



Vève

HAITIAN ART SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



André Pierre's *Mambo* at grand scale on bus shelters across the city, pictured above with HAS President, Ed Gessen. The early 1960s oil on fiberboard painting was gifted to the National Gallery by HAS Board Member Kay Heller and her husband, Rod.

IN THIS ISSUE

- I. Letter from the President
- II. HAS Conference, 2024: Overview & Highlights
- III. Meet Our New Regional Directors
- IV. Temwayaj, featuring Kathia St. Hilaire
- V. Museum/Gallery Spotlight - Ayiti Toma II: Faith, Family, and Resistance
- VI. Credits

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Haitian Art Society Members and Friends:

As many of you may already know, Hurricane Helene destroyed my home in Florida and most of its contents. This event altered my life and forced me to rethink my alternatives and future. I have recently been unable to dedicate the time or concentration necessary to perform my duties as President of HAS. Therefore, I have decided to resign my position effective December 31st.

The HAS has been a significant part of my life, and I plan to continue to support our group as a Board Member. I am proud to have led the organization from a small group of collectors and enthusiasts to the diverse, prestigious, international organization that it has become over the past twenty-plus years.

In my final "Letter from the President," I have reflected on the past several years, and we have accomplished quite a list of achievements. A few of these are:

The Haitian Art Society gained independence from the Waterloo Center for the Arts and created an independent 501 c 3, all-volunteer charitable organization. We established a formal structure and bylaws, forming a diverse Board of Directors and Officers (Executive Committee). We also built a highly acclaimed website—the single most-queried site for researching Haitian Art online—free and accessible to all.

The Executive Committee, with the dedicated support of our board, organized and managed Annual Conferences, including educational symposia and panel discussions. We also hosted numerous local social events for members. As a truly international organization, we established Regional Directors to support local activities and events. As a group, we have supported Museum and Gallery exhibitions worldwide.

Socially, we've moved online, building a large Facebook following and community and establishing VEVE, a newsletter communicating these many activities!

I am proud to have advocated for Haitian Art, adhering to our mission to support and promote Haitian Art and artists.

Thank you all for your continued support of our Society. I am not leaving the organization but just changing my role and responsibilities. I will deeply treasure my involvement with all of you. It has been my pleasure and honor to serve the Haitian Art Society.

Best Regards to all, and Happy Holidays!

Ed

Letter from the Executive Committee.

As indicated above, Ed Gessen has recently decided to step back from his role as President of the Haitian Art Society—we continue to enjoy his involvement as a member of the Board.

Ed wanted to share his decision personally, reflecting on this transition and the years he spent leading our organization.

Ed's decision was met with understanding, understandable disappointment, and enormous gratitude for his service. Know that during this transition, we, the Executive Committee, and Ed's long standing collaborators, remain committed and engaged.

We look forward to growing with you in 2025!

HAS Executive Committee
Magdalah Racine-Silva, VP
Matt Dunn, Treasurer and Webmaster
Natasha Tauber, Secretary.

The Haitian Art Society's 2024 Conference, "Liminasyon / Illumination: Honoring Tradition and Path Forging in Haitian Art"

By Natasha Tauber

The Haitian Art Society's 2024 Conference, "Liminasyon / Illumination: Honoring Tradition and Path Forging in Haitian Art," was held in celebration of the opening of Spirit and Strength: Modern Art from Haiti held at Washington D.C.'s National Gallery. André Pierre's Mambo appeared life-size on bus shelters, greeting visitors throughout the city.

For the first time in the organization's history, HAS invited two celebrated Haitian artists to join the tour as our guests. We're enormously grateful to the Kent Family Foundation for bringing this dream to life. Through Larry Kent's support of this year's conference, we were welcomed at the Haitian Embassy in Washington, D.C., greeted by Ambassador Joseph, and treated to what is acknowledged as one of the most insightful panel discussions in memory.

The panel was led by Manbo Dr. Kyrah Malika Daniels, professor of sacred arts and HAS board member, as guest artists, Babette Wainwright and Frantz Zéphirin, reflected on aspects of their practice. The guest artists' work was featured in an installation at the Embassy of Haiti spearheaded by HAS board members, Tomm El-Saieh and Matt Dunn.

Collection tours kicked off at some of D.C.'s most prominent institutions. Thanks to Matt Dunn's tireless advocacy, works by Hector Hyppolite, Rigaud Benoit, and Castera Bazile were displayed for the first time in decades, included in the Hirshhorn survey *Revolutions!* Matt Dunn and Manbo Dr. Daniels joined exhibition curator, Betsy Johnson, in discussing not only Haitian Masters but also contextualizing the artists' work alongside global movements. Broadening the context in which Haitian Art is viewed, Smithsonian Museum of African American Art and Culture's African Diaspora Curator, Joanne Hyppolite, greeted the HAS group in the museum's lobby with an accounting of Haitian Work in the collection, along with a wishlist. Closer to the Capitol, at the National Museum of African Art, Karen Milbourne led us through work remaining at the institution (with permission from the kingdom of Benin) and a contemporary response to the Black Atlantic, both exhibits Milbourne installed before joining the Fralin Museum of Art at UVA as its director.

