



# *Un* | Fixed Homeland

Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art

(on cover)

Khadija Benn

*Amalivaca* (detail), 2012 from the series, *Wanderer*

See page 38

Published on the occasion of the exhibition *Un | Fixed Homeland*.

July 17–September 23, 2016.

Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art  
591 Broad Street  
Newark, New Jersey 07102-4403

Copyright © 2016

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without the permission of the publisher.

Aljira's operations and programs are made possible, in part, by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, New Jersey Cultural Trust, The Kenneth Aidekman Family Foundation, Bank of America, The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Edison Properties Newark Foundation, The Fidelco Group, Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, James Douglas Family Foundation, Joan Mitchell Foundation, MCJ Amelior Foundation, Merrill Lynch, Newark Downtown District, Newark Museum, The New York Community Trust, Pharmachem Laboratories, Inc., PNC Bank, Prudential Financial, The Prudential Foundation, PSE&G Foundation, Newark Celebration 350, Rutgers University-Newark, The Schumann Fund, Spire Group, The Turrell Fund, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and many generous individual contributors.



Works of art copyright © 2016 the individual artists

Text, installation images, and catalog copyright © 2016 Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art.

Exhibition Design: Joey Rizzolo

Catalog Design: Karran Sahadeo

Editor: Celeste Hamilton Dennis

All installation images copyright Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art

Photos: Argenis Apolinario

ISBN: 0-9774354-6-6



Large  
Print

Available upon request.

# *Un* | Fixed Homeland

Grace Aneiza Ali, Guest Curator

July 23–September 23, 2016  
Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art  
Newark, New Jersey

# Contents

About the Exhibition 6

Artists in the Exhibition 7

Director's Statement 8

Dexter Wimberly, Executive Director

Foreword 11

Victor L. Davson, Founding Director

Acknowledgments 13

Grace Aneiza Ali, Guest Curator

Installation View of *Un | Fixed Homeland* 15

*Un | Fixed Homeland*:

Artists Explore the Guyanese Experience of Migration 25

Grace Aneiza Ali

The Plates 30

Commentaries by Grace Aneiza Ali

Press Reviews 77

Artist Biographies 78

Exhibition Checklist 84



*Un | Fixed Homeland* brings together an inter-generational roster of thirteen emerging and established artists of Guyanese heritage who, via photography and photography-based art, explore their intimate relationship to the experience of migration and homeland. These artists examine how a “homeland” can be both fixed and unfixed, a constantly shifting idea and memory, and a physical place and a psychic space. Their roots in Guyana and where they now call home reflect the reality of the country’s diaspora; these are artists working in Guyana, as well as in five metropolitan cities—Boston, Los Angeles, New York, London, and Toronto. While the exhibition’s title reflects the emergence of the Caribbean diaspora in these global metropolises, *Un | Fixed Homeland* is steeped in a larger conversation—what is perhaps the defining global movement of our 21st century—migration.

## Artists in the Exhibition

Kwesi Abbensetts

Khadija Benn

Frank Bowling

Sandra Brewster

Erika DeFreitas

Marlon Forrester

Roshini Kempadoo

Michael C. Lam

Donald Locke

Hew Locke

Maya Mackrandilal

Karran Sahadeo

Keisha Scarville

# Director's Statement

Dexter Wimberly, Executive Director

*Un* | Fixed Homeland is the first exhibition to open at Aljira during my tenure as executive director. In many ways, it both sets the tone and raises the bar for the kind of projects I envision taking place in our galleries. Given its elegance, it's easy to assume that this exhibition came together without significant challenges. However, what you see in the pages of this catalog is the result of Herculean effort and vision on the part of the exhibition's curator, Grace Aneiza Ali, as well as the generous support of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

*Un* | Fixed Homeland brings together the work of thirteen multi-generational artists of Guyanese heritage in a presentation that is at once thoughtful, inspiring, and dare I say, educational. The theme of the exhibition struck a personal chord with me. Being born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, I grew up surrounded by people whose families immigrated to the United States from all corners of the world. My closest friends in high school and college were not only from the United States, but also from Asia, Europe, Africa, South America, and the Caribbean. I took for granted that such a diverse experience was typical. In my adult life I came to understand the blessing and beauty of being exposed to such diversity, none of which would have been possible without people having the ability to move around the globe to pursue their dreams for a better life.

When people ask me where I'm from, I can see the surprise on their face when I say, "I'm from Brooklyn." Their usual response is, "I don't meet too many people who were born and raised here." My typical reply is "Neither do I!" The world is not a fixed place. It is constantly changing. History is still being made. Borders are being contested and becoming more politically charged every year. Home is a place that is simultaneously escaped from and sought-after. When I think about home and its many definitions, I am reminded of the words of the genius entertainer Rakim who summed it up perfectly: "It ain't where you're from, it's where you're at."

Frank Bowling  
*Mother's House with Beware of the Dog*, 1966  
*Bowling's Variety Store, Main Street, New Amsterdam, British Guiana*, 1966  
*Bowling's Variety Store, Main Street, New Amsterdam, British Guiana*, 1953  
(Photo: Argenis Apolinario)





## Foreword

Victor L. Davson, Founding Director

The late Claudine Brown helped me to appreciate the unique value of small art groups as feeder institutions within a larger ecosystem. Guest curator Grace Aneiza Ali fills me with great pride as we gave her the same opportunity we gave the now internationally renowned curator Okwui Enwezor over three decades ago—a first curatorial endeavor to provide a platform for a community of artists who have been largely marginalized.

*Un | Fixed Homeland* is rigorous in its scope. It is a thoughtful framing of objects with a deep and sustained relationship to a broader discourse in contemporary art and culture. Indeed, *Un | Fixed Homeland* was well received in the art press.

The thirteen artists in the exhibition demonstrated a more compelling command of their formal means than I usually experience in an exhibition of this kind. The effective exhibition design of Joey Rizzolo juxtaposing photography, painting, collage, video, and installation, weaved a metaphor of place, which resonated with the trauma of global migration in our time.

We are grateful to The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts for supporting the research for *Un | Fixed Homeland* with a curatorial fellowship. Many thanks to Merrill Lynch and Aljira Trustee Pat Bell for sponsoring the closing reception and dinner. Without the tireless striving of Aljira's staff this project would not have been possible.

Keisha Scarville  
*Untitled* (detail), from the series, *i am here*, 2013  
Archival digital print  
24 x 24 in.  
Courtesy of the artist



## Acknowledgments

Grace Aneiza Ali, Curator

The organization of this exhibition would not be possible without a beautiful spirit of collaboration and partnership among many. I am first indebted to the thirteen artists for their brilliance, belief in the endeavor, and incredible generosity in entrusting their work in service to the exhibition's thesis. From the beginning, Victor L. Davson, founding director of Aljira and the visionary who commissioned this project, remained invaluable in seeing it transition from idea to reality. He kept the ship steadied and on course. Carl Hazlewood, co-founder of Aljira, never wavered in his investment of time, guidance, and exquisite art historical knowledge of Guyanese artists. I am equally grateful to the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts whose gift of a Curatorial Fellowship meant that the research phase of this project was a fruitful and dynamic one. And I am indebted to Dexter Wimberly, executive director of Aljira and the entire staff whose labor and love for this project shine through the moment one enters its glorious space.

I extend a special note of thanks to the scholars in the field of photography, art history, and cultural studies whose scholarship, support and enthusiasm elevated this project: Deborah Willis, Gaiutra Bahadur, Erin Haney, David Dabydeen, and Krista A. Thompson. For their commitment to excellence in how this exhibition was represented in language, design, and aesthetics, I am eternally grateful to editor Celeste Hamilton Dennis, catalog designer Karran Sahadeo, and exhibition designer Joey Rizzolo.

I also wish to convey my deepest appreciation to friends and colleagues for their acts of generosity in seeing this project soar: Spencer Richards, Arlington Weithers, Brenda Locke, Michelle Joan Wilkinson, Zita Nunes, Indra Khanna, Christopher Cozier, Nalini Mohabir, Terrence Jennings, Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken, Maria del Pilar Kaladeen, Mason Richards, Nikki Kahn, Terrance McKnight, and Pato Hebert. Several institutions proved invaluable in their support of this project: Department of Art & Public Policy, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University; Independent Curator's International; En Foco; Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; Institute for Research in African-American Studies and the Avery Art History Library at Columbia University; National Archives of Guyana; The National Archives United Kingdom; Hales Gallery; and The Canada Council for the Arts, Art Bank.

It has been humbling to see this exhibition—the first of its kind—come to light and to be buoyed throughout its evolution by those in my life who beautifully model what it means to be in service to something larger: my mother Ingrid Ali, Theaster Gates, Kathy Engel, E. Ethelbert Miller, and the entire Ali family. And finally, to my homeland Guyana—a place that continues to nurture and demand from me so much more and better and higher.

