

Visionary Aponte: Art and Black Freedom features fifteen contemporary artists in response to an extraordinary – now lost – historical artifact: a *Book of Paintings* created by Cuban freedom fighter José Antonio Aponte, who was executed in Havana in 1812. A free black carpenter, artist and former soldier, Aponte led an ambitious antislavery movement in Cuba during the Age of Revolution. His book was confiscated and Aponte was forced to describe each of its pictures during his trial. To spark new awareness of Aponte's complex life and art, each artist evokes Aponte's trial testimony in new work – paintings, drawings, sculpture, video, mixed media and textiles – that engages how Aponte's portrayals of an array of subjects – Biblical scenes, landscapes and episodes in the history of Africa, Europe and the Americas – invite us to think, today, about how art and history shape social and political change.



Marielle Plaisir
Lamina 45, 2017
Mixed media
18 x 12 inches

Little Haiti Cultural Complex
The mission of the City of Miami's Little Haiti Cultural Complex is to present and preserve Afro-Caribbean cultures and train the next generation of leaders by leveraging arts and culture as tools for transformation and community building. The LHCC broke ground in 2006, as a result of the efforts and vision of the late City of Miami Commissioner, Arthur E. Teele, Jr. Since then, it has become a key engine of economic growth and community building in Little Haiti and nearby neighborhoods. Over 100,000 people per year visit or take part in LHCC programs.

We recognize Mireille Chancy Gonzalez, HCAA Chair, for her deep commitment to the Visionary Aponte project.



Fabiola Jean-Louis Studio

FABIOLA JEAN-LOUIS
Born in 1978 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY
<http://www.fabiolajeanlouis.com>

Lámina 26
“... inside a clay jar in the desolation of a Beach, Diogenes, protected by the Goddess Isis who favored him, and who is represented above in a carriage she rode down in every afternoon to provide him with all he needed.”

Fabiola Jean-Louis is a Haitian-born fine artist and photographer. As a girl growing up in New York, Jean-Louis was surrounded by art and fascinating characters. Her imagery seamlessly combines magic with the mundane and considers reality with the speculative to reveal hidden, unseen worlds. Her style is haunting, moody, dreamy, magical and mysterious as she blends the fantastic with her talent for visual storytelling. Jean-Louis stands out as an artist to be watched. As a visionary artist who reinvents her craft through practice, she manifests a distinct array of art works that incorporate myriad inspirations from space-time travel, sci-fi, costume design and surrealism within the uniquely composed worlds of her art. Jean-Louis's work has been featured in publications, such as *AfroPunk*, *Blerds* and *ArtInsomniac*. Her art has also been commissioned for books, album covers, branding and for models' portfolios.



Kelly Anderson-Staley

NINA ANGELA MERCER
Born in 1973 in Washington, DC
Lives and works in Bronx, NY
<http://windowsdoorsclosetsanddrawers.blogspot.com>

Lámina 26
“... jumping to the dock, greed meets death; there is also virtue as the right of Commerce and farther down happiness, cut from an engraving and superimposed on the paper, in execution of the idea the declarant expressed above.”

Nina Angela Mercer is a cultural worker. Her plays include *GUTTA BEAUTIFUL*; *RACING MY GIRL*, *SALLY*; *ITAGUA MEJI: A Road & A Prayer*; *GYPSY & THE BULLY DOOR*; and *MOTHER WIT & WATER BORN*, a trilogy, including *BETWEEN WHISPERED BLOOD-LINES*. Her work has been shared at the former Warehouse Theatre and The Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company (Capital Fringe Festival, Washington, DC); Rutgers University-Newark and New Brunswick (New Jersey); and in New York at Wings Theatre, Brecht Forum, The Classical Theatre of Harlem, Dr. Barbara Ann Teer's National Black Theatre, The Nuyorican Poets' Café, Abrons Arts Center/Henry Street Settlement, Dumbo Sky and The Little Carib Theatre. Mercer's writing is published in: *The Killens Review of Arts & Letters*, *Black Renaissance Noire*, *Voices Magazine*, *#SayHerName Edition* and *Continuum: The Journal of African Diaspora Drama, Theatre, and Performance*. She has performed in collaboration with Betty's Daughter Arts Collaborative, Angela's Pulse, Abigail DeVille and Charlotte Brathwaite, BWA for BLM and others. Mercer is a co-founder and co-director of Ocean Ana Rising: www.oarinc.org. She is currently a doctoral fellow of Theatre and Performance at The Graduate Center-CUNY. She holds an undergraduate degree from Howard University and a MFA from American University. She currently teaches at Brooklyn College. Find updates on Mercer's work at <http://windowsdoorsclosetsanddrawers.blogspot.com>



Glexis Novoa Studio

GLEXIS NOVOA
Born in 1964 in Holguín, Cuba
Lives and works in Miami, FL and Havana, Cuba
David Castillo Gallery, Miami, FL
<https://davidcastillogallery.com/artist/glexis-novoa/>
<http://www.glexisnovoa.com/>

Láminas 8-9
“... jumping to the dock, greed meets death; there is also virtue as the right of Commerce and farther down happiness, cut from an engraving and superimposed on the paper, in execution of the idea the declarant expressed above.”

