

## THE BARBADOS GALLERY OF ART TRUST THE HISTORY OF THE FROM 1985 TO 2003.

The Barbados Gallery of Art Trust is the successor to the Art Collection Foundation, Inc., a private non-profit company incorporated under the laws of Barbados in 1985. The Art Collection Foundation Inc. (the “ACF”) was accorded Benevolent Organization status in 1988, thereby entitling it to accept gifts under deed of covenant (i.e. tax exempt to the donor). Its affairs were conducted by an annually elected Board of Directors (elected by the membership) and six standing committees. These committees were responsible for acquiring and managing a permanent collection of art, including paintings, drawings, sculpture and graphic arts of Barbados and the Caribbean.

Thus a group of artists, art administrators, educators and art collectors came together, with great enthusiasm and awareness of breaking new ground to establish the ACF, and accepted the commitment and challenge to preserve Barbadian heritage through art. The ACF held the premise that visual artists are the custodians of our culture, and help to capture and preserve for posterity, the episodes, scenes and character of our way of life.**1987-16<sup>1</sup>**

The ACF’s mission was to collect the very best art from Barbados and the Caribbean, for the benefit of the people of Barbados. In so doing, the ACF sought to promote the general interests and development of visual artists, and hoped eventually to establish a national gallery of art. A national gallery would present visual evidence of the Barbadian national identity thus encouraging national pride, and playing a major role in heritage tourism.**1986-13<sup>2</sup>**

After receiving the Articles of Incorporation of the ACF, a meeting of the ad hoc Art Collection Committee was held at Tranquility, Sandy Lane, home of Dr. Richard and Mrs. Nancy Sonis to formalize the ACF. At this meeting officers were elected and proposals were made for the composition of the Board of Directors, Ex-officio Members and Honourary Members.

The first formal meeting of the executive to officially launch the ACF was held at the law offices of Alfred H. Clarke on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1985.

On January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1986 a meeting of the full Board of Directors was held at the Central Bank with the following people in attendance:

Norma Talma, President; Chairman: Art Acquisition Committee, and co-Chairman: Exhibition and Competition Committee

Rachelle Altman, Secretary

Gloria Blackman, Chairman: Membership Committee

Alison Chapman-Andrews, Vice-President, co-chairman: Exhibition and Competition Committee

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<sup>1</sup> #EB2 “Fading Aspects of Barbadian Culture”, Bernard Reid. Sponsor: Royal Bank of Canada

<sup>2</sup> #W7FD “Wash Day”, Golde White

Henry Forde, Q.C.  
Henry Fraser, Gallery Site Committee  
David Gall  
A.C. Graham  
Ruth Lambie, Treasurer, and later chairman: Special Events Committee.  
Amor Mottley, chairman: Fund-Raising Committee  
Hayden Thorpe  
Rita Voeth,  
Nancy Sonis, Honourary Patron  
Richard Sonis, Honourary Patron

Later in the year, Joscelyn Clarke Gardner was appointed Public Relations Officer.  
The first Principal Patron was Sir Hugh Springer, GCMG, GCVO, KA, CBE, then Governor-General of Barbados.

Still later in 1986, ex-officio Members were appointed:  
Dr. Trevor Carmichael, President, Barbados National Trust  
Hyacinth Alissandra Cummins, Director, Barbados Museum & Historical Society  
Alfred Forde, Director, National Cultural Foundation  
Lilian Nicholson, President, Barbados Arts Council  
Lois Redman-Simmons, Cultural Officer, Queen's Park Gallery

During the next five years Honourary members included:

Genevieve Adams  
Carolyn Barrow  
Lord Bernstein  
Alfred H. Clarke  
Sally Shelton-Colby  
Dr. Carol Jacobs  
Val McComie  
Stella St. John, now Lady St. John  
Angelita Sandiford, now Lady Sandiford  
Marietta Tree  
John Wickham  
Victor Bynoe  
Pat Packard  
Claudette Colbert