Karran Sahadeo

*Untitled (blue 2)* (detail), 2014

24 x 34 in.

Archival pigment print on canvas

Courtesy of the artist

For Guyanese-born artists Victor L. Davson and Carl E. Hazlewood,  
co-founders of Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art, and unwavering  
champions of Guyanese artists.

## Installation View of *Un* | Fixed Homeland

All installation images copyright of Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art  
Photos: Argenis Apolinario













## Un | Fixed Homeland

Artists Explore the Guyanese Experience of Migration

Grace Aneiza Ali, Guest Curator

One of the most defining movements of our time is global migration. Few of us remain untouched by its sweeping narrative. For those who have left one place for another, fueled by choice or trauma, sustaining the vulnerable threads to *homeland* is at once beautiful, fraught, disruptive, and evolving.

Guyana is a country of migrations. In 1995, my family emigrated from Guyana to the United States. We became part of what seemed like a mythical diaspora—an estimated one million Guyanese citizens living around the globe while the country itself has a population of around 760,000.<sup>1</sup> In other words, my homeland is one where more people live outside its borders than within it.

Making the journey with us were a handful of photographs chronicling our life. Owning photographs was an act of privilege; they stood among our most valuable possessions. There were no negatives, no jpegs, no double copies— just originals. Decades later, these photographs serve as a tangible connection to a homeland left behind. Many of them are taken at Guyana's airport during the 1980s and 1990s when we often bade farewell to yet another emigrating family member. Guyana, the only English-speaking country in South America, celebrates its fiftieth anniversary of independence from the British this year. Yet, the last five decades have been defined by an extraordinary ebb and flow of its citizens.

*What then does it mean to have a homeland that is no longer home?* This question underscores *Un | Fixed Homeland*. The thirteen artists of Guyanese heritage explore how a homeland can be both fixed and unfixed, a constantly shifting idea and memory, a physical place and a psychic space.

The photographic medium has historically played a critical role in how as a society we see and editorialize narratives of migration. To explore this relationship between photography and migration, the artists employ innovative use of several photographic mediums—the archival image of British Guiana, contemporary photography on present-day Guyana, self-portraiture, studio portraiture, painted photographs, passport photos, family albums, selfies, photography in video installations, and the documentary format, among others. Through their engagement with these photographic mediums, the artists unpack global realities of migration, tease out symbols of decay and loss, and avoid trappings of nostalgia by envisioning avenues out of displacement and dislocation. In tandem, the exhibition provokes several

Hew Locke  
*Rose Hall* (detail), 2014  
(see page 61)

## A Brief History of Migration in Guyana

Guyana, a multi-cultural nation of Amerindians, British, Portuguese, Africans, Indians, and Chinese, is the only English-speaking country in South America. In tandem, the country's religious landscape reflects its dynamic population: Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Catholic, among others. Guyana's location in the northeastern region of the continent in the heart of the Amazon and on the Caribbean Sea, coupled with a history of British colonization shared with nearby Caribbean islands, allows for the nation's cultural identity as one defined as a hybrid between Caribbean and South American. Beginning in the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, Guyana's lands were subjected to European explorers and colonists, its territory changing hands among the Spanish, Portuguese,

Dutch and finally, British empire. From the early 1600s to the 1800s, the British utilized the enslavement of Africans in their vigorous pursuit of wealth via sugar production. When slavery was abolished in 1834, the British instituted the system of indentured servitude that lasted until 1917, bringing Indian and Chinese laborers into the colony—a measure that would later define Guyana's modern multi-cultural landscape and also set the tone for decades of ethnic conflict between Africans and Indians. Often violent and politically explosive, the ethnic tensions fueled and exploited by the British themselves would scar Guyana throughout the 20th century.

In 1948, the British Nationality Act gave British citizenship to all people living in its

commonwealth countries, and full rights of entry and settlement in Britain. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, many ambitious dreamers took advantage of the 1948 Act and began making their way to England, becoming part of what was known as the "Windrush Generation" (the first significant group of Caribbean immigrants to arrive in Britain in the 1950s).

At the time, there was no university in the colony. A desire for professional and economic advancement inevitably meant emigration. The early 1950s would become a period rife with intense political unrest as the movement towards gaining independence became more forceful. In April, 1953 the colony had undergone its first democratic election and yet it would

take another thirteen volatile years, marked by highly oppressive policies by the elected government, before gaining independence in 1966. Many did not wait and orchestrated their own independence. In the 1970s and 1980s, another movement of emigration unfolded as Guyanese began shifting to Canada and the United States. In fact, by 2001, Toronto emerged as a prominent node in the Caribbean diaspora as one of the largest and oldest Guyanese populations outside of Guyana. Similarly, in New York City, Guyanese immigrants make up the city's fifth largest immigrant population.

critical questions: How does the photographic medium express the tensions between place and placeless-ness? How can we turn to the photograph to inform and challenge our current framing of the experiences of migration and diaspora, nationality and belonging, immigrant and citizen? What shifts occur in the migration narrative when photographs themselves cross geographic borders?

*Un | Fixed Homeland* showcases work spanning five decades of art. The oldest work in the show, Frank Bowling's *Mother's House with Beware of the Dog* (1966) to its most recent, Kwesi Abbensetts's *You Booked Your Passage* (2016) mirror Guyana's 50-year journey from British colony to independent nation. The biographies of the artists themselves also reflect this history—ranging from 82 to 30 years old, featured in the exhibition are the artists who were born when the country was still under British rule and saw it struggle through its transition to shirk a colonial past. Other artists have only known their homeland as an independent nation, while others live outside its borders and connect to Guyana through their parents' migration narratives. These thirteen artists reflect the reality of the country's diaspora; artists working in Guyana, as well as those living in five metropolitan cities—Boston, Los Angeles, New

York, London, and Toronto. Together, they bring to bear diverse and inter-generational perspectives of Guyanese experiences of migration.

Yet, the exhibition does not rest solely on artists gazing back from an outsider distance. It is instead a dynamic exploration of the artists' encounters, departures, returns, absences, and reunions. *Un | Fixed Homeland* also examines the other side of the spectrum of the migration story, and perhaps one of the more lesser told narratives—the points of view of those who are left behind. Like my family who made frequent trips to the airport to bid farewell to loved ones, the Guyanese citizen is a witness to constant acts of emigration—friends and family leaving for "another land, for gain and training...good dollars and education," as the artist Kwesi Abbensetts poignantly puts it. With an intimate understanding of this liminal space of leaving and returning, through their work the artists represent the ones who leave and the ones who are *left*. Some of the artists return to Guyana often and some rarely. Others examine what survives and what is mourned.

Outside of a handful of an established few, the cadre of contemporary

artists of Guyanese heritage remains relatively under the radar. For women, this is even more acute. Consequently, an important agenda underlining *Un | Fixed Homeland* was to feature an equal representation of work by women. Six of the thirteen artists in the exhibition are women at various stages in their artistic practice. For Khadija Benn, one of the few women photographers living and working in Guyana, *Un | Fixed Homeland* is her first exhibition. In tandem with Aljira's mission as a contemporary art center that aims to provide a platform for emerging and under-represented artists, Benn's stunning digital photographic landscape work, *Amalivaca* (2012) was chosen as the lead image for the exhibition and for its publicity materials. This selection, to feature a young woman who is also an artist exhibiting for the first time, speaks to the show's priorities of inclusivity and representation. It has also marked an important shift in Benn's professional practice.

Unfortunately, what the global public often sees of the visual culture of Guyana *still* centers on the exotic, tropical, colonial, and touristic. The artists in *Un | Fixed Homeland* are part of a contemporary movement to counter this historic malpractice by challenging, disrupting, manipulating, and even exploiting the 'picturing paradise' motif often associated with the region. Reinforced throughout the work presented in *Un | Fixed Homeland* and via the artists' personal narratives fueling their art-making is a framing of the Guyanese experience of migration *and* homeland as symbolic of larger pressing universal concerns capturing daily headlines and weighing on our hearts and minds.

---

<sup>1</sup> The history of increased migration from Guyana to North America and Europe is due to unstable economic conditions, which continue to prevail—43% of the population in Guyana currently lives below the poverty line. Source: Manuel Orozco, "Remitting Back Home and Supporting the Homeland: The Guyanese Community in the U.S.," Inter-American Dialogue Working Paper commissioned by the U.S. Agency for International Development GEO Project, January 15, 2003. [http://www.w.thedialogue.org/PublicationFiles/Remitting back home and supporting the homeland.pdf](http://www.w.thedialogue.org/PublicationFiles/Remitting%20back%20home%20and%20supporting%20the%20homeland.pdf)



**GRACE ANEIZA ALI** is an independent curator; faculty member in the Department of Art & Public Policy, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University; and Founder/Editorial Director of OF NOTE—an award-winning online magazine on art and activism. Her essays on photography have been published in Harvard's *Transition Magazine*, *Nueva Luz Journal*, *Small Axe Journal*, among others. In 2014, she received an Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Curatorial Fellowship. Highlights of her curatorial work include Guest Curator for the 2014 Addis Ababa Foto Fest; Guest Curator of the Fall 2013

*Nueva Luz* Photographic Journal; and Host of the Visually Speaking photojournalism public program at the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center. Ali is a World Economic Forum 'Global Shaper' and Fulbright Scholar. She holds an M.A. in Africana Studies from New York University and a B.A. in English Literature from the University of Maryland, College Park. Ali was born in Guyana and lives in New York City.