Glexis Novoa was born in Holguín and grew up in Havana. He received a degree from the National School of Arts (1984). While Novoa has lived in Miami since 1995, he maintains a studio in Vedado (Havana) and works on site specific murals and ephemeral projects globally. Since 1987, Novoa has had solo exhibitions at the Cheekwood Museum, (Nashville); in Miami at the Lowe Museum of Art (University of Miami), Locust Project and the former Miami Art Museum; at the Worcester Art Museum (Worcester, MA); the Snite Museum of Art (University of Notre Dame, IN); and in Havana at Espacio Aglutinador, Castillo de la Real Fuerza, El Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes and La Galería Habana, among others. Novoa's work has been featured in many group exhibitions globally, including *Lost in Landscape*, Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea (Trento, Italy); *Politics: I do not like it, but it likes me*, Center for Contemporary Art Lanzia (Gdansk, Poland); *Perder la forma humana*, Museo Nacional Reina Sofia, (Madrid, Spain); *Caribbean: Crossroads of the World*, El Museo del Barrio (New York, USA); *Crisis | América Latina | Arte y Confrontación (1910-2010)*, el Museo Del Palacio de Bellas Artes (Mexico City); and *Arte e Vida: Actions by artists of the Americas, 1960-2000*, El Museo del Barrio (New York, USA). Novoa's awards include grants from The Joan Mitchell Foundation and Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation. His work is featured in important private and public collections. He has also completed several notable public art commissions.



Marielle Plaisir Studio

MARIELLE PLAISIR
Born in 1975 in Le Havre, France
Lives and works in Miami, FL
<http://marielleplaisir.wixsite.com/marelle-plaisir>

Láminas 2-3
“... the Punishment and banishment from Paradise of our first parents, who as they leave encounter a demon in the figure of a monkey who throws their sin in their faces with the same apple, the Owl Administerer of death (is down below), the Serpent that deceived Eve...”

Plaisir is a French-Caribbean multimedia artist who spent her childhood and adolescence in Normandy (France), before settling in Guadeloupe (French Caribbean) and later in Miami. Her strong attachment to her island occurred after her studies during which time Plaisir searched for, and from reading history learned more details related to her past and her identity. As a result, she combines painting, drawing and monumental installations with performance to present highly intense visual experiences. Plaisir's art blends life and fiction in both autobiographical and historical narratives from the Caribbean that touch upon universal themes like power, domination, life and death. She is inspired by Italian quattrocento, Latin American and Caribbean literature. Plaisir incorporates textiles, fibers and fabrics that are socially meaningful into her work. She uses her daily practice to examine the many roles of the individual within society. Her art conveys a sense of humor and beauty while exploring evidence of society's humanity that she discovers in our increasingly digital world. Plaisir's art is poetic. Her essence is theatrical. Her work may appear in many forms, including monumentally scaled installations or itinerate in-situ performances within exhibitions. Her compositions have been used as children's book illustrations, publications and as drawings for animation. Since 2000, Plaisir has exhibited in numerous group and solo exhibitions worldwide. She has also participated in various international contemporary art biennials.



Asser St. Val Studio

ASSER SAINT-VAL
Born 1974 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Lives and works in Miami, FL
<https://www.assersaintval.com>

Láminas 12-13
“Asked about what idea he had for the meaning of the figure of a young woman with a paper in her hand, cut out and placed on top, with the following inscription: My son, Peace is made, he said: That as he considered said adornment fitting, he cut it from a fan and, just as he found it, put it to use in his work.”

Asser Saint-Val is a painter, sculptor and installation artist. Cumulative and objective, Saint-Val's pictures, objects and environments are a surreal fantasia based on the aesthetics and metaphors of melanin and neuro-melanin – organic compounds responsible for human skin, hair and eye color (the former) and the latter for certain brain functions. Saint-Val's images are humorous and grotesque explorations of the metaphysical reality and materiality of melanin in relation to his identity and conscientious artistic voice. He sees melanin's molecular structure and its workings in the human body as a source of poetic possibility. Saint-Val thus blends traditional art media with an array of unconventional, organic materials – coffee, chocolate, ginger, tea and chocolate. Saint-Val believes each person has within a universe beyond this galaxy that holds everything needed.

Asser Saint-Val moved to South Florida in 1988. He earned BFAs in painting and graphic design from the New World School of the Arts. His work has been exhibited in Florida, New York and throughout the Caribbean. His art is featured in prestigious private collections, including: Francie Bishop Good, Dr. Arturo Mosquera, the Rubell Family and Carlos Sanchoo. Saint-Val has twice received the South Florida Cultural Consortium Fellowship Award. In 2012, he created The Philosopher's Stone, a large-scale interactive public installation and his largest work to date, with support from the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners.



