slavery's trans-Atlantic journey through the "Middle Passage" and the arrival of Africans to the "New World", and in the present context, Negril Beach in Jamaica. The female figure is a cypher for several possibilities of meaning, among them, the process of becoming, and the evolution of, a people that have and will develop a new creole intellectual and cultural milieu in their new geography.

Pollard, like Lane and Chambers, is committed to the commemoration of the human body as a sacred and unique site for the artist to express strength, force and beauty in physical sculptural forms¹⁰. In his *Body-Mind-Soul I,II,III*, triptych, Pollard seeks to counter standard limiting views of the male anatomy in popular culture that understands the male anatomy only as a sexual and practical entity. He re-defines the negative assumptions cast by the media and popular culture on the black male subject in North America. Influenced by African art and a contemporary African American tradition, Pollard as a practitioner still maintains the Western tradition of idealizing and imparting a special unique quality and "Romantic"



Lloyd Pollard *Soul No. III* 1997



Roberta Huebener Africa in Turtle Island 1993

reading to the human figure as a carrier of large ideas, aspirations and beliefs for the artist and his or her society, as observed in the Renaissance art of Michelangelo, for example.

Four practitioners in this exhibition have been exploring ideas concerned with "the location of culture and identity". They are Roberta Huebener, Ali Hosein, Yvon Villarceaux and Barbara Prézeau Stephenson. Significantly, all four have either come from a Caribbean context, or, have parents and grandparents who have come from that region to North America. The locating of culture and identity from a diasporic viewpoint has always taken into account the notion of hybridity, creolization, and syncretic religious ritual practices¹¹. The West Indies as a geographical site has been home to Aboriginal, European, African, Asian, Middle and Far Eastern peoples. These artists are wanting to further understand their dual national identities, their multi-racial heritage, their geographical environments, and their history, while still being "Canadian".

Ali Hosein is a Canadian originally from Trinidad, who has in the past decade explored the themes of ancestors and dreamers. Committed to the use of re-cycled stone and steel from areas in which he has lived, Hosein combines his materials to pay homage to his ancestors, their secrets, dreams and messages that have been interwoven in Buddhist thought, West Indian oral traditions, and Canadian Aboriginal culture. While *Homage to First Peoples* commemorates the culture of the West Coast First Nations peoples, his *Dream Keeper* (one of thirty) can be read as a votive piece; a work that contains a core secret about ancestors. The structure of *Dream Keeper* is a vessel that preserves and maintains the core secret or dream of the artist/creator.

In *Whose Culture Is It, Anyway? - Domestic and Imported Aboriginal Icons*, an eclectic mixed-media work in five components, we observe a "Renaissance" sensibility at work. **Roberta Huebener** has taught art in high schools for several years. Her professional interests include the making of paper and books, calligraphy, and illustration of books. It is her professional interest in "seductive and tactile materials", namely paper, that has forced her to think more analytically about the processes of her artmaking.¹² *Whose Culture Is It Anyway?* recalls and acknowledges cultures and traditions in the Americas (Aboriginal and African) that have been eradicated or subsumed by contact with European colonialism. Huebener's usage and variety of shapes and objects that give form to the past and the present are powerful reminders of texts and subtexts, and the ambiguity of "hybridity" itself, the space