## The Plates

Quotations from the artists in the texts are from artist statements and correspondence with the curator, unless otherwise noted.

## Kwesi Abbensetts

### b. Guyana 1976

Kwesi Abbensetts' roots in Guyana stem from both city-life in Georgetown and country-life in the East Berbice-Corentyne coast of Guyana—an impressive stretch of miles spanning the entire eastern border of the country with the Atlantic Ocean to its north, Suriname to its east, and Brazil to its south. It is from both of these crossroad-perches, the bustling capital and the provincial countryside, that as a child Abbensetts became an early witness to constant acts of emigration. He recalls how friends and family left for “another land, for gain and training... good dollars and education.”

In *Pieces of Land, From Where I Have Come*, 2016, Abbensetts embeds into a series of nine small mixed-media canvasses key objects or what he calls, “helpers of memory” to aid him in conjuring a homeland he has not seen since 2001. The artist is now based in New York City, where coincidentally, Guyanese immigrants make up the city's fifth largest immigrant population. Abbensetts wields a color palette on the canvas both familiar to and intentionally nostalgic of his homeland—deep, bold reds, blues, and greens, as well as softer, lighter hues of yellows and pinks—to frame the photographs of his family and friends. Collected from that last visit to Guyana fifteen years ago, the analog photographs capture both public and private spaces: a snapshot of a visibly nervous young bride being escorted by her father, against a backdrop of a street dotted with Guyana's quintessential wooden stilt houses; family members posing at weddings and parties; and a line-up of mini-buses awaiting passengers in front of Georgetown's Stabroek Market. Layered onto and around the photographs are abstract lines, handwritten notes featuring the artist's personal reflections, brown mud, white rice, and brown sugar. In some pieces, torn strips of paper towels are soaked onto the canvas by a baptism of acrylic paint—a symbol of “an identity immersed by all things Guyana,” states the artist.

This trifecta of paint, photograph, and objects function literally and figuratively as remnants, “pieces of the land” Abbensetts poetically references in the work's title. In its layers and complexity, lies a simple desire: to reconnect, to reclaim homeland. The impulse to reclaim space is one that goes beyond that of a son of Guyana, a migrant, or an artist. It is a compulsion that is human and vulnerable at its core. “I am distant and removed,” the artist states. “The paintings are a contemplation of space...a forgotten space.”





Kwesi Abbensetts  
*Pieces of Land, From Where I Have Come*, 2016  
(Photo: Argenis Apolinario)



Kwesi Abbensetts  
*You Booked Your Passage*, from the series, *Pieces of Land, From Where I Have Come*, 2016  
 Mixed media, painting, and photography on canvas  
 8 x 10 in.  
 Courtesy of the artist

## Khadija Benn

### b. Canada 1986

The digital photographic series *Wanderer*, 2012–2016 is an homage to the “discovery and re-discovery of place...and the underlying histories that have created these complex spaces,” states Khadija Benn. That this body of work relies on Guyana’s landscapes is a testament to Benn’s intimate relationship to *home* and *land*. The artist has witnessed how we appreciate land in its natural state and work to preserve it, as well as how we mine it for its precious core and irrevocably transform it. Benn spent her childhood in the mining town of Linden, in the northeastern region of Guyana, where bauxite, a main source of aluminum, has been the town’s staple export since the early 1900s. Later in her life, the artist’s formal training as a geographer and cartographer would lead her on map-making and heritage preservation assignments across the country.

In *Amalivaca*, 2012, *Kanuku*, 2012, *Chrysalis*, 2013, Benn takes us to the Rupununi grasslands, the Kanuku Mountains, and the coral ferns in an abandoned Linden mine, respectively. At first glance, Benn’s polished painterly images, lush with color, light and a heavy-handed brush of glamour and romanticism, might appear as a replica of the pervasive ‘picturing paradise’ aesthetic we often see associated with the Caribbean and South American region. However, it is this very narrative that Benn seeks to exploit by inserting the female body, both her own via self-portraiture (*Amalivaca* and *Kanuku*) and those of collaborators (*Chrysalis*). In this act of agency, of claiming space and ownership of these sweeping vistas, Benn notes, “Not wanting to contribute redundant pictorials of Guyana, I sought a re-interpretation of these places through portraiture... anchoring and abstracting the female body within the landscapes.”

While foregrounding the body against landscapes, Benn simultaneously employs what she notes as an “erasure of the faces of the women photographed” to remind us of the ways in which Caribbean women are often eroticized and hypersexualized in Western art. While rendering the subjects’ faces pseudo-hidden or invisible, Benn implores the viewer to shift attention to the naming of the work. *Amalivaca*, for example, is a little known indigenous mythical figure of Cariban-Amerindian legend who teaches harmonious existence with the environment. In these dual countering acts of imaging and naming, Benn’s work combats the erasure of women from the historical record.



Khadija Benn  
*Chrysalis*, 2013, from the series, *Wanderer*  
Archival pigment print on canvas  
48 x 48 in.  
Courtesy of the artist



*Kanuku*, 2012, from the series, *Wanderer*  
Archival pigment print on canvas  
48 x 48 in.  
Courtesy of the artist

*Amalivaca*, 2012 (next page), from the series, *Wanderer*  
Archival pigment print on canvas  
48 x 32 in.  
Courtesy of the artist



## Frank Bowling

### b. British Guiana 1934

Frank Bowling was born in 1934 in British Guiana, in the small trading town of Bartica in the county of Essequibo. At six years old, his family moved to the port town of New Amsterdam where his mother, Agatha Elizabeth Franklin Bowling, a talented dressmaker, set up a general store, named the "Bowling's Variety Store" and grew it to become the family's crown jewel.

The image of "Bowling's Variety Store," or as the artist simply calls it "mother's house," emerges as an impressive and reoccurring presence in several of Bowling's paintings and their titles. In 1964, Bowling began screen printing the image of "mother's house" in red and green onto multiple blank canvasses. Throughout the 1960s, he would create several abstract large-scale works where the screen-printed "mother's house" was both a central and pseudo-visible presence.

Featured here, *Mother's House with Beware of the Dog*, 1966, is one of the many works where the façade of "mother's house" is visible. The

accompanying archival black and white images (1953 and 1966) from the artist's personal family collection illustrates the architectural view used by Bowling in the series of "Mother's House" paintings. The image shows bold letters that mark the grand three-story clapperboard building located on Main Street as the "Bowling's Variety Store" and the artist's mother posing within the store's front gates. The 1966 photograph provides a sense of the full architectural beauty of the structure—bountiful windows encircling the house are wide open while the British flag looms above and a windswept palm tree hovers behind.

Reflecting on the importance of New Amsterdam to his oeuvre, Bowling notes:

"...New Amsterdam is the most important place, and it reappears all the time...in my quiet moments it reappears. It was a town that was full of terror, and at the same time it was marvelous ... it belonged to me."

<sup>1</sup>Mel Gooding, *Frank Bowling*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2011.



*Bowling's Variety Store, Main Street, New Amsterdam, British Guiana, 1966*

Photograph from the artist's archive  
11 ½ x 15 ¾ in.

Courtesy of the artist



*Bowling's Variety Store, Main Street, New Amsterdam, British Guiana, 1953*

Photograph from the artist's archive  
11 ½ x 15 ¾ in.

Courtesy of the artist



Frank Bowling  
*Mother's House with Beware of the Dog*, 1966

Acrylic on paper  
56 ½ x 47 ½ in.

Courtesy of the artist and Hales London New York

# Sandra Brewster

## b. Canada 1973

The first time the Toronto-based artist Sandra Brewster stepped foot on Guyana's soil was in 2008. She was 35 years old. Her Guyanese-born parents were part of a great migration of the 1960s to the United States and Canada. In the coming years, Toronto would emerge as a prominent node in the Caribbean diaspora as one of the largest and oldest Guyanese populations outside of Guyana.

What then does it mean to be Guyanese, Caribbean, and Canadian all at once? On navigating identity during her childhood growing up in Toronto, the artist shares, "My sister and I were seen as two little Canadian

girls. However, I'd insist that I was Guyanese simply because of where my parents were born. It didn't matter where I was born."