The group enjoyed several exceptional private collection visits thanks to our hosts' generosity. Meg Gilroy hosted a casual reminisce, reacquaintance, and dealmaking over brunch.

At Daniel and Magdalah Racine Silva's home, members enjoyed passed hors d'oeuvres around an installation of Elizabeth Martineu's large-scale canvases; then retired to the garden for a feast of Haitian-inspired delicacies. John Fox Sullivan served a potent rum punch followed by a hopscotch through his and Beverly's collection, with historical insights offered by UVA historian, Laurent Dubois. Matt Dunn's salon-style hang mirrored the social spread throughout the floors of his metro townhouse, where guests found a pause in a packed itinerary.

At the National Gallery, the tour's centerpiece, we marked the opening of Spirit and Strength: Modern Art from Haiti with celebrated artist Edouard Duval-Carrié, who spoke on the importance of "Reframing Haitian Art." Curator Kanitra Fletcher installed a model of the Trinity Cathedral's famous murals as part of the exhibit. Founding Haitian Art Society Board Members, John Fox Sullivan and Kay Heller, spoke at the opening night, sharing wistfully that 'No paintings were better loved.' Rod Heller further reflected:

"Since Kay lived in Haiti in the 1980s, she has been impressed by the vitality, creativity, and dignity of the Haitian people and their art, and has become a committed collector. Sharing our appreciation of Haitian art with Beverly and John Sullivan as well as other friends, has been an inspirational and instructive experience. We are so pleased that the uniqueness and significance of these works are being recognized by the National Gallery and presented to a much wider audience,"

Kaywin Feldman, director of the National Gallery of Art, lauded collectors and hailed the collection:

"Assembled with great care, curiosity, and passion over many decades, the Heller and Sullivan collections demonstrate the remarkable spirit and strength of artistic production across the Republic of Haiti. We are immensely grateful for these generous gifts as they contribute to the National Gallery's representation of the African Diaspora. The works included in the gift relate meaningfully to our collection of work by African American artists, and enable us to tell significant global, trans-national stories."

The events throughout a full and joyous week carried the memory of Beverly Sullivan, John Fox Sullivan's wife, Kay's dear friend, their love, and the adventures the Hellers and Sullivans shared. Neither family had imagined their commitment and passion would find a home amongst the world's most renowned collections. As John reflected:

"To have our 40-year passion for collecting Haitian art validated by the National Gallery brings us such joy and pleasure. Beverly traveled to Haiti more than 25 times over three decades, discovering—often with Kay Heller—the extraordinary vitality of the country and its art. We are delighted to now share these works with thousands of visitors to the National Gallery,"

The adventure continues...

(We also thank the 2024 Executive board: Ed Gessen, Magdalah Racine-Silva, Matt Dunn, and Natasha Tauber with a particular appreciation for the dedication of HAS board members Manbo Dr. Kyrah Malika Daniels and Tomm El-Saieh in planning this year's conference.)

Conference Highlight: The Haitian Art Society was pleased to welcome artists, Babette Wainwright and Frantz Zéphirin, as esteemed guests to this year's conference. They took part in a panel discussion facilitated by Manbo Dr. Kyrah Malika Daniels.



Guest artist, Babette Wainwright (*right*), pictured with her wife Kathy Kelly in the Auditorium of the National Gallery.