Barbara Prézeau Stephenson
Tell my Horse, Homage to Zora Neal Hurston 1994

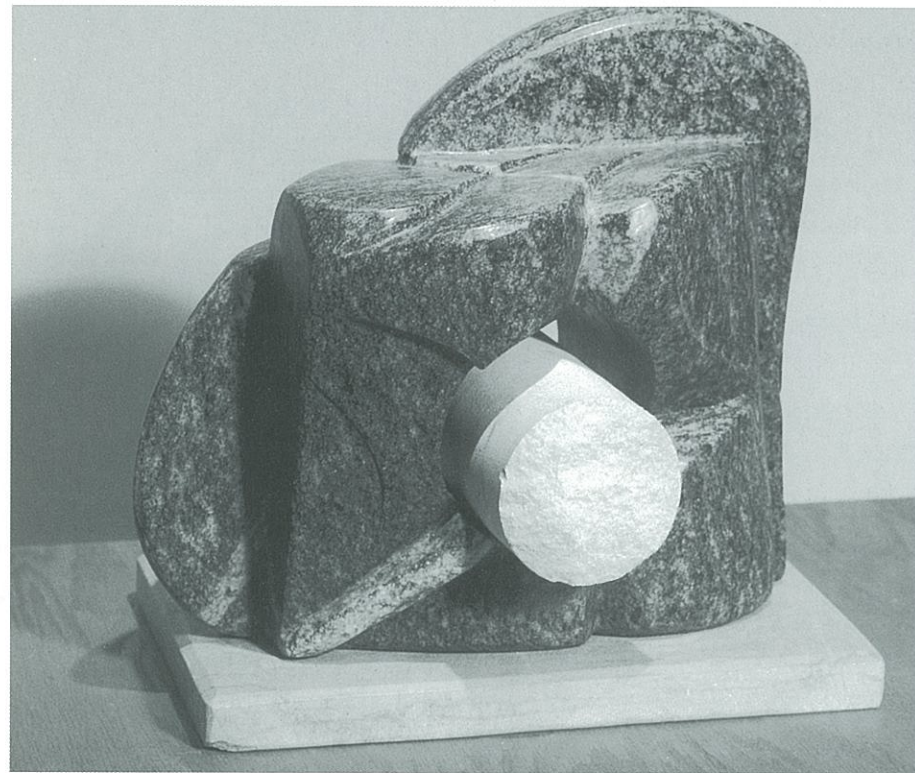
of having been, or remembering an old context as one is becoming, and beginning to realize a new one. The contact among Aboriginal, European and African is at the heart of this work that introduces one-dimensional and relief objects coming out of European iconography (the *Mona Lisa*, *Boticelli Venus*, and the *Clarkson/Phillips engraving of the Slave Ship "Brooks" of 1788-9*), African sculpture tradition (*Bakota ancestral guardian figures*, *Ashanti Akua'ba figurines*), and pre-Columbian West Coast Canadian stone masks. For Huebener, "five centuries of conquerors, merchant slavers, zealous missionaries, and cultural oppression clothed in secular democracy, has not erased cultural ghosts from the past who today bring suggested rites of passage for the next awakening".¹³

Both **Yvon Villarceaux** and **Barbara Prézeau Stephenson**, artists who formally trained in Canada,

are originally from Haiti. A visually sophisticated artist such as Prézeau Stephenson has, in the past decade, explored "hybridity" and creolization by blending a personal visual vocabulary, her manner of colouring, her Naïf forms with Euro-modernist figuration and formalisms, to arrive at a new and rich narrative, a matrix of imagination exposed by the emotional intensities of saturated colour. Prézeau's work is a mixture of colours, cultures and ritual that conjures up the primal, the tropical, and the future. To quote the artist: "Ma peinture doit être saisie comme...un crédo animiste et contemporain; quant à mes moyens d'expression, ils sont indéniablement 'bâtards', hybrides; par l'emploi rituel des couleurs: l'indigo, le rouge, le

blanc, le noir, ma peinture parle créole".¹⁴ Both she and Villarceaux use Haitian religious iconography which samples aspects of *Santería* (a blending of Afro-Catholic religions flourishing in the Americas manifesting their syncretic forms in *Santería*, *Vodun/Vever* and *Candomblé*).

Yvon Villarceaux's contributions have risen out of his practice of working in series, and the literal transformation of his appropriation of modern art's (old) Cubism for the use and development of something new. Unlike the old Cubism, there is more emphasis on colour, light and space, and although