As a daughter of immigrant parents living in Canada, Brewster grew up hearing her family's stories of life in Georgetown that simultaneously gave her a connection to as well as "... a longing for a home I had never been to," states the artist. "They would talk about a place that was once beautiful and productive, then debate over the county's troubling economic conditions now."

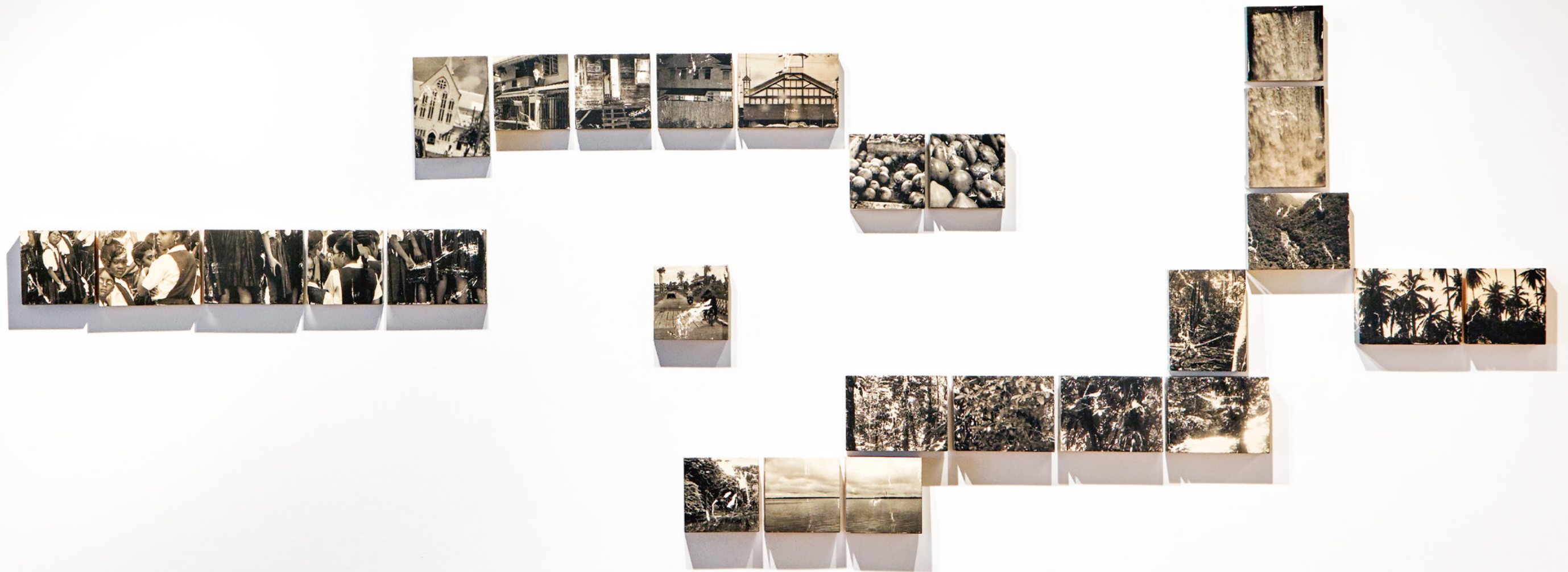
These are the questions and stories that

Brewster mined, along with the scenes she documented from her inaugural trip to Guyana, to inform this robust collection of 26 wood panels, *Place in Reflection*, 2016. Here process and material are just as key as visual imagery. The artist employs a gel transfer technique to transplant black and white photographs, many of which are tattered, torn, stained, and scratched, onto small wooden panels. "These transferred images are reflections that naturally, through the material, reveal imperfections," she notes.

In her intent to expose the flaws and make visible the defects in the images, Brewster

alludes to a personal concept of homeland as a space of shifting memory, as suggested by the blurry treatment in some of the images. We are left to ponder: Do the memories of fruits in a market place stall, school girls dressed in their uniforms, or a breezy verandah belong to the artist? Or, are they borrowed memories, reflecting a desire for a homeland that never was?

Sandra Brewster  
*Place in Reflection*, 2016  
(Photo: Argenis Apolinario)





Sandra Brewster  
*Bowda 1*, from the series, *Place in Reflection*, 2016  
Photo gel transfer on wood  
6 x 6 in.  
Courtesy of the artist

*Guyana Girl 2*, from the series, *Place in Reflection*, 2016  
Photo gel transfer on wood  
6 x 8 in.  
Courtesy of the artist

*Bridge*, from the series, *Place in Reflection*, 2016  
Photo gel transfer on wood  
6 x 6 in.  
Courtesy of the artist



## Erika DeFreitas

### b. Canada 1981

The practice of Toronto-based artist Erika DeFreitas is steeped in process, gesture, performance, and documentation. As a baker, DeFreitas' grandmother sold cakes out of a humble home in Newton, British Guiana in the late 1950s. She also taught classes in cake décor to neighborhood women, reflecting the craft as one belonging to a community of women. She would pass down the practice to DeFreitas' mother who later migrated to Canada in 1970, and in turn, taught the Canadian-born artist and her sister the intricacies of icing cakes. It is this sacred act of passing on a closely held family craft through three generations of DeFreitas women and across two continents, that forms the portraiture series, *The Impossible Speech Act*, 2007.

The artist states that Guyana is an engagement with "A place I've never been to and a place my mother has not returned to since my birth." In this work, rooted in maternal histories, DeFreitas' mother is both subject and collaborator. Drawing on the teachings of the grandmother, mother and daughter take turns in a series of documented performative actions, both poetic and playful, to hand-fashion face masks out of green, yellow, and purple icing. From start to finish, the photographic series slowly unveils the meticulous detail, labor, time, and artistry embedded in the process of masking a bare face with these sculptural objects of "absurd growths of flowers and leaves." The diptych featured here is the final two portraits of the process. DeFreitas states, "In a sense these repeated actions situate my mother psychically closer to her homeland as she remembers it, but only places me further away." The artist's choice to separate the portraits between mother and daughter can also be read as a commentary on the experience of separation when family members migrate.

DeFreitas' employ of icing as material is a symbolic one, noting that "historically, icing was created with two purposes: to be decorative and to preserve." This symbol of preservation becomes one of irony as the masks inevitably lead to an absence of the faces, their complete erasure. The viewer is then left with the notion that even when we commit to preserving a homeland's memories, traditions, and rites, loss still pervades. "In the end," says DeFreitas, "the masks did not become a substitute object in each of our images, as they melted from the heat emitted from our bodies, the flowers and leaves eroding, sliding slowly down our faces...an unpleasant reminder of the persistence of impermanence."



Erika DeFreitas  
*The Impossible Speech Act* (left and right), 2007  
Digital photography  
40 x 40 in.  
On loan from The Canada Council for the Arts, Art Bank  
Courtesy of the artist



## Marlon Forrester

b. Guyana 1976

Born in Guyana, Marlon Forrester now lives and works in Boston, Massachusetts. His photographic collages, many of which are self-portraits as seen here, are a direct commentary on the body, particularly the black male body, and the role historical forces have had in shaping their identities. His use of furniture as sculptural objects along with self-portraiture addresses the remnants of slavery and colonialism throughout the Caribbean diaspora.

*Vitualamen Sculpture*, 2011 features the artist directly holding and engaged with a melon. His choice to use an object of food is a reminder of the role of agricultural production for commercial export as a central component to colonial economies based in slave labor. The dominant colors of green and yellow found in the national flag of Guyana are appropriated in the colors of the melon and used to mirror "the simultaneous construction and dismemberment of my body," states Forrester. The adoption of the national colors of what the artist calls his "ancestral homeland" may also be his way of questioning what, for the Guyanese immigrant, constitutes nationalism.

The artist abstracts the male body, segregating its parts by only showing the viewer his arm and hands holding the melon. Although it is a very personal look at his own body, Forrester connects what he sees as a binding "history of displacement of the black body in both America's and Guyana's colonial slave history." In drawing from global influences such as these, Forrester forges strong statements about male identity and the contemporary place of the black immigrant body in society.



Marlon Forrester  
*Vitualamen Sculpture*, from the series, *Bball*, 2011  
Archival print  
60 x 20 in.  
Courtesy of the artist

## Roshini Kempadoo

### b. United Kingdom 1959

Born to Guyanese parents, photographer and media artist Roshini Kempadoo spent much of her youth shuffling between England, where she was born and is currently based, and throughout the Caribbean, including Guyana where she was a student in the 1970s. The artist's multiple acts of migration have shaped much of her repertoire, which has included a body of work aimed at examining the role of the photographic image in the Caribbean diaspora and Britain.