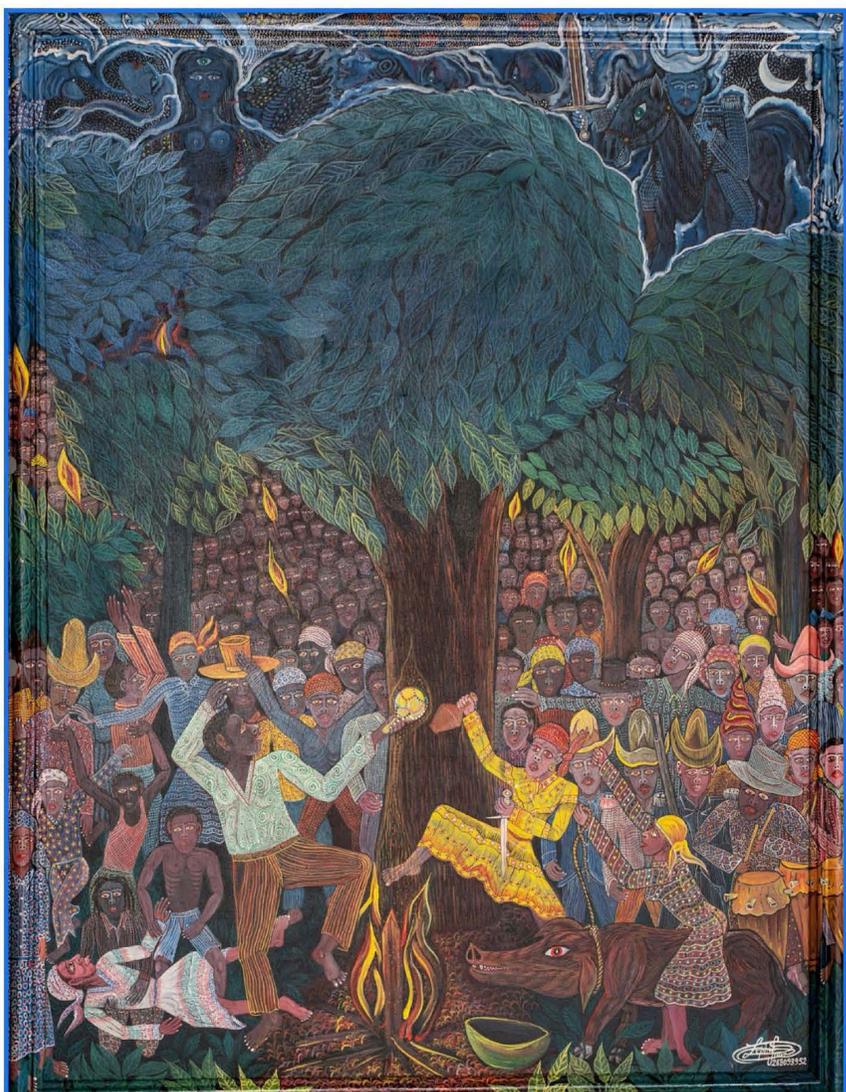


Guest artist, Frantz Zéphirin, in conversation at the panel discussion.

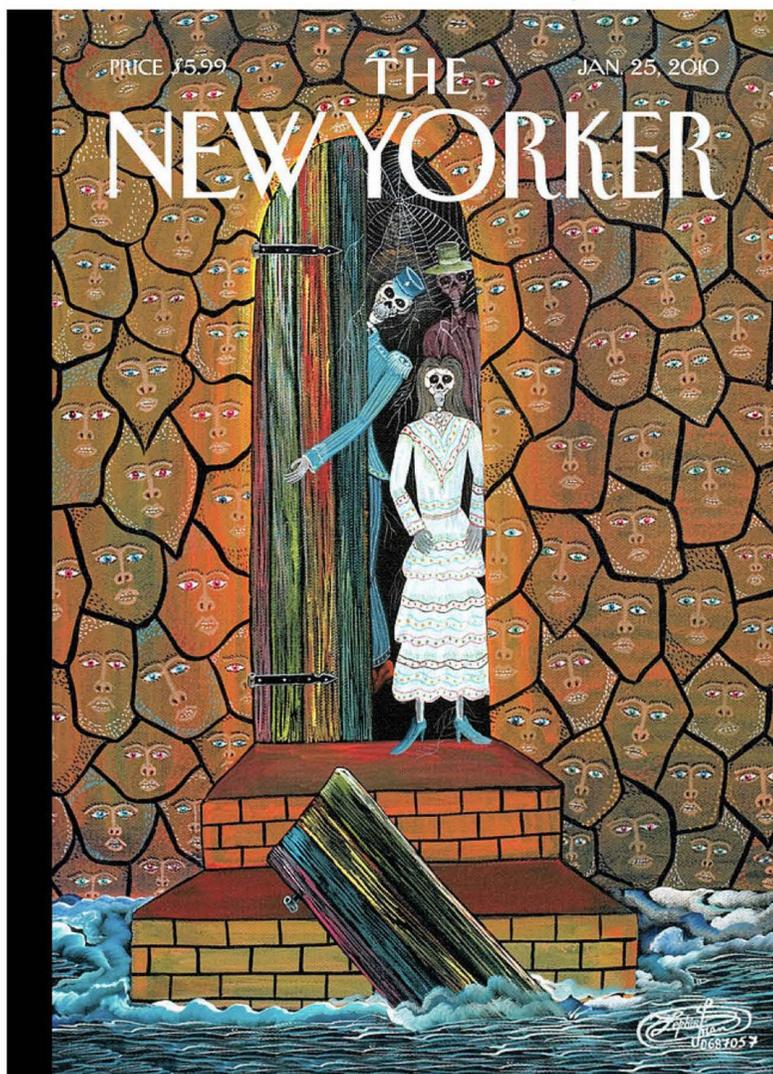


This year's collectible pin was modeled on Fete du Morts, a Hector Hyppolite painting once owned by Irving Berlin. Guests were thrilled to see the work in a private collection on this year's tour.