Ali Hosein *The Dream Keeper* 1997

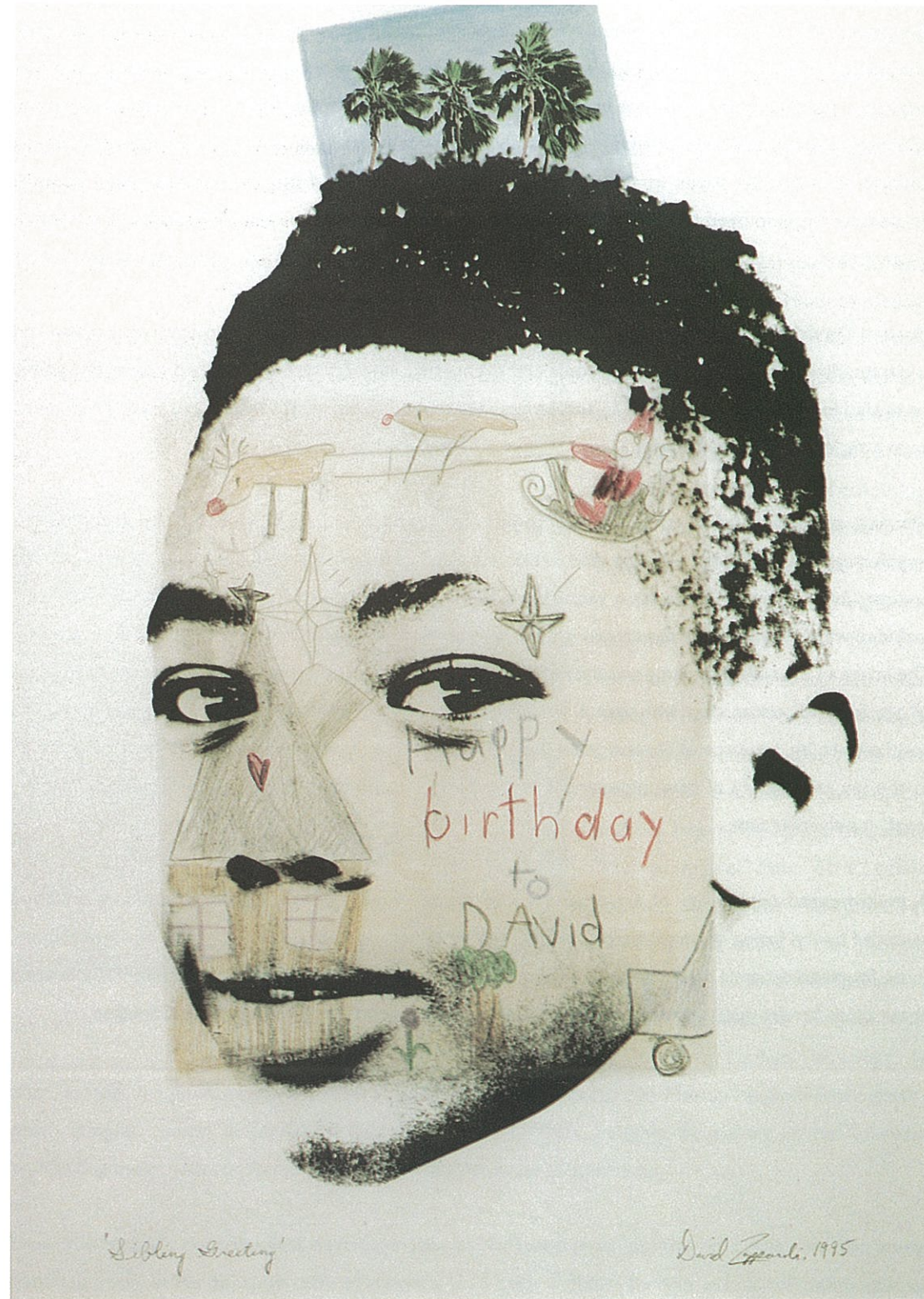
still representational, his imagery is more stylized. This transformation concerns the development of a new style of cubist painting which he refers to as "cube-organicism". According to Villarceaux, it is a new way of studying nature which has allowed him to create works that are multi-faceted and multi-directional. Significantly, *Flower Woman "Dans les Anges"* went through many titles that ranged from *Metamorphosis No. 3*, to *Travelling Spirits*, before arriving at the present title. His *Brisé and the Scarecrow* has a dual significance in that it was created especially for the current exhibition at Chatham, given the historical resonances for Chatham and the establishment of African Canadian communities in southern Ontario by runaway slaves in the nineteenth century emerging from the Underground Railway. Villarceaux has employed the "crossroads" symbol from Haitian voodoo religious practice to ornament his picture.¹⁵

Much of **David Zapparoli's** works in the near past have been shaped from memory, recollection and understanding of his past family life; people and events that have created, "watershed events in a young person's life",¹⁶ the basis of which is autobiographical. The works represented here have been taken from a series titled *Assemblages*.

His two prints are informed by a "recognition or dénouement" brought about by subconscious transformations. In *Sibling Greeting*, the artist has appropriated an image from Paul Robeson's *The Emperor Jones* in order to assert a racial pride through the wearing of a hat or crown on his head. Included within the image of the crown is the image of the palm, symbolizing the West Indian landscape. The image of the sibling greeting was indeed an actual event; a birthday greeting to Zapparoli at 14 years of age from his sister who was then 6 years old. The layering of images upon images has been, and continues to be, a source of revelation to the artist about his past life, its burdens and sorrows, as well as the joy and victory of new experiences at the birth and development of his own children, namely *Jonah*, his sleeping son.