*Face Up*, 2015, presents a series of characters whose stories are told through screen animation vignettes, and weaved with text, images, and sound, referred to by Kempadoo as "snippets, sound bites, and fragments of life stories." The work examines how our culture's reliance on phones, tablets and other mobile devices "have radically affected how...[we] connect with others and...comprehend world events..." To frame an examination of the dependency on technology apparatuses to maintain connection across the diaspora, Kempadoo creates the character "Deirdre" as one of the protagonists. She is a young Guyanese woman living in London who still has close ties to her extended family in Guyana. In the video, the viewer is made aware of distressing news about a family member's health in Guyana while simultaneously seeing Deirdre's engagement with multiple digital screens. From these engagements, the viewer witnesses the ways in which Deirdre stages and creates a self-image, curating and sharing her experiences with the world.

*Deirdre checks her hair using the screen and switches her earplugs from the phone to the laptop. She is in her regular coffee bar near Regent Street around the corner from work, waiting for a Skype call. It is what she suspected...her cousin in Georgetown has gotten worse and needs medical treatment. Ordering another flat white, she downloads and forwards the visa forms, looks up airline tickets and checks her bank balance. The credit card balance has maxed, but she has managed to reserve flights from Cheddi Jagan International to Gatwick.*

Via her selfies, Deirdre's gestures of "self-validation and visual confirmation" reveal a kind of myth-making. The diasporic Londoner is always "negotiating journeys across and through spaces and media," states Kempadoo, "[she] knows about at least two places called 'home' and keeps track of and maintains tenuous and multiple 'identities' as a precarious life experience—hers and others."



Roshini Kempadoo  
*Face Up*, 2015  
Video  
11:35 mins  
Courtesy of the artist



## Michael C. Lam

### b. Guyana 1973

Michael Lam's ongoing *Oniabo* series, 2013 to present, takes the viewer to Guyana's coastlines and shorelines. The photographer, who is first trained as a biologist, states, "The *Oniabo* series is centered around the sea and its effect on the land and the people, how we see it and how we use it...From the rivers, creeks and waterfalls of the interior to the mighty Atlantic Coast, we are the land of many waters...waters that feed us and drive commerce."

The artist is intentional in his naming of the series: the word *oniabo* comes from the language of the indigenous Arawak people and means "water." Here, the visual image and the literary naming both become symbolic. These stark black and white seascapes, and the sense of timelessness they embody, implore the viewer to meditate on the nation's historical and pivotal relationship with water: A sacred natural resource for the country's first people, the Amerindians, the means by which European colonizers first arrived, the traumatic Trans-Atlantic Middle Passage that brought enslaved Africans to toil its soil, and a visceral reminder of precarious indentured immigrant crossings for Indians and Chinese. As the notable Caribbean poet Derek Walcott wrote in his 1930 poem of the same name, "The sea is History."

As much as these images harken to the past and allude to ancestral histories, they equally remind the viewer of the ubiquity of water—three mighty rivers and countless creeks, canals, gutters—in the present-day lives of the people. In *Seaward Bowline*, 2014, shot in Kingston, Georgetown, Lam captures a tranquil scene, in an otherwise usually vibrant entrepreneurial culture of fishing, where a fisherman's boat is battened down for the night. In *Devotion Point*, 2013, taken in Bushy Park, Parika, Essequibo, Jhandi flags planted on bamboo poles—a repeated visual element also seen in *Seaward Bowline*—indicates that an Indian Hindu religious ceremony has been performed. On these shores, survival and the desire for the spiritual meet, they share space. In its centering of water, Lam's *Oniabo* is a poetic reminder of why Guyana translates as, then and now, the "land of many waters."

Michael C. Lam  
*Contemplative (Thomaslands, Georgetown, Guyana)*  
from the series, *Oniabo*, 2013–2016  
Archival pigment print on canvas  
20 x 30 in.  
Courtesy of the artist

*Seaward Bowline (Kingston, Georgetown, Guyana)* (next page)  
from the series, *Oniabo*, 2013–2016  
Archival pigment print on canvas  
30 x 20 in.  
Courtesy of the artist



## Donald Locke

### b. British Guiana 1930–2010

As a young student in British Guiana, Donald Locke trained under artist of note E.R. Burrowes. After receiving a scholarship to Bath Academy of Art at Corsham, Locke left British Guiana for England in 1954. He arrived on the heels of the “Windrush Generation”—a period that marked the beginning of a post-World War II mass migration from the Caribbean to the United Kingdom. As his artistic career evolved and flourished, Locke would embark on multiple migrations, steeping his practice in and across three lands—Guyana, United Kingdom, and United States—whose colonial histories and contemporary socio-political landscapes deeply informed his work.

As an accomplished visual art critic, educator, sculptor, and painter, Locke’s engagement with the photographs in his canvasses was often ignited by the personal and political. In the mixed media collage, *Songs for the Mighty Sparrow: The Ballad of Monkey Mountain*, 1998, Locke layers the canvas with an array of photographic imagery: cutouts of magazine advertising, snapshots of his bronze female nude figurative sculptures, and a doubled insertion of a monkey in its natural habitat, alluding to the work’s title “*Monkey Mountain*,” a remote terrain located in Guyana’s Potaro Siparuni region. Locke also places onto the canvas the visual imagery of Guyana’s past: Xeroxed black and white photographs of mostly men in passport-style portraits that appear to be culled from the obituary pages and images of the country’s quintessential wooden houses with its Demerara shutters, also sourced from clippings of Guyana’s print newspapers. A weave of meandering gestural black forms rests on the grid of images. While black is the dominant color, the canvas is punctuated by red, green, yellow, gold, and two blue upward facing arrow shapes.

Locke’s layering and juxtaposing of historical photographs from print publications of his homeland suggests the need to examine, or rather, question, the nature of established historical records. By 1998, when *The Ballad of Monkey Mountain* was completed, Locke had settled in Atlanta, Georgia. It was his encounters there with a canon of African-American artists working in the American South that catalyzed for him a breaking away from a European colonial legacy of artmaking, what he called “*an alien inheritance*.” In a 2003 interview with *The Atlanta-Journal Constitution*, Locke remarked, “*You can’t escape from what is imprinted in you...I had to leave to do this work.*”



Donald Locke  
*Songs for the Mighty Sparrow: The Ballad of Monkey Mountain*, 1998  
Mixed media on canvas  
18 x 24 in.  
Courtesy of the estate of Donald Locke



## Hew Locke

### b. United Kingdom 1959

At seven years old, London-based artist Hew Locke left the United Kingdom for Guyana and spent the next fourteen formative years there (1966 to 1980). Deeply instilled in his psyche are the colors, landscapes, structures, and symbols of day-to-day life in Guyana. It is from this vault that he incorporates into his work the signs and remnants of colonial and postcolonial power and interrogates how these artifacts are altered by, or stand the test of, the passage of time.

The two C-type painted photographs, *Rose Hall*, 2014 and *Mount Sinai*, 2014, in which the artist blurs the line between photograph and painting with his employ of acrylic paint and ink, feature traditional plantation houses on stilts that pepper the Guyanese countryside. The works' titles are named after real places in Guyana—Mount Sinai, an old plantation estate in New Amsterdam and Rose Hall, a small town in the East Berbice-Corentyne region. The original images were taken by Locke in 2013, during one of his many trips back to Guyana. Drawn to their inherent duality of beauty and decay, Locke states:

*"These houses are falling apart, and returning back to the earth from which they originally came as trees. They are like spirit houses ... I am seeing my childhood falling down. Beautiful houses I dreamed of living in as a child are now wrecks."*

Their physical signs of long neglect and disrepair are symbolic of something deeper than collapsing infrastructure. In tandem, Locke is interested in what lies beneath the wooden wreckage reclaimed by nature's lush vegetation: a story of ghosts of a colonial past, economic depression, and abandonment as owners emigrate.

For many living in Guyana, periods of intense floods are a constant reality. Completed by the Dutch in 1892, the 280-mile long seawall along the country's Atlantic coastline was constructed to protect Guyana's below sea level inlands from frequent threats of flooding. Using the flood as metaphor, Locke alters the original images, rendering these houses both physically and symbolically flooded. With this artistic gesture, the houses standing in water become mythical places and dreamlike memories, adding an allegorical resonance to the work. Locke notes the flooding is "also the flood of the mind, or memory, washing away the past," suggesting water as a metaphor of transformation and change. What might be illuminated through Locke's flooded interpretation is that floods create space for renewal, an opportunity to rebuild and to restore what was lost. To usher in the birth of a new nation.