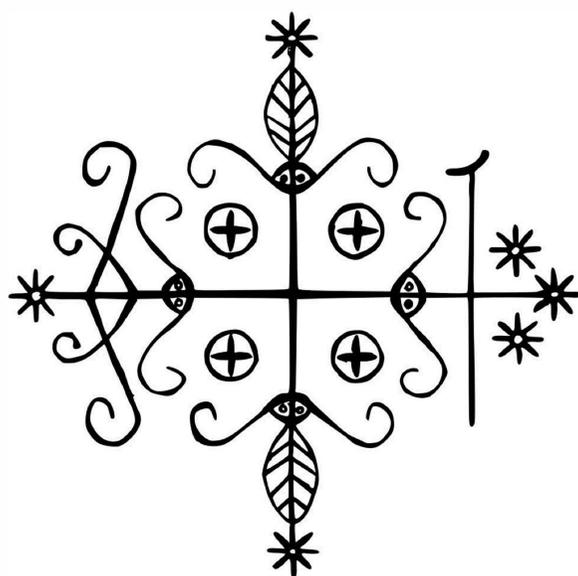
While painter, Frantz Zéphirin, speaking in Creole, engaged with members through an interpreter, nothing was lost in his ebullient and often humorous recounting of stories from his childhood, which included developing his talent under the mentorship of master painter, Antoine Obin, while thwarting the disapproval of his mother, who was adamant about her son not pursuing art as a career. He recalled how his road to success included everything from misadventures attempting to sell paintings to tourists when he was starting out, to being personally confronted by Erzulie (Vodou lwa of love, beauty, and femininity) who once expressed displeasure with one of his creations. Zéphirin returned more than once however to the important role of art and artists to Haiti's future, asserting that he makes it a point to stay inspired and encouraged. This determination has spurred his long career, keeping him working and producing despite coups, natural disasters, and general political upheaval. He pointed out that one of his most acclaimed and recognizable works ("The Resurrection of the Dead"), borne of the trauma of the 2010 earthquake, made the cover of The New Yorker. Zéphirin emphasized, "In this current [political] moment, it's even more important for artists to find inspiration and not be discouraged."



La Cérémonie du Bois Caïman by Frantz Zéphirin, 2022 (from the collection of Matt Dunn), was on view at the Haitian Embassy during *Liminasyon / Illumination: Honoring Tradition and Path Forging in Haitian Art*. The work is also featured in the Catalog for *In Slavery's Wake: Making Black Freedom in the World*, which opened on December 13th, 2024, at the National Museum of African American History and Culture.



The Resurrection of the Dead by Frantz Zéphirin, 2010 (from *The New Yorker*, January 25, 2010)





A vitrine at the Embassy of Haiti displaying two of Babette Wainwright's Sculptures, *Bosou*, and *Gran Bwa*.



Babette Wainwright, *Water Bearer*, Madison, Wisconsin, 2008. Low-fired earthenware. H. 24"

Artist Babette Wainwright's chosen medium is clay, a category of Haitian art that is often overlooked with the general focus and emphasis on Haitian paintings. She describes her work as "unusually personal and woman centered," further elaborating:

"I do not "produce" art. I create art to stay connected to the spirit of my African ancestors, and to soothe my soul. I make no more than 8 to 10 pieces a year, all stemming from my emotional state of the moment. I usually explore a theme until I am exhausted, then I open myself to the next emotional/spiritual experience that comes along.

I work (I imagine) in the style and with the techniques of my African ancestors, like coiling, molding, carving, modeling. I use the low fire red clay found in most of the ancient artifacts. To add color, I use oxides and smoke the work in a fire pit. I sometimes incorporate material such as wood, animal hides and bones, rafia cord, canvas and rusty nails.

Although my art is not meant for a particular audience, it always pleases me when it reaches others at a very human level."

—Compiled by Line Marshall



HAS Board Member John Fox Sullivan and *Spirit and Strength* curator, Kanitra Fletcher frame, *The Fight*. Beverly and John Fox Sullivan gifted the 1975 Jasmin Joseph painting to the National Gallery of Art.



Edouard Duval-Carrié speaking on "Reframing Haitian Art."



Images of the murals appearing behind the altar of Port-au-Prince's Holy Trinity Cathedral, installed in the reading room accompanying the exhibition, *Spirit and Strength: Modern Art from Haiti*.



Hervé Sabin, architect and Director of Port-au-Prince's El-Saieh Gallery (left), and Allenby Augustin, Executive Director of Le Centre D'art (right), relaxing in Matt Dunn's Metro D.C. row house.



At the opening of *Spirit and Strength: Modern Art from Haiti*, Dinner at the National Gallery was followed by dessert under the canopy of a monumental Calder.

Meet Our New Regional Directors



Carine Fabius - Western U.S.

A native of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Carine Fabius grew up in New York and has lived in Los Angeles since 1986. In 1990, she and her sculptor husband Pascal Giacomini opened *Galerie Lakaye*, a contemporary Haitian art gallery in Hollywood, California. The gallery has been featured in various television shows and prestigious publications, including ***Vanity Fair*, *Bon Appetit Magazine*, *Los Angeles Times***, and many others. Over the years, Carine has curated over 50 gallery exhibitions at *Galerie Lakaye*, including “Vodou Reflections,” which was held in conjunction with the major traveling exhibition hosted by the Fowler Museum at UCLA, the *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou*. She has also worked as a freelance museum curator for venues throughout Southern California. Her last four exhibitions are as follows:

Serving the Lwas: Vodou Gods of Haiti at Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles
Haiti: Where Spirits Dance for Museum at Center for the Arts, Escondido
Healing: A Cultural Exploration at Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles
Tropics: A Contemporary View of Brazil, Cuba and Haiti at Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery at Barnsdall Park.

Carine is also the author of six books:

Mehndi—The Art of Henna Body Painting, (Random House)
Ceremonies for Real Life (Council Oak Books)
Sex, Cheese and French Fries—Women are Perfect, Men are from France (Kouraj Press)
Jagua—A Journey into Body Art From the Amazon (Kouraj Press)
Saturday Comes, A novel of Love and Vodou (Kouraj Press)
Short Stories About Us (Kouraj Press)

She has also been published in *African Arts* magazine, a Fowler Museum at UCLA publication; *Calabash: A Journal of Caribbean Arts and Letters* (an NYU publication). For 10 years Carine was a regular blogger for *Huffington Post*, writing about arts, culture and lifestyle issues until it shut down its blogger platform.