A multi-faceted complexity of art practices informs the exhibition *Transforming the Image* which is textured by the fusion of myth, history, politics, memory and popular culture. For the new millennium, these fourteen dynamic artists are in a key position to provide the mainstream with new, positive ideas about roles for art in our society, visual language, imagery, and what it means to be Canadian.

Rosalie Smith McCrea, Guest Curator



David Zapparolli *Sibling Greeting* 1995

- ¹ My interpretations have taken into account the artist's written statement to me in a faxed letter dated 6/5/97.
- ² Gordon Christopher to Rosalie McCrea in a faxed letter dated 8/6/97.
- ³ This particular discussion of the African mask pertains to the Baga Mask. For more on the African Mask see Malcolm McLeod, *Treasures of African Art* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1980). See also Robert Farris Thompson, *Face of the Gods: Art and Altars of Africa and the African Americas* (New York, the Museum of African Art: Prestel, Munich, 1993).
- ⁴ Buseje Bailey in faxed letters to Rosalie Smith McCrea dated respectively 19/5/97 and 17/6/97.
- ⁵ Carlyle N. Matthew to Rosalie Smith McCrea in an "Artist's Statement" and faxed letter dated 13/6/97, 1997, p. 1.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p.2.
- ⁷ Matthew, "Artist's Statement", pp. 2-3
- ⁸ For more on the fragment and modernity in Western art see Linda Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994).

- ⁹ Michael Chambers in an interview with Rosalie Smith McCrea, 16/4/97.
- ¹⁰ For more on the representations of the black male body in traditional and popular culture in the visual arts see Thelma Golden (Ed.), *Black Male: Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary American Art* (Whitney Museum of American Art New York: Harry N. Abrahms Inc., 1994)
- ¹¹ For a recent postmodernist discussion on this subject see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994)
- ¹² Roberta Huebener to Rosalie Smith McCrea in an interview, 12/5/97.
- ¹³ Artist's Statement on "Whose Culture Is It, Anyway?" dated 1993.
- ¹⁴ Barbara Prézeau Stephenson in an undated typescript.
- ¹⁵ Yvon Villarceaux to Rosalie Smith McCrea in a written letter dated 6/6/97.
- ¹⁶ David Zapparolli in his "Artist's Statement" dated March 1996.

Jim Adams

White Rock, British Columbia

Jim teaches at an Art College in BC. He has exhibited in many solo and joint exhibitions in and outside of Canada. Adams' work has drawn much of its inspiration from Western popular culture, and the icons within it. Many of these icons are visually dissected, or appropriated into landscape or portraiture narratives that have a contemporary understanding for us. Stylistically, his work could be described as being postmodern and surreal.

1. **Isle of the Dead** 1996
(65cm x 104cm)
Acrylic on canvas
2. **July Storms** 1996
(72cm x 125cm)
Acrylic on canvas

David Alexander

Stirling, Ontario

Alexander is originally from Windsor, Ontario. His Fine Art studies were pursued at the Ontario College of Art and at the University of Toronto. His main concentrations have been in art education at college and high school levels. For the past two decades David Alexander has worked as a painter, teacher and free-lance artist and has exhibited extensively in group and solo shows across southern Ontario. These communities have ranged from Belleville, Stirling, Amherstburg, to Harbourfront, Toronto and Ottawa. He has also exhibited in Quebec.

1. **Palaver** 1996
(122cm x 91cm)
Encaustic and mixed-media
2. **Mates** 1996
(81cm x 51cm)
Beeswax and acrylic on window

Buseje Bailey

Toronto, Ontario

Buseje Bailey currently teaches at the Ontario College of Art. She is a well established art practitioner in the African Canadian visual art community. Like Adams, she has exhibited widely in artist-run centres here, and abroad, and has accumulated disparate critical reviews of her work. She is essentially a conceptual artist whose mixed-media assemblages and videos explore the issues of race, gender, class, and the power of memory; the art, and act of remembering. In several instances, the materials brought to bear on these projects have created an aesthetic tension between the beauty and surfaces of materials exposed, and the controversial historical dynamics within them.