In 1985, the initial exhibition and competition was organized, and the first donation of artwork was accepted from Mrs. Theresa Gwyn of a watercolour portrait of King Dyal by Hector Whistler<sup>3</sup>. An Award of Excellence, sponsored by Dr. Richard and Mrs. Nancy Sonis, was given to Ras Akyem Ramsey for his painting, "House of King David"<sup>4</sup>. This painting along with five other works of art purchased with

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<sup>3</sup> #5A3 "Portrait of King Dyal", Hector Whistler

<sup>4</sup> #06B "House of King David", Ras Aykem Ramsey

donations by international and national corporations and individuals became the nucleus of the new collection.

The ACF had developed a three-fold mission:

- To mount an annual art exhibition and competition from which the ACF acquired, based on a jury selection, works for its permanent collection.**1990-24**<sup>5</sup>
- To purchase significant twentieth century works of art, as they became available, with priority being given to the older generations of artists. The Acquisition Committee bought art on the local market as funds were available, and also accepted gifts and bequests **1990-15**<sup>6</sup> which met its criteria.
- To highlight the urgent need for a public national gallery which would provide concrete evidence of the role of the visual artists in preserving the heritage of Barbados, as well as to search for new forms of expression. The ACF held special exhibitions and art events in cooperation with the Barbados Museum & Historical Society (the “Barbados Museum”), the Barbados National Trust**1989-8**<sup>7</sup>, The National Cultural Foundation, and other organizations, and participated in numerous meetings with the Barbados Government in seeking a gallery site.

### Competitions, Exhibitions and Community Projects

For its competitions the ACF was able to attract eminent international judges, including Jacob Lawrence and Vera Hyatt of the Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C., U.S.A.; David Boxer, Director and curator of the National Gallery of Art, Jamaica, and Lowery S. Sims of the Metropolitan Museum in New York City, U.S.A. Barbadian judges have included Alissandra Cummins, Director of the Barbados Museum, Joyce Daniel, leading artist, educator and former Director of the Barbados Design Center, Lesley Barrow-Whatley and Wendy Donawa, curator and education officer, respectively, of the Barbados Museum and Karl Broodhagen, a leading sculptor.

Selections from the collection were exhibited at various galleries and exhibition spaces, both internationally and nationally. These included the Barbados Queen’s Park Gallery, The East Wing of the Barbados Parliament Building, Ilaro Court (official residence of the Prime Minister of Barbados), The Barbados Museum, The Barbados National Bank, Tyrol Cot Mansion (Barbados National Trust Property), The Grande Salle of the Barbados Central Bank, Eyrie Cot, Barbados Community College, the OAS Gallery in Washington D.C., U.S.A.**1989-4**<sup>8</sup> and the First Biennial of Paintings of Central America and the Caribbean in Santo Domingo.

The first ACF fund-raising event took place in 1986 at Sunbury House and Museum. Called “An Afternoon with the Art Collection Foundation”, this benefit tea party highlighted the pioneer artists of Barbados and began a series of ACF fundraisers which

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<sup>5</sup> #57F “Blue Soap”, Stanley Greaves

<sup>6</sup> “Last Day in the Country”, Alison Chapman Andrews. Anthony Hunte Bequest

<sup>7</sup> #23A “Millie, 1962”, Karl Broodhagen

<sup>8</sup> #BBD “Tuk Band”, Arthur Atkinson

supported its long-term objectives. Briggs Clarke, a pioneer artist was present and honoured on this occasion<sup>9</sup>.



The ACF was ever conscious of the need for increased public involvement and to this end annually organized “**Art in Bloom**” (*photograph provided by Mrs. Alice Forde - painting Master Blaster* by David Skinne), where floral arrangements were creatively harmonized with works from its collection. The series included, “Art in Fashion”, Art in Dance”, and “Art and Artefacts”, all staged in Barbados. “Art in Bloom” was also staged in Toronto, Canada<sup>10</sup>. Funds generated were used to build and maintain the collection. Through the ACF series of events, “The Art of Giving”, patrons were encouraged to assist the ACF effort with donations of art, through “Collectors Choice”; private collections were opened and viewed by the ACF membership and friends. The ACF programmes also included “The Young Artists” series<sup>11</sup>, and other events that brought recognition to various aspects of the collection and the need for a national gallery and were designed to interest different segments of the population.