Most recently, Carine collaborated with Pascal as writer/producer on his film *Out of Chaos, An Artist's Journey in Haiti*, a multiple award-winning feature documentary on the post-earthquake art scene in Haiti.



Ervenshy Hugo Jean-Louis - Haiti

Ervenshy Hugo Jean-Louis is a journalist, cultural professional, and art writer. He is currently studying Art History and Archaeology at the *Institut Supérieur d'Études et de Recherches en Sciences Sociales* of the State University of Haiti. He is interested in the different artistic dynamics in the Caribbean region, the relationship between Haitian and Caribbean visual arts and the socio-political questions that influence their development.

Ervenshy Hugo Jean-Louis is a member of the organizing team for **The Contemporary Art Week** in Haiti, an initiative to encourage critical discussion of “contemporary” art in Haiti. He currently holds the position of Assistant director at the Centre d'Art de Port-au-Prince, where he contributes to the management and follow-up of the institution's cultural and artistic projects.

He is also active with the Museums Association of the Caribbean (MAC). Through this institution, he was able to better understand the difficulties faced by Caribbean museums, and participated in MAC initiatives aimed at supporting, developing and professionalizing museums in the Caribbean region.

He has collaborated with the Centre PEN-Haiti, a Haitian association of writers, journalists and writers' workers, affiliated to PEN International, which defends freedom of expression. As well as with the Bureau National d'Ethnologie, committed to the promotion and preservation of Haiti's material and immaterial heritage. His articles are published in critical reviews such as AICA-CARAIBE du Sud, Contemporary AND, a platform focusing on Afro-diasporic artistic perspectives, and AyiboPost.



Marie Vickles - Miami

Marie Vickles is the Senior Director of Education at the Pérez Art Museum Miami and has worked in various roles within the museum's Education department since October 2013. In her work as the Senior Director of Education, she administers programs that directly serve over 100,000 youth and adults annually. Marie has organized arts educational programs, workshops and exhibitions across the United States and the Caribbean for over 20 years and maintains an active practice as an independent curator producing exhibitions and curatorial projects.

Marie's curatorial work includes the co-curation of *Prizm Art Fair*, Miami, FL (2013 and 2022); *Visionary Aponte: Art and Black Freedom* (2017); *walls turned sideways are bridges: narratives of resistance* (2019); *Dust Specks on the Sea* (2019-2024); the *Global Borderless Caribbean exhibition series: Local Global* (2020), *Noir Atlantic* (2021) and *Vernacular, Vènakilè, Asusu obodo: À la Mode* (2022); *Introspective: A Reckoning of the Soul* (2021); *Give Them Their Flowers* (2023); *Vernacular Spectacular: Art of the Contemporary Caribbean Diaspora* (2023), *AIM Biennial* (2023) and *Ayit Nan Kem | Haiti in my Heart* (2024). Marie is currently the Curator-in-Residence at the Little Haiti Cultural Complex (LHCC) alongside her independent curatorial practice.

Marie completed her studies at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, and Florida State University, which includes degrees in both Visual Arts and Public Administration. Marie currently serves on the Art in Public Places Professional Advisory Committee for Miami Dade County Cultural Affairs.

In her work as an arts educator and cultural practitioner, she is concerned with the relationship between creativity and community engagement – with the goal of supporting equity, sustainability, and access for all, through the arts.

MUSEUM/GALLERY SPOTLIGHT:

Listed among “The Best New York Art Shows of 2024” by Jerry Saltz of *Vulture-New York Magazine* is

Ayiti Toma II: Faith, Family, and Resistance

Organized by Haitian Art Society Board Member, Tomm El-Saieh
Tribeca

November 2, 2024 – January 11, 2025

From the Luhring Augustine Website:

“Haitian paintings will drink the blood of the phoenix. And, with the epaulets of Dessalines, it will ventilate the world.” – André Breton

Luhring Augustine is pleased to present Ayiti Toma II: Faith, Family, and Resistance, an exhibition of Haitian art organized by artist Tomm El-Saieh in partnership with El-Saieh Gallery, Port-au-Prince, and CENTRAL FINE, Miami Beach. On view in our Tribeca location from November 2, 2024 – January 11, 2025, this project marks the first collaboration between Luhring Augustine and El-Saieh Gallery, and is a continuation of the collaboration between Luhring Augustine and CENTRAL FINE.

Ayiti Toma II is part of an ongoing series, conceived by Tomm El-Saieh, that will explore Haitian art and culture. The absence of a first iteration (Ayiti Toma I) represents the erased culture of the Taíno people who called the island Ayiti, a name which became the revolutionary-era moniker chosen for Haiti by its people. Meaning “land of the high mountains/From now onward, this land is our land,” Ayiti Toma encapsulates the country’s history of survival and renewal. In the presentation at Luhring Augustine, the work of artists from various generations explores the deep roots of faith, the rich legacy of family, and the indomitable spirit of resistance that define Haitian culture and its artistic traditions.