1. **Masks** (seven in number)

Obatala

Wilhel Thorpe - The Grand mother of the children 1997

(40cm x 22cm x 23cm) Paper, wax, plaster

Yemaya

Iona Brown/Gray-Mother of all nations 1997

(32cm x 18cm x 23cm) Paper, wax, plaster

Oya'

Ernestine Salmon-Keeper of the narratives 1997
(38cm x 33cm x 9cm) Cotton doily, rattan and wax

Obba

C Leach - The sentinel 1997
(70cm x 28cm x 13cm) Organic fibre, wax

Olokun

BB - The contriver 1997
(129cm x 16cm x 23cm) Organic root fibre, hair and wax

Oshun

C Brooks - The prismatic 1997
(32cm x 40cm x 23cm) Paper, wax, plaster

Yegua - The narrative 1997

(72cm x 57cm x 10cm) Plaster, sand, chain

2. **Blood** 1992
6 minute video
Colour
This tape deals with an intense personal view of self-personification of race. Through touching the sexual self, sexuality itself is represented. This representation is reaction to exploitation of Black women's sexuality in history and contemporary media. This is a metaphor for rage.

Gordon Christopher

Calgary, Alberta

Calgary printmaker and photoetching artist Gordon Christopher is a highly sophisticated and technical printmaker whose works situate themselves within the trajectory of Euro-modernism, and its impact on West Indian cultural "hybridity".

1. **The Imitation of Life** No. I, II, III, 1994
(84cm x 112cm)
Ink and graphite on paper (broken glass as a stencil)
2. **The Sentinel No. I.** 1997
(122cm x 122cm)
Mixed-media (acrylic, pencil and aluminum on OSB board covered with wire)

Michael Chambers

Toronto, Ontario

Photographer Michael Chambers, graduate of York University's Fine Art Program, engages the viewer in black and white silver prints that visualize the human body and the human subject in new ways. These works either "dialogue" with the landscape by becoming sculptural shapes within it, or they present themselves as vulnerable subject/objects cast upon new shores in the Americas (be it metropolitan Toronto, or Negril beach in Jamaica) playing upon the historical fact of the Transatlantic marine voyages of Africans to the "New World" because of the slave trade.

1. **Boat - The Middle Passage** 1993/1994
(33cm x 43cm)
Black and white silver print on fibre based paper
2. **Untitled** 1994
(33cm x 43cm)
Black and white silver print on fibre based paper

Ormsby Ford

St. Lambert, Quebec

Ford is an extremely gifted artist from Montreal whose visions concerning the duality between order and chaos in nature, technology and in human nature, have given rise to a body of work which has an iconic and narrative quality.

1. **Damned Cruciform Interference Figure Keeps Interfering With My Jesus Contemplating My Anima Contemplating "Les Champs Transformationnels De Ma Conscience"** 1995-96
(85cm x 54cm)
Mixed-media (foamcore, lino-tile, tissue paper, acrylic paste and medium, photographs, collographs, oil, drawing) on wood
2. **One Worthwhile Non** 1996
(85cm x 54cm)
Laminated photographs (liquid crystal diode segments, acrylic paste and oil) on wood

Ali Hosein

Ottawa, Ontario

Coming from Vancouver, but now living in Ottawa, Hosein is an artist whose sculptures quintessentially exemplify art as a process of metamorphosis. Many of his works have been created in series, and several pieces emerge as new forms from previous statements. The richness of his forms derive authority from the experiences of his earlier West Indian culture, and the experiences of First Nations culture in British Columbia, after having lived in Victoria for many years. His works are grounded in notions about unity, harmony, and the interrelationship among all things in nature.

1. **The Dream Keeper** 1997
(33.75cm x 27.5cm x 17.5cm)
Recycled granite and marble (from Almont, Ontario)
2. **Homage to First Peoples** 1993
(57.5cm x 43.75 x 10cm)
Quebec limestone and recycled steel

Roberta Huebener

Ottawa, Ontario

Since the 1970s, Roberta Huebener has been teaching visual art in high schools in Ontario. As a founding member of several graphic, bookbinding and calligraphic societies, she has been engaged recently in bookdesigning and papermaking and has organized numerous workshops. Huebener makes extensive use of graphic, colour and calligraphic elements in her work, and has always used mixed-media, traditional and modern. Her latest projects involve the making of artists' books, because of the intimacy they afford the viewer, and the opportunity to "participate" in the viewing and touching of the work.