Sandra Brewster  
*Place in Reflection*, 2016  
(Photo: Argenis Apolinario)

Hew Locke  
*Mount Sinai*, 2014



Hew Locke  
*Mount Sinai*, 2014  
Acrylic paint and ink on C-type photograph  
50 x 65 in. (framed)  
Courtesy of the artist and Hales London New York  
(Photo: Charlie Littlewood)



Hew Locke  
*Rose Hall*, 2014  
Acrylic paint and ink on C-type photograph  
50 x 65 in. (framed)  
Courtesy of the artist and Hales London New York  
(Photo: Charlie Littlewood)

Maya Mackrandilal  
*Kal/Pani*, 2015  
SD video with sound  
8:53 mins

*Alapadma Mudra*, *Kappitha Mudra*, and *Yoni Mudra* (right), from the series, *Mudra Erasure*, 2015  
Pigment print on bamboo paper  
20 x 26 in.  
(Photo: Argenis Apolinario)





## Maya Mackrandilal

### b. United States 1985

"Embrace the void, or embrace the land," says Maya Mackrandilal as she narrates the video *Kal/Pani*, 2014. We never see her. We only hear her voice. The artist's poetic words float over a scene of a moving ritual as preparations are made for her maternal grandmother's funeral on the family's farm. With bare hands, her aunt washes down large, white concrete above-ground tombs of elders past with generous buckets of water. In this moment of reverence, Mackrandilal tells us, "Nanie asked that we build her tomb high above the ground so the flooding river would not touch her body." Here, water is trauma. The unpainted tomb in the background belongs to her.

The work's title mirrors the phrase *kal pani*—Hindi for "dark waters." It is meant to conjure the dehumanizing system of Indian indentured labor in British Guiana that replaced the brutal enslavement of Africans. Between 1838 and 1917, over 500 ship voyages deposited more than a quarter-million men and women from India to Guiana's Atlantic coast. They would spend over eight decades toiling on sugar plantations and rice fields. Mackrandilal notes, "They called the sea *kal pani*, black water. To cross it was a rupture, a separation from the land, from culture, from caste, to be forever outside, forever a nomad."

To produce the video-poem *Kal/Pani*, American-born Mackrandilal returned to Guyana in 2011 to film the rice fields where her Guyanese-born mother grew up. Like the majority of the indentured laborers who never returned to their motherland India, but made their borrowed land their new home, so too have the artist and her mother laid claim to the United States. Mackrandilal's mother left Guyana in 1976. "Acres of rice farm in a country we rarely visit... what are we, the generation that exists in the... wake of estrangement, to make of the pieces?" asks Mackrandilal.

Two centuries later, the "rupture" created by the initial crossing of the *kal pani* remains pervasive. It now haunts a second wave of a Trans-Atlantic migration from Guyana to the United States. The video is accompanied by a triptych, *Mudra Erasure*, 2015 of "mudras"—a Hindi word for the symbolic hand gestures often used in Indian dance. It features anonymous hands holding three food objects unique to the region: a gutted hassa fish, a pierced green coconut, and a halved sapadilla fruit, all of which have been violently ruptured.



Maya Mackrandilal  
Stills from the film, *Kal/Pani* (previous page), 2014  
SD video with sound  
8:53 mins

*Yoni Mudra* (above), from the series, *Mudra Erasure*, 2015  
Pigment print on bamboo paper  
20 x 26 in.  
Courtesy of the artist



## Karran Sahadeo

### b. Guyana 1986

The simplicity of the imagery and execution of Karran Sahadeo's photographs belie the disruption and dislocation they convey. Born in Guyana, Sahadeo's family left the country when he was four years old. He would spend the next twenty-four years in the Bahamas, United States, and United Kingdom. After earning undergraduate and master's degrees abroad, Sahadeo returned to Guyana to continue his artistic practice and teach photography at the E. R. Burrowes School of Art in Georgetown.

It is these acts of constant transition, of leaving and returning, of rupture and disruption, that inform the series, *Untitled*, 2014. Sahadeo describes his work as a product of "the tension between what I believed Guyana to be and what I know it is. They are memories of events and places I never truly experienced, centered around my understanding of Guyana as someone who has lived outside its borders for the majority of my life."

In his photographs capturing active scenes of Guyanese life, Sahadeo transforms the everyday into beautiful moving meditations: a boy rides his bicycle on the seawall as an older man, framed from behind a bench, watches on; a fisherman's boat is battened down for the night, appearing blurry and ghostly; and a man is illuminated from behind as he carries a full tray of clay diyas—Indian oil lamps used for Hindu religious ceremonies. Even with their quiet stillness someone or something is always in transition, coming or going, in these images. Perhaps Sahadeo's framing of movement is a metaphor for the multiple migrations that have come to characterize the one million citizens in the Guyanese diaspora.

In the self-portraiture work *Untitled (blue)*, 2014, the artist is photographed in his bedroom, illuminated by the glow of multiple digital screens that surround him: a tablet rests on his lap, a phone lies under his hand, and a laptop is visible on a dresser drawer. The wealth of technology visible in the frame is juxtaposed by visual codes of an impoverished nation that continues to grapple with a struggling infrastructure—the artist is enclosed securely under a mosquito netting and photographed in the midst of an electricity blackout. In exploring the reliance on technology and devices to stay connected, Sahadeo comments on what he sees as the "disconnection between Guyana and myself."

Karran Sahadeo

*Untitled (fire two)* (top), 2014  
24 x 34 in.

Archival pigment print on canvas  
Courtesy of the artist

*Untitled (wind)* (bottom), 2014  
24 x 34 in.

Archival pigment print on canvas  
Courtesy of the artist

*Untitled (blue)* (next page), 2014  
24 x 34 in.

Archival pigment print on canvas  
Courtesy of the artist





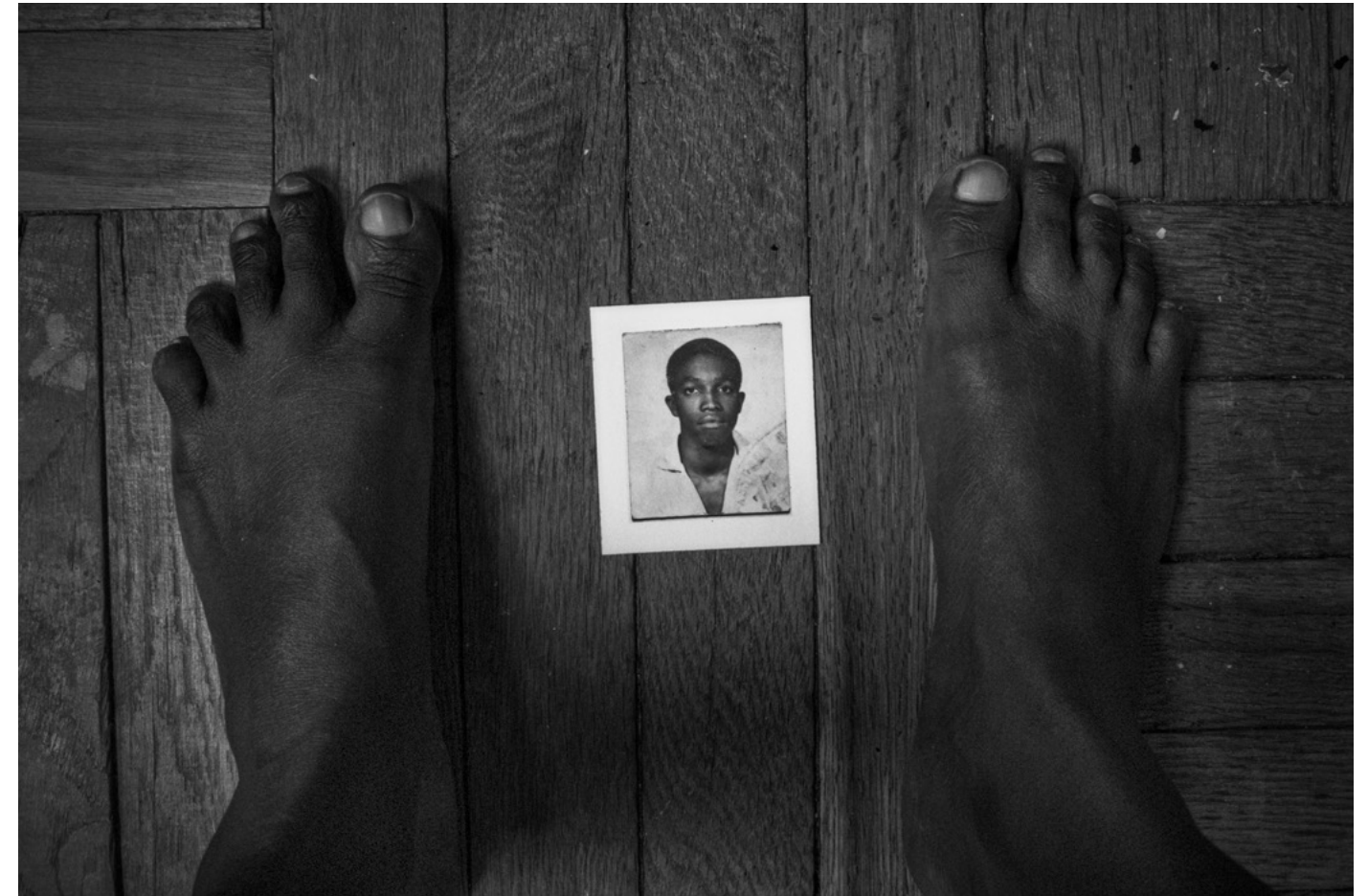
## Keisha Scarville

### b. United States 1975

Born in New York to a Guyanese father and mother, Keisha Scarville spent her childhood raised in a Brooklyn community. Her parents maintained their connection to Guyana, returning often and taking their children with them. Scarville's ongoing mixed-media series *Passport* pays homage to her father Keith Scarville. The passport photo is an incredibly charged object with notions of belonging, displacement, dislocation, homeland, exile, freedom, migration, and exclusion. What the artist sees in this singular passport photo from her family's personal archive—it's signs of age and decay visible via its yellowing tones, frayed edges, and a faint timestamp on its right corner—is a "young man frozen in the distant past." The date of the photo is 1955: a time when the then-British colony was rife with political turmoil and haunting racial violence between Africans and Indians. By 1968, two years after Guyana gained its independence, Keith would find his way to New York where he took on new roles: an immigrant in the United States, a young black man witnessing America's civil rights era, a husband and father.