Faith and family are interwoven throughout the works of the modern masters of Haitian art. Reflecting the profound spiritual and cultural essence of Vodou, the paintings of André Pierre and the grand maître, Hector Hyppolite are rich in their references to the natural world and the frequent depictions of Lwa, spirits who serve as intermediaries between humans and the divine. The symbolism evident in the metal sculptures of Georges Liautaud, and his student Murat Brierre, reference a deep connection to the earth and respect for ancestorism, which are central principles of Vodou. The Obin

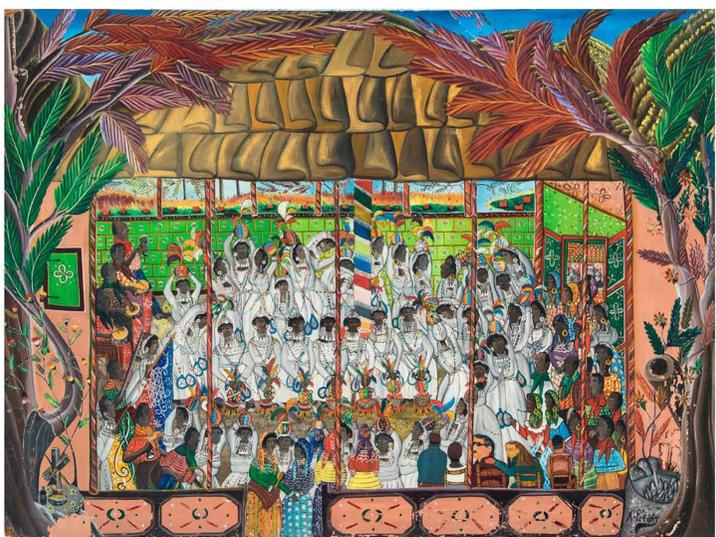
Family School of Painting, which includes Philomé and Sènèque Obin, emphasize the quotidian with depictions of everyday street life and images of resistance. Turning inward to the setting of the home, Luce Turnier's portraits of family and neighbors capture a familiarity of both her sitters and of the distinct Caribbean aesthetic of the environment.

The works of the living artists in this exhibition blend the forms of their predecessors with contemporary concerns. Frantz Zéphirin's paintings portray the natural and spiritual realms with a controlled chaos; a nephew of Antoine Obin, his work uniquely reinvents the tradition of The Obin School of Painting and recalls the works of Pierre and Hyppolite. Inspired by colloquial language and expressions, the symbolism and figuration in Jean Hérard Celeur's sculptures recall those of Liautaud and Brierre before him. The drapo of Myrlande Constant span the subjects of Vodou cosmology, history, and popular culture. Constant's works are intricately beaded in her studio by her and her family, whereby artmaking and storytelling are ensured to be kept alive for future generations, as it has for the Obin family. In Haitian history, resistance can be traced as action against imperialism, a desire for national, religious, and cultural sovereignty, and as a passing-down of traditions and stories, which preserves memory and refuses oblivion.

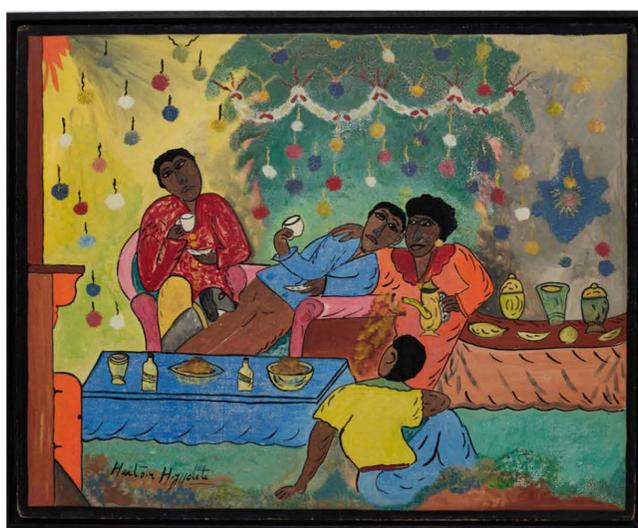
More from the press:

” ‘Ayiti Toma II’ pulses with the rhythm of a land that defies erasure.”

—Giuliana Brida, from “Here Are the 12 Must-See Exhibitions on View in New York’s Galleries This Month” (Cultured Magazine, December 9, 2024)



André Pierre
Untitled, c. 1968
Oil on board
35 1/2 x 48 inches
(90.2 x 121.9 cm)



Hector Hyppolite
New Years Celebration, c. 1948
Oil on board
25 1/2 x 31 1/2 inches
(64.8 x 80 cm)

Temwayaj:

Artists and Changemakers in Their Own Words



Informed by her experience growing up in Caribbean and African American neighborhoods in South Florida, Kathia St. Hilaire seeks to memorialize the communities that she has been a part of through innovative printmaking techniques. Her work draws inspiration from Haitian Vodun flags, which are used to tell the country's history and honor ancestral spirits. Using nontraditional materials such as beauty products, industrial metal, fabric or tires, she creates ornate tapestries that seek to preserve the Haitian history and Vodun religion that lives around us in Miami.