1. **Whose Culture Is It, Anyway? - Domestic and Imported Aboriginal Icons** (in five components) 1993

Africa in Turtle Island
(95cm x 55.7cm)

Mixed-media (hand-cast cotton rag paper, St. Armand paper, acrylic, watercolour, coloured pencil, chinese stick ink, graphite, gold leaf) on paper

Midwives at the Birth of Venus
(90.5cm x 76.5cm)
Mixed-media (as above)

Mona, the Lily of the West
(96cm x 64cm)
Mixed-media (as above)

Sleepers Awake
(78cm x 102cm)
Mixed-media (as above) with casts taken from a wood sculpture created by the artist

Slaves to Culture
(75.5cm x 56cm)
Mixed-media (as above) with photocopied images

2. **Babylon II** 1992
Book Project with Calligraphy 2/20
Excerpt from "Odawa Blues" 1992
Designed, lettered and bound by RH
Limited edition series for family and friends

Artis Lane

Ruidoso, New Mexico
(formerly of North Buxton, Ontario)

Originally from the Chatham area of the "Underground Railway" circuit, Lane, is based between Ontario and New Mexico. Currently working in bronze, ceramic shell and steel, Artis Lane is preoccupied with the "fragment" - the body in pieces, which can be seen as a metaphor for modernity.

1. **Emerging New Woman Fragment**
(Edition of seven) 1993
(36cm x 37cm x 15cm)
Bronze, ceramic shell and resin
2. **Emerging First Man Fragment** 1995
(52.5 x 20 x 16cm)
Bronze, ceramic shell, resin and wire
3. **Emerging Into Spirit** 1996
(90cm x 62cm)
A four run lithograph printed from one limestone and three aluminum plates.

Carlyle Matthew

Port Coquitlam, British Columbia

Carlyle Matthew is a Vancouver multimedia maskmaker whose masks are situated in the West Indian folkloric and religious traditions of the "shango yard" in Trinidad. Matthew introduces different metals on wood interwoven with graphic designs and textures in order to engage in discussions concerned with the "mask" as an icon for traditional African religious beliefs juxtaposed with its "New World" meanings around the carnivalesque.

1. **Mask Enigma** 1996
(68.75cm x 68.75cm x 24.38cm)
Pinewood, copper tubing, acrylic
2. **Spirit Building - Soul Foundation Mask** 1997
(52.5cm x 46cm x 39cm)
Copper tubing, copper wire, sisal

Lloyd Pollard

Brampton, Ontario

As a photographer with mixed-media interests, this artist has always attempted the process of defining maturation through the search for a personal visual universal. Pollard's current work has less to do with his being a black male artist, and more to do with achieving a harmony between the intellect, body and emotions conveyed in his artworks that are highly "finished" and crafted.

1. **Body No. I of III** 1997
(90cm x 60cm)
Photograph, mat, wood and acrylic
- Mind No. II** 1997
(90cm x 90cm)
Photograph, mat, wood, acrylic and nails
- Soul No. III** 1997
(90cm x 60cm)
Photograph, mat, wood, acrylic and screens

Barbara Prézeau Stephenson

Port-au-Prince, Haiti
(lived extensively in Montreal and Paris, France)

Haitian-Canadian, based in Montreal, Paris and Port-au-Prince, this painter has exhibited on many occasions in Canada, Europe and the West Indies. Her paintings may be described as expressionist and sensual in their intensities of colour and textures; her aesthetic draws upon the Haitian traditions of Vodun cult objects and the vévé sacred writings of African origin. Her pictures contain a primal concern with ecology, and the animistic and inescapably "hybrid" or "creole" elements within the diasporic sense.

1. **Réminiscence - Taino II** 1994
(38cm x 78.5cm)
Acrylic oil, pastel, collage on hand-made paper
2. **Tell my Horse, Homage to Zora Neal Hurston** 1994
(71cm x 51cm)
Acrylic oil, pastel, collage on canvas with "paquet congo" (voudou charm)

Yvon Villarceaux

Ottawa, Ontario

Painter, video-artist, and quiltmaker, prolific Ottawa based Villarceaux has been recently stimulated by geometric forms and organic matter. His recent cube-organic paintings incorporate various movements to seize and create a dynamic system of painting. Various movements imply not only the manipulation of materials to make the piece, but also the fact that each piece may be read from more than one perspective.

1. **Flower Woman "Dans les Anges"** 1997
(85cm x 205cm)
Oil on canvas
2. **Brisé and the Scarecrow** 1997
(75cm x 195cm)
Oil on canvas

David Zapparoli

Toronto, Ontario

Toronto based David Zapparoli works with hand-coloured photo-collages to explore his visions on childhood, and the cumulative imagery of autobiography.

1. **Sibling Greeting** 1995
(40cm x 50cm)
Hand-coloured silver based photograph
2. **Jonah** 1995
(40cm x 50cm)
Hand-coloured silver based photograph

I would like to thank the following persons who helped me in bringing forward this exhibition as well as the catalogue publication documenting the show:

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- Rosalie Smith McCrea

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Yvon Villarceaux
Flower Woman "Dans les Anges" 1997



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