The ACF always accepted its responsibilities to research and provide documentation on art and artists. The ACF, with funding from the Caribbean Art Search Foundation of the United States documented the work of 37 artists who are represented in the collection, and produced a large reference book. It also produced a full color booklet with exercises for younger viewers to further their understanding of art and its relation to social history and heritage. This particular publication was produced to accompany an exhibition,

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<sup>9</sup> #F4B “The Road to Wildey”, Briggs Clarke

<sup>10</sup> #9BF “Family Pik”, Joyce Daniel

<sup>11</sup> #91F “Bathsheba” Wayne Branch

“Heritage in Art”**1988-12**<sup>12</sup> which was staged at the Barbados Museum. This young people’s guide is still relevant to the collection and it was the first such project in Barbados. Other projects and exhibitions were accompanied by catalogues.

#### The Barbados Gallery of Art, Inc.

To raise funds needed to establish and operate a gallery of art, a Capital Endowment Fund was launched on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1993 by the then Governor General, Dame Nita Barrow, GCMG, DA, the second Principal Patron of the ACF.

The ACF then formed the Barbados Gallery of Art Financial Committee to raise funds. Co-chaired by Peter Boos, the Managing Partner of Ernst & Young and Gillian Clarke of Clarke & Co, Attorneys at Law, the Committee sought contributions from corporate sponsors, Barbadian citizens and friends of Barbados in Canada and the United Kingdom. The Art Collection Fund, a fund raising organization in the United States, had already been formed and was operating successfully under the leadership of Nancy Sonis.

In 1994, the name of the ACF was legally changed to the Barbados Gallery of Art, Inc. (the “BGA”). With the establishment of capital/endowment funds both in Barbados and in the U.S.A. the BGA continued to operate under the direction of a Board of Directors.

Though the generosity and public spiritedness of the Barbados Turf Club, the BGA was afforded the use of a beautiful building for a nominal rent for ten years, within the historic Garrison, Bush Hill area. The Barbados Museum, the important historical collection of cannons and other cultural organizations were in this centrally located area, and it was anticipated that The Garrison could be marketed as a major cultural center

The building provided by the Barbados Turf Club would provide space for the permanent collection of the BGA, changing exhibitions, as well as a much needed administrative office, a documentation center, a reception area, a shop and storage.

On March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1995, a ceremonial “ground-breaking” ceremony was held at the Garrison site, and the keys of the Barbados Gallery of Art (the “Gallery”) were given to the BGA. The architectural plans for the renovation of the building, generously donated by Design Collaborative and refined by the Building Committee, were introduced.

With the completion of the renovations to the Gallery, the BGA’s functions expanded to include the exhibition of the permanent collection, and continuous and sequential programming as well as the establishment of the Gallery as a visitor attraction and part of the Heritage Tourism Programme, with plans for the further development of the Garrison Area.

The BGA continued its mandate to:

- Acquire works of art**1989-1**<sup>13</sup> for the benefit of the people of Barbados.

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<sup>12</sup> #OCF “Sewing”, Mary Armstrong

<sup>13</sup> #669 “Seated Woman”, William Bertalan

- Document the existing collection and additions in an organized manner conforming to international standards.
- Preserve and carry out ongoing conservation of the collection<sup>1985-7</sup><sup>14</sup>
- Develop resources for education and research
- Provide a source of energy and inspiration for the visual arts in Barbados.
- Educate the public about Caribbean visual heritage<sup>1987-5</sup><sup>15</sup>, particularly children for whom the gallery may be their first encounter with art, young people preparing for advanced degrees and adults involved in research, or viewing for pleasure who may find a mirror of experience in the works in the collection

### The development of the Mission Statement

The BGA was and still is dedicated to the arts and artists of Barbados and the wider Caribbean. The Gallery presents for a broad public its collection, educational materials, and research resources, which reflects the diversity of the people of Barbados.