Kathia St. Hilaire received her M.F.A. in Painting and Printmaking at the Yale School of Art in New Haven, Connecticut and her B.F.A. in Printmaking at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, Rhode Island. Her work has recently been featured in solo shows at the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA; Perrotin, New York, NY; and the NSU Art Museum Ft. Lauderdale, Ft. Lauderdale, FL; as well as group exhibitions at the Speed Museum of Art, Louisville, KY; The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs; Half Gallery, New York; Blum & Poe, New York; and James Fuentes, New York.

(Source: https://www.perrotin.com/artists/kathia_st_hilaire/954#images)





Lonbraj Nan Eleonore Juliette Chevallier Moreau, 2024

**The word the general's chosen is parsley.
It is fall, when thoughts turn
to love and death; the general thinks
of his mother, how she died in the fall
and he planted her walking cane at the grave
and it flowered, each spring stolidly forming
four-star blossoms.
-Excerpted from the 'Parsley' by Rita Dove**

Spiralism is an aesthetic and literary movement in Haiti, which began in 1965 with three artists: Frankétienne, Jean-Claude Fignolé, and René Philoctète, who sought to imagine their world or their "whirl" within the terms of the spiral. This cultural movement came in response to François Duvalier's regime, in which his Tonton Macoutes or "Bogeymen" police actively terrorized Haitian civilians in order to enforce absolute submission to his totalitarian vision. Spiralism embraces the ambiguous, communicating an awareness of existence that is not only decentralized, but also interconnected in its ever-widening scope. Haitian Spiralism offers a worldview that recognizes all phenomena within a chaotic yet interrelated process, constituting one of the many and diverse forms of resistance to colonial exploitation.

Spiralism is a state of mind in the face of life's absurdity. The curvature and rhythm of a hurricane, vertigo, or a drop of water that ripples through the ocean can serve as a metaphor for

complex unknown histories that continually repeat but change slightly. This is represented in my *Lonbraj* (shadow in Creole) series, where the surfaces of the paintings have curved line shapes. Taking inspiration from a vèvè drawing of the lwa, Azaca Médeh, who engages with labor and the land, this tombstone type shape and the language of spiralsim allow me to commemorate and talk about the 1937 Parsley Massacre.



Spiralsim is a perfect way to understand the complex racial history of both Haiti and the Dominican Republic, along with their shared border. Both colorism and social status play important roles within the West Indies. Haiti often sees itself as a Black republic, unlike its neighbor which has historically worked to distance itself from blackness.

The border dividing the island of Hispaniola between Haiti and the Dominican Republic has always been complicated. Tensions between the two countries go back to a 19th Century war. But in many ways, and for decades post-Revolution, the border existed mostly on paper and was a notably seamless site: many people crossed back and forth freely to go to school on one side and home on the other. Numerous cattle ranches spanned the divide, and Dominicans and Haitians mingled and intermarried frequently. That ended on Oct. 2, 1937, when the Dominican military, under President Rafael Trujillo's orders, began to execute Haitian families as well as Dominicans of Haitian descent. The killings, many of which took place in the border region, were mostly carried out by machete to help sell the regime's official account that the massacre was a spontaneous uprising of patriotic Dominican farmers against Haitian cattle thieves. This was called the Parsley Massacre because Dominican soldiers carried a sprig of parsley and would ask people suspected of being Haitian to pronounce the Spanish word for it: "perejil". Those whose first language was Haitian Creole found it difficult to say it correctly, a mistake that could cost them their lives. Historians estimate that anywhere between 9,000 and 20,000 Haitians were killed in the Dominican Republic on Trujillo's orders. Many of the victims, though ethnically Haitian, had been born on Dominican soil, but many dark-skinned Dominicans were also killed.

I found it interesting that little is known about Trujillo's early life and his relationship to his identity. A good chunk of these records were intentionally destroyed by his regime in order to hide his origins due to how he would be perceived. Trujillo was born on October 24, 1891 in the town of San Cristobal, into a lower middle class family, and had both Dominican and Haitian lineage. A former sugar cane plantation guard, he began his ascent to power in the National Guard, where he was trained by American Marines occupying the Dominican Republic. He quickly rose through the ranks, becoming head of the armed forces when the American troops left in 1924, a time of relative prosperity. It was not long afterwards that he toppled an aging caretaker president, and in 1930, began a thirty-one-year dictatorship, during which he renamed mountains and cities after himself and embellished his own name with the honorific "Great Benefactor of the Nation and Father of the New Dominion." He wore pancake make-up to lighten the traces of color his Haitian grandmother's blood had left in his skin. Despite this, Dominican society still snubbed him for his working-class family origins and for his youthful exploits as a petty thief.

Apart from the history itself, two writers informed the imagery of my paintings. The first is Rita Dove and her poem, "Parsley," in which she vividly describes the complexity of anti-Blackness. "Parsley" conveys an understanding of the cultural and historical effects of racial warfare through the internal thoughts and experiences of the Haitian sugar cane farm workers, and those of Rafael Trujillo himself. It expresses the need to stop hate and senseless murder through understanding. While there is no true justification for the murders, Dove's thinly-disguised 'El General' is a man in immense anguish over the loss of his mother. She tries to humanize him for a moment, suggesting that his need or desire to cause pain to others stems from his own emotional turmoil.