In *Passport*, this humble five-by-seven-inch archival image becomes both canvas and symbol of the "transformative effects of immigration," states Scarville. The passport photo is heightened and downplayed in the artist's various treatments via collaging, distorting, scratching, damaging, and layering the portrait with found objects. In these artistic gestures, Scarville confronts notions of femininity and masculinity and engages ideas of invisibility, erasure, and censorship—of both her father and herself. In several other reinterpretations, Scarville replaces her father's face with objects that threaten to drown and devour him. These symbolic objects suggest the collective histories of a homeland—slavery past, ethnic strife, exploited labor, colonizers' greed—this young man carries, confronts, and aims to break free from.

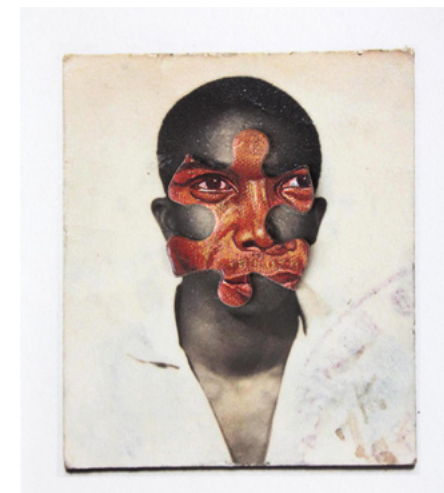
Joining *Passport* are two pieces from Scarville's black and white, self-portraiture series, *i am here*, 2013, where the artist engages her body with the passport photo of her father. In positioning parts of her body with the image, Scarville merges both time and space—two generations, two homelands, and the complexities in between.



Keisha Scarville  
*Untitled*, from the series, *i am here*, 2013  
Archival digital print  
24 x 16 in.  
Courtesy of the artist



Keisha Scarville  
*Passport*, 2012–2016  
2 ¼ x 2 ¼ in. (unframed in archival sleeves)  
Courtesy of the artist



Keisha Scarville  
*Passport*, 2012–2016  
(Photo: Argenis Apolinario)

*Untitled* (left), from the series, *i am here*, 2013  
Archival digital print  
24 x 16 in.

*Untitled* (right), from the series, *i am here*, 2013  
Archival digital print  
24 x 16 in.



## Press Reviews & List

“A particular strength of the show is how it manages this deep dive into Guyanese lives while also offering points of entry for visitors of any origin...The show’s total effect is cosmopolitan and particular, a bridge slung in either direction as needed.”

—**Siddhartha Mitter**, “A Guyanese Art Show Explores Images of Migration and Home-Making,” *The Village Voice*, July 28, 2016.

“Guyana celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence this year, so it makes sense to assemble this show now. It’s additionally timely because the issues examined here—of nativism, political and ethnic identity, global travel and its relationship to authenticity—are present in our current collective consciousness. *Un | Fixed Homeland* works through these concepts using the specifics of Guyana, but it also raises broader questions about migration: “How did you make it here?” “How do you hold onto one place while experiencing another?” Its artists offer up a chorus of answers.”

—**Seph Rodney**, “Gathering the Work of Guyanese Artists Far from Home,” *Hyperallergic*, September 14, 2016.

*Harvard’s Transition Magazine*, “Artists Explore the Guyanese Experience of Migration,” by Grace Aneiza Ali, Fall 2016, Issue #121.

*Ragazine*, “*Un | Fixed Homeland*: How Art Makes Me Want to be a Guyana Girl Again,” by Celeste Hamilton Dennis, November 1, 2016.

*The Daily Meal*, “*Un | Fixed Homeland*: A Night of Guyanese Art and Inspired Cuisine in Newark’s Aljira,” September 23, 2016.

*Hyperallergic*, “Gathering the Work of Guyanese Artists Far From Home,” by Seph Rodney, September 14, 2016.

*Voices of NY*, “How Thirteen Artists See Guyana,” by Melissa Noel, September 8, 2016.

*True Africa*, “*Un | Fixed Homeland*: 13 Artists Explore Themes Around What ‘Home’ Is,” August 1, 2016.

*Village Voice*, “A Guyanese Art Show Explores Images of Migration and Home” by Siddhartha Mitter, July 28, 2016.

*NY Daily News*, “CARIBBEAT,” by Jared McCallister, July 10, 2016.

*Guyana Chronicle*, “5-Part Series on *Un | Fixed Homeland*,” by Dominique Hunter.

1. “Kwesi Abbensetts: Tending the Garden of Fragmented Memories,” November 12, 2016.
2. “Karran Sahadeo: Exploring the Disconnections of Migration Through Conceptual Photography,” November 5, 2016.
3. “Khadjia Benn: Countering the Typical Narrative of Guyana’s Landscape,” October 29, 2016.
4. “Picturing Guyana’s Seascape in Black and White,” October 22, 2016.
5. “Migration, Memory, and the Guyana Experience,” October 15, 2016.

## Artist Biographies



[www.spaceshipgeorge.com](http://www.spaceshipgeorge.com)

**KWESI ABBENSETTS** (b. Guyana 1976) is a New York-based photographer who hails from the Corentyne coast of Guyana. He moved to the United States in 1995. Portraiture has been Abbensetts’ main photographic foundation as he’s always found fascination in the human figure and its various states. His photography stands firmly within the modern contemporary aesthetic and is enhanced by his West Indian origins—the colors, the sun, and the vibrancy. He is a 2016 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellow in Photography. Abbensetts’ work has been included in Reginald F. Lewis Museum, Baltimore (2011); African & African-Caribbean Design Diaspora Festival, London (2011); Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art, Newark (2009); Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, New York (2010); and the Nathan Cummings Foundation, New York (2010).



[www.khadijabenn.com](http://www.khadijabenn.com)

**KHADIIJA BENN** (b. Canada 1986) grew up in the bauxite mining town of Linden, Guyana and later settled in the capital city Georgetown. She received a BA in Geography from the University of Guyana, and postgraduate certification in Applied Digital Geography & GIS from Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada. In the last six years she has undertaken projects that have enabled her to travel throughout Guyana, including working as a cartographer and spatial analyst in areas such as land use planning, community development, and heritage preservation. She discovered her affinity for photography at 23-years-old, eventually favoring conceptual portraiture for achieving creative balance and self-expression. She has also produced a body of documentary work that focuses on the diversity of Guyanese people, places, and cultural experiences. Currently Benn is pursuing a Master of Science in Geoinformatics at the University of the West Indies at St. Augustine, Trinidad.



Photo: Wayne Salmon  
[www.sandrabrewster.com](http://www.sandrabrewster.com)

**SANDRA BREWSTER** (b. Canada 1973) holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from York University and is a recipient of grants from the Toronto, Ontario, and Canada art councils. Her work has been published in *OF NOTE Magazine*, *The Walrus*, *Small Axe*, *Chimurenga Magazine*, *Mix Magazine*, and *NKA Journal of Contemporary African Art*. Brewster's work has been included in Allegheny College Art Galleries, Meadville (2015); Alice Yard, Port of Spain (2013); Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto (2012); A Space Gallery, Toronto (2009); Robert Langen Gallery, Waterloo (2010); The Print Studio, Hamilton (2010); SPACE, London (2011); and FiveMyles Gallery, New York (2009). Brewster is currently pursuing a Masters of Visual Studies at the University of Toronto.