In fulfillment of its mission, the Gallery:

- Collects, preserves, exhibits, and documents art that exemplifies the diversity and excellence of the visual art traditions in Barbados and the wider Caribbean;
- Fosters and encourages research in Barbadian and Caribbean art that reflects a broad range of opinions and contributes to a lively exchange of ideas among the artistic community, and the public;
- Promotes art as a integral component of the educational experience in history, literature, visual culture, and other aspects of the humanities;
- Stimulates an understanding of Barbadian and Caribbean art and visual expression in its broader contexts and meaning through exhibition, programmes, and publications;
- Encourages the enjoyment of art as an open-ended record of experience, holding different meanings for different viewers, and offering exceptional and unique insights into history, culture, society, and the individual.

With a permanent home in which to house its collection, the BGA began the search for a director/curator and funds for that person's salary. Thanks to the contribution from a major benefactor, Mrs. Brigitte Mavromichalis, the BGA was able to set up a search committee, chaired by Dr. Barry Gaither, Director of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, to find and recommend a candidate for the post of director/curator. After reviewing the references and conducting interviews, the BGA Board accepted the recommendation of the search committee in 1996, and appointed Mr. Rodney J. Reynolds as director/curator of the Gallery under contract for three years.

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<sup>14</sup> #OC2 "Mummy, One of the Eggs Dun Fall an Brek", Frank Taylor

<sup>15</sup> #69D "Woman with Child", Aileen Hamilton

In addition to Mr. Reynolds, the Gallery attracted assistance from part time administrative assistants, interns, volunteers, and the BGA's multi-functional and supportive Board of Directors.

The collection had over the years been mounted in various government ministries, embassies, official residences and as temporary public exhibits in Barbados and abroad. The opening of the Gallery allowed the collection to be housed, for the first time, as a unit for continual public viewing. Outreach to the community, especially the schools, became an important priority for the Gallery.

The official opening of the Gallery took place with an exhibition curated by the new Curator/Director, Rodney Reynolds<sup>16</sup>. In a special ceremony, in October 19th, 1996, Sir Clifford Straughn Husbands, GCMG, KA, Governor-General of Barbados and third Principal Patron of the Barbados Gallery of Art declared the Gallery open. After many years and much work by the patrons, honorary members, board members past and present, committee members, numerous volunteers and corporate sponsors (both local and international) all of whom collectively provided their wisdom, energy and commitment to the BGA's mission, a new era for the BGA began.

At the time of the inaugural exhibition the following persons sat on the Board of Directors of the BGA: President: Norma Talma, Vice-Presidents: Alice Forde, Robert Showan, Recording Secretary: Grace Showan, Treasurer: Kathy Davis, and Pearl Agriss, Mervyn Awon, Clyde Cave, Gillian Clarke, Adrian Elcock, Randall Goddard, Amor Mottley, and Patricia Nehaul.

Thus began a period of great consolidation and expansion. This was a period of extensive and sequential programming of exhibitions, educational events and widening of the collection on a professional level. Exhibitions included the "Contemporary Art Exhibition in 1998, curated by Rodney Reynolds, "Parallel Realities – Five Pioneering Artists From Barbados", in August 1999; "Ichirouganium - Bardun Exhibition" in November 1999; "Portrait Exhibition" held at the Inter American Development Bank in August of 2000; "In the Land – a retrospective of the work of Alison Chapman Andrews" which ran from February to April of 2000; "The People in the Land, The Land in the People" an exhibition of the works of Kathleen Hawkins in May 2000; "Perception and Attitudes to Independence", also held in 2000. Further documentation and conservation of the collection was undertaken. After eight years of careful acquisition, the collection reflected the island's culture, and included traditional and innovative artists who represent the very best of Barbados.