Atelier Jean-Marcel St. Jacques

JEAN-MARCEL ST. JACQUES
Born in 1972 in Richmond, CA
Lives and works in New Orleans, LA

Láminas 44b-45
“Several black nuns arrive at a temple named the resurrection, which was built in thirty days by Saint Mattheu. He is shown to one side, converting those same women and also Saint Paulinus of Nola, of the same color as they are.”

My great-grandmother made patchwork strip quilts. My great-grandfather was a hoodoo man who collected junk for a living. As a visual artist, I work mainly with wood and junk. These wooden quilts are my way of being with the spirits of my great-grandmother who quilted and my great-grandfather who collected junk. They are also my way of finding a higher purpose for the pile of debris that Hurricane Katrina left with me. All of the wood used in this work is reclaimed from my Katrina-damaged home in the Tremé neighborhood. On one hand, this particular series grew out of an impulse to find beauty in the ugliness of one of the worst human disasters that this country has ever experienced and on a more practical note it grew out of my efforts to save and rehab my house for me and my family.

I am a California-born self taught artist with deep Louisiana Creole roots, though I have a couple of academic degrees in other subjects. My first love is music and I spent much of my life as a poet and performing artist until Hurricane Katrina hit and sent me into this silent meditation from which emerged Jean-Marcel the visual artist.



Mary Noble Ours

RENÉE STOUT
Born in 1958 in Junction City, KS
Lives and works in Washington, DC
<http://www.reneestout.com>

Láminas 44b-45
“Asked again why he mingled the destruction of the army of Senaquerib with the invasion of Tarragona when nothing connects one with the other, he said: that even though the two events do not go together, he included that of Senaquerib by reason of History, like everything else in the book...”

Renée Stout grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and received her B.F.A. from Carnegie-Mellon University in 1980 where her focus was on painting. However, in 1985, immediately after moving to Washington, D.C., she began to explore the spiritual and cultural roots of her African American heritage through her increasingly sculptural works, which found their early inspiration in the aesthetics and philosophy of Kongo ritual objects. Stout's art attracted the attention of museum curators across the United States and led to her becoming the first African American artist to have a solo exhibition in the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art. Inspired by the African Diaspora, historical and current world events, as well as everyday life in her DC neighborhood, Stout now creates in a variety of media, including painting, drawing, mixed media sculpture, photography and installation. She has been the recipient of awards from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, the Joan Mitchell Foundation, the Bader Fund, the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, the Gottlieb Foundation and Anonymous Was A Woman. She was also the recipient of the Driskell Prize, awarded by the High Museum of Art (Atlanta, GA) and the Sondheim Award from the Baltimore Office of Promotion and the Arts. Stout's work is featured in many museum and private collections, nationally and internationally, including the Smithsonian's new National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC.



Ada Ferrer

ADA FERRER, Ph.D
New York University
Ada Ferrer (Havana, 1962) is Julius Silver Professor of History and Latin American and Caribbean Studies at New York University. Her award-winning book, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898*, examines the participation of slaves and former slaves in Cuban independence. Her second book, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution*, won six book prizes, including the Frederick Douglass Prize from the Gilder Lehrman Center at Yale University. Chapter 7 focuses on José Antonio Aponte.



Linda Rodríguez

LINDA RODRÍGUEZ, Ph.D
New York University
Linda Rodríguez is a Visiting Scholar at the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at New York University. She is an art historian who focuses on colonial Cuba. In 2015, she co-organized the international symposium, *Jose Antonio and His World: Writing, Painting, and Making Freedom in the African Diaspora* at New York University. Currently, she is lead scholar for the digital humanities website Digital Aponte (<http://aponte.hosting.nyu.edu/>).



Laurent Dubois

LAURENT DUBOIS, Ph.D
Duke University
Laurent Dubois is Professor of Romance Studies and History and the Founding Director of the Forum for Scholars & Publics at Duke University. He is the author of six books, including *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (2004), *Soccer Empire: The World Cup and the Future of France* (2010), *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (2012) and *The Banjo: America's African Instrument* (2016). In 2018 he will publish *The Language of the Game: How to Understand Soccer with Basic Books*. His writings have appeared in *The Nation*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Slate*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *The New Republic*. In 2016-17 he was a fellow at the National Humanities Center, where he began work on an experimental biography of Katherine Dunham.



VISIONARY APONTE: ART & BLACK FREEDOM

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| JOSÉ BEDIA | NINA ANGELA MERCER |
| LEONARDO BENZANT | CLARA MORERA |
| SANFORD BIGGERS | GLEXIS NOVOA |
| JUAN ROBERTO DIAGO | MARIELLE PLAISIR |
| ÉDOUARD DUVAL CARRIÉ | ASSER SAINT-VAL |
| ALEXIS ESQUÍVEL | JEAN-MARCEL ST. JACQUES |
| TERESITA FERNÁNDEZ | RENÉE STOUT |
| FABIOLA JEAN-LOUIS | |

LITTLE HAITI CULTURAL COMPLEX ART GALLERY
Art Basel Miami Beach 2017
December 8, 2017 – January 20, 2018

KING JUAN CARLOS I OF SPAIN CENTER
New York University
February 21 – June 30, 2018

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