Also very prominent in the poem is a caged parrot. Dove uses its being caged and kept for someone else's enjoyment to symbolize imprisonment and enslavement in general. To echo this, I use a yellow caged bird within the composition of all three *Lonbraj* paintings to show imprisonment in one self, but also to foreshadow the Parsley Massacre, as inspired by Renè Philoctète's book, *Massacre River*. I was immediately moved by the first page, in which there is an ominous unidentifiable object flying around the border town. Some think it's a bird or a kite that one of the sugar guards likes to fly. Its shadow cuts through the town, ultimately foreshadowing the coming massacre. In my paintings it does exactly that, it hovers over the figure to foreshadow this tragic event.

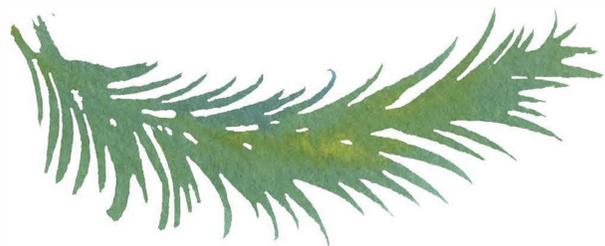




Lonbraj La Nan Pèsi ,2024

In all three paintings, I've also included a cane that is flowering from the ground. In Dove's poem *El General* is burying his mother's walking cane but it flowers. The walking cane symbolizes sugarcane—its four-star blossoms, a symbol of wealth. The cane itself isn't blooming, but the *sugarcane* is, so it takes on a whole new layer of significance, a kind of awful repetition, or an indication of more death to come:

“Suddenly, the bird hangs motionless, wings spread...No sound leaves its throat. Not one twitter or chirp. The bird is mute. Dogs, cats, oxen, goats, donkeys, horse bite, claw, graze, browse its shadow set in the crystal of a Caribbean noon.” (Philoctète and Coverdale 18)





Lonbraj Jòn, 2024

Works Cited

René Philoctète, and Linda Coverdale. *Massacre River*. New York, New Directions, 2008.



Our Annual Membership Dues For:

Personal Memberships:

- \$50 Individual
- \$75 Family
- \$250 Patron
- \$2500 Lifetime

Business Memberships:

- \$250 Preferred Gallery or Business

Membership Link: <https://haitianartsociety.org/how-to-join>

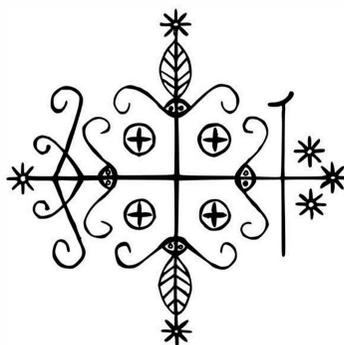
NOTE: Membership dues are our only source of income, so feel free to make an additional contribution to help fund our website and organization.

Donors may deduct contributions under the IRS - IRC Section 170.

More Opportunities to Get Involved:

1) Interested in submitting to future editions of *Vèvè*? Please forward ideas and/or articles to our Editor-in-Chief at linemarshall@haitianartsociety.org.

2) HAS's current Regional Board is an energetic group of collectors, teachers, art advisors, and 501(3)-c professionals. This enthusiastic group of member volunteers meets quarterly to track international exhibitions, curate HAS's artist directory, and plan regional events. In addition, the Regional Board serves as a critical advisor to the Board of Directors. If you want to get the word out about an art event in your region, contact your regional chair via their email address above. If you're interested in becoming more involved in a region where we don't have coverage, please reach out!



Vèvè Credits

Line A. Marshall, Editor-in-Chief

Editors: Ed Gessen, and Natasha Tauber

Publisher: Matt Dunn

Art Direction and Design by Elijah Marshall

Issue 11 Title Banner Art: Philomé Obin, President Tiresias Sam
Entering Cap-Haitien, 1958



Join Today!

The Haitian Art Society is a 501c3 public charity.

The Haitian Art Society was formed in 2003 as an international membership organization designed to strengthen and expand interest in, and understanding of, Haitian art and artists. The HAS is a thriving community of art collectors, gallerists, museum professionals, scholars, and researchers all connected by a mutual appreciation and affection for Haitian Art.

As an all-volunteer, non-profit organization, we rely on your membership dues to support our website and our group. Members receive the following benefits:

- **Inclusion on our mailing list to receive current news and events via email and this newsletter.**
- **Virtual Events (Symposia, Film Screenings, Art Talks...)**
- **Invitation to attend our Annual Conference**
- **Invitations to attend private home tours of art collections**
- **Invitations to participate in panel discussion groups with experts in their field**
- **Consideration to post your art collection on our site (Requires Approval)**
- **Opportunity to meet other Haitian Art collectors, gallerists, museum professionals, artists, scholars, and other Haitian Art enthusiasts.**
- **Business memberships receive a Featured Gallery designation and a direct link to their website**