By this time, the Government of Barbados had made public its intentions to establish a National Gallery of Barbados. The BGA welcomed this statement and continued to express its support and willingness to help provide the wisdom, energy and commitment to a continued vision for the establishment of a National Gallery of Barbados as developed by the Barbados Government.

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<sup>16</sup> #507 "Barbados Barbados", Frances Griffith

## The Barbados Gallery of Art Trust

In 1996, with the expanded operations and changing mandate of the BGA a decision was taken to change the structure of the organization so that it could function more efficiently in a changing environment. The Barbados Gallery of Art, Inc. was dissolved in December 1997, and the Barbados Gallery of Art Trust (the “Trust”) was formed as of January 1, 1998. The first board of trustees included many of the faces of the former board of directors of the BGA. The first trustees were Robert Showan, Randall Goddard, Pearl Agriss, Arlette St.Hill, Gillian Clarke, Clyde Cave, Patricia Nehaul and Nel Bretney. Alexander Pathy was the first Chairman of the Board of Trustees and Patricia Nehaul is the current Chairman.

The objects of the Trust, set out in its Trust Deed are to hold the capital and income of the Trust Fund which comprises the collection and some money, upon trust to apply the income and all or such part or parts of the capital at such times and in such manner and subject to such restrictions (if any) as the Trustees may in their absolute discretion think fit for or towards:

- (a) the promotion of interest in and the study of art in Barbados and the wider Caribbean;
  - (b) the provision for the acquisition and preservation of works of art and the holding of exhibitions, educational lectures, public meetings, classes and conferences on the subject of art and culture;
  - (c) the envisioning, establishment, construction, maintenance, equipping and operation of buildings to house the collection of an art museum for the benefit of the general public;
  - (d) research, publication and education on the subject of art and art related matters;
  - (e) the maintenance of the collection of an art museum for the benefit of the general public and the management of such collection in accordance with internationally recognized museum standards and making the collection available to the general public for research and education;
- and the doing of all such things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objects.

The collection, which numbered some 194 pieces of art and sculpture in June of 1997, now numbers some 700 pieces. The most important recent addition to the collection has been the exceedingly generous donation by the family of the late Kathleen Hawkins of a significant body of work of the late artist, numbering over 300 pieces<sup>17</sup>.

On January 30, 2001 the Trust wrote to the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture and informed the Ministry of the policy decision taken by the Trustees to be

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<sup>17</sup> #ACD Painting of a tractor in cane fields, Kathleen Hawkins

dedicated participants in the development of the proposed National Gallery. The Trust re-affirmed to the Ministry its commitment to work with the National Art Gallery Committee in the establishment of the National Gallery and to examine and pursue all avenues open to the Trust, with a view to making the entire collection of the Trust fully available to the National Gallery upon its establishment.

Sadly, in 2002, before the end of the ten year lease, the Trust had to give up the Gallery space which it rented from the Barbados Turf Club due to an infestation of termites in the building which posed a serious threat to the collection. Having operated successfully for several years, the Trust now finds itself again without a permanent home. The Trust's significant collection, which has been digitally photographed as part of the National Art Gallery Committee's efforts to build a database of artwork, is safely stored at the Barbados Museum under the supervision of trained curators.

The continued cooperation of the Trust with the National Art Gallery Committee has been evidenced by the Trust's loan of works in its collection to the National Art Gallery Committee for two important exhibitions staged by the National Art Gallery Committee, namely "Moving Forward – Putting the Pieces Together" at Queens Park Gallery in 2002<sup>18</sup> and "In the Middle of the Ocean" at Zemicon Gallery in early 2003.

The Trust proposes to continue its collaboration with the National Art Gallery Committee and remains committed to make its collection available to the public in as many ways as possible, until a new home for the Trust can be found or the National Gallery of Barbados becomes a reality.

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<sup>18</sup> J#351 "Cochineal Cactus", Robert MacLeod