Photo: Arlington Weithers  
[www.frankbowling.com](http://www.frankbowling.com)

**FRANK BOWLING, OBE, RA** (b. British Guiana 1934) moved to London in 1953, where his artistic career began shortly after his arrival at the Royal College of Art (1959–62). The artist has since established studios in both New York and London. Bowling began his career as a figurative painter, and was involved in the British Pop Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In the mid 1960s, he moved to New York, and there turned his attention to abstraction—the field in which his contributions were to be most significant. It is during this transitional period that Bowling's seminal body of work, the *Map Paintings*—a series of quasi-abstract color fields overlaid with stenciled images of maps of Australia, South America, and Africa—was produced. In his more recent work, Bowling continues to explore the nature and possibilities of abstract painting, a period of painterly experimentation that has garnered critical acclaim. He is the recipient of two Guggenheim Fellowships, and a member of England's Royal Academy of Arts. He is represented in varied collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), Museum of Modern Art (New York), Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), Royal Academy of Arts (London), Tate Gallery (London), and the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York).



[www.erikadefreitas.com](http://www.erikadefreitas.com)

**ERIKA DEFREITAS** (b. Canada 1981) is a Toronto-based multidisciplinary conceptual artist. Placing an emphasis on process, gesture, and documentation, she explores the influence of language, loss, and culture on the formation of identity through public interventions, textile-based works, and performative actions that are photographed. DeFreitas is a recipient of the Finalist Artist Prize from the Toronto Friends of Visual Arts, and a graduate of the Masters of Visual Studies Program at the University of Toronto. DeFreitas' work has been included in Project Row Houses, Houston (2015); the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, Toronto (2005); The Art Gallery of Windsor, Windsor (2014); Platform Centre for Photographic & Digital Arts, Winnipeg (2008); Centre for Print and Media Arts, Hamilton (2013); The Art Gallery of Mississauga, Mississauga (2013); the Pollock Gallery at the Southern Methodist University, Dallas (2014); the Houston Museum of African American Culture, Houston (2013); and a residency at Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, Winnipeg (2010).



[www.themichaellamcollection.com](http://www.themichaellamcollection.com)

**MICHAEL C. LAM** (b. Guyana 1973) is a layout artist and photographer. Born and raised in Guyana, Lam is of mixed Portuguese and Chinese heritage. He holds a degree in Biology from the University of Guyana, was the Bronze medalist in the 2012 Guyana Visual Arts Competition and Exhibition, and shortlisted in the 2014 edition of the same. In addition to having his entries in both competitions displayed in the exhibition portion, he co-exhibited with photographer Nikhil Ramkarran in the National Gallery at Castellani House in 2012 in an exhibition titled "Coastal Wanderings." His current *Oniabo* collection was previewed through a slideshow presentation at Moray House in October of 2014. He was also the chief judge for the inaugural "Capture Guyana" national photography competition in 2014. His yearly photography project, *The Deck*, covers a wide variety of subjects and photographic styles. His work has been featured in the tourism pages of local media and calendars, and his photography has graced the covers of local magazines *Ku'wai* and *ClassiMag*, as well as the regional travel magazine *Caribbean Beat*.





[www.roshinikempadoo.co.uk](http://www.roshinikempadoo.co.uk)

**ROSHINI KEMPADOO** (b. England 1959) is a London-based photographer, media artist, and scholar with the School of Media, Arts and Design at University of Westminster. Kempadoo's work has been included in *Ghosts: Keith Piper and Roshini Kempadoo* at Lethaby Gallery, London (2015); *Wrestling with the Image: Caribbean Interventions* at Art Museum of the Americas, Washington D.C. (2011); *Liminal: A question of position* at Rivington Place, London (2009); and *Roshini Kempadoo work: 1990-2004* at Pitzhanger Manor and Gallery, London (2004). Her writing has included "Spectres in the Postcolonies: Reimagining Violence and Resistance" in *Visualising Slavery: Art Across the African Diaspora*, Liverpool University Press (2016); and "Creating notebooks, photographs and interventions: Visualizing African, Caribbean and Arabic presence in Europe" in *Crossings: Journal of Migration; Culture Volume 3 #2* (2012). Published portfolios have included *Nueva Luz Photographic Journal, Volume 17 #3* (2013). Kempadoo's book *Creole in the Archive: Imagery, Presence and Location of the Caribbean Figure* is being published in November 2016 with Rowman & Littlefield International. She is currently working on 'New' *Europeans* (2016), a screen-based artwork concerned with economic migration, labor, and Europe.



[www.marlonforrester.com](http://www.marlonforrester.com)

**MARLON FORRESTER** (b. Guyana 1976) is an artist and educator raised in Boston, Massachusetts. He is a graduate of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, BA (2008) and Yale School of Art, MFA (2010). He is currently a painting faculty member at School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and a resident artist in the African-American Masters Artist Residency Program (AAMARP), an adjunct to the Department of African-American Studies at Northeastern University. Concerned with the corporate use of the black body, or the body as logo, Forrester's paintings, drawings, sculptures, and multimedia work reflect meditations on the exploitation implicit in the simultaneous apotheosis and fear of the muscular black figure in America. He has exhibited both internationally and nationally.



[www.donaldlocke.com](http://www.donaldlocke.com)

**DONALD LOCKE** (b. British Guiana 1930-2010) lived, studied, and worked in Guyana, United Kingdom, and the United States, moving backwards and forwards across the Atlantic. Living in Guyana in the 1960s, he was part of the creative elite who shaped art after the country's independence, using the language of modernism allied with traditional motifs to help mold a new international style. Locke spent most of the 1970s in London, and is known in the UK for a series of paintings and sculptures entitled *The Plantation Series*, (1972-74)—forms held in strict lines and grids, connected as if with chains or a series of bars, analogous he has said, to the system whereby one group of people are kept in economic and political subjugation by another. He also freely and continuously drew upon Guyana's spirit, animal, and ghost stories, stemming from the Amerindian, African, European, and East Indian religions, traditions, and folklore of its population, to create a pool of "mytho-poetic material." Locke moved to the United States in 1979 when he received a Guggenheim Fellowship in Sculpture, and was the recipient of the Biennial Purchase Award from the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1986. He is represented in varied collections including the Tate Gallery (London), Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (Washington, D.C.), The Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia (Atlanta), and Victoria & Albert Museum (London).



Photo: Sean McConnell

[www.mayamackrandilal.com](http://www.mayamackrandilal.com)

**MAYA MACKRANDILAL** (b. United States 1985) is a transdisciplinary artist and writer currently living in Los Angeles. She is a graduate of the University of Virginia, BA (2007) and School of the Art Institute of Chicago, MFA (2011). She is the recipient of an Aunspaugh Fellowship, a Jacob K. Javits Fellowship, and was a 2014-2015 HATCH Resident Artist with the Chicago Artist's Coalition. Mackrandilal's work has been included in THE MISSION Gallery, Chicago (2015); Mana Contemporary, Chicago (2016); Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago (2016); and Smack Mellon, New York (2015). Mackrandilal is also a founding member of FEMelanin, a Chicago-based woman of color identified theater collective, and has a collaborative practice with the Chicago-based artist Stephanie Graham. In her writing, she focuses on issues of race, gender, and labor in the art world, sometimes writing collaboratively with the poet and scholar Eunsong Kim. Her essays have appeared in *The New Inquiry*, *60 Inches from Center*, *MICE Magazine*, and *contemporary*.

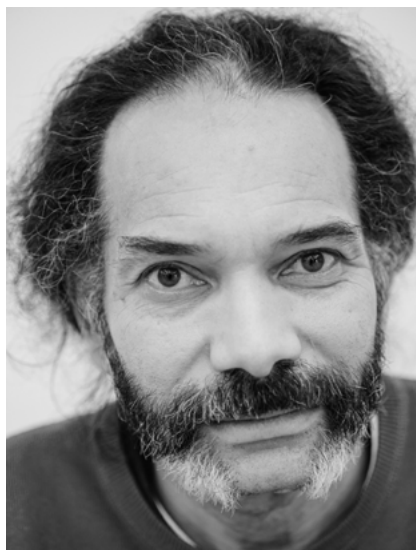


Photo: Charles Littlewood  
[www.hewlocke.net](http://www.hewlocke.net)

**HEW LOCKE** (b. United Kingdom 1959) spent his formative years (1966–1980) in Guyana before returning to the UK to complete an MA in sculpture at the Royal College of Art (1994). Locke explores the languages of colonial and postcolonial power, how different cultures fashion their identities through visual symbols of authority, and how these representations are altered by the passage of time. To illustrate this layering of time, Locke's work is accompanied by a unique merging of influences from the artist's native Guyana and London, where he now lives and works. Locke's work has been included in the Guangzhou Triennial, China (2008); Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India (2014); and Prospect 3 New Orleans Contemporary Art Biennial, New Orleans (2014), among others. He is represented in varied collections including The Pérez Art Museum Miami (US), The Tate Gallery (UK), The Brooklyn Museum (New York), The Victoria & Albert Museum (London), and The British Museum (London). Currently, Locke's work is featured in the major exhibition *Artist and Empire* at Tate Britain (2015–16), traveling to the National Gallery of Singapore.



[www.karran.tv](http://www.karran.tv)

**KARRAN SAHADEO** (b. Guyana 1986) is a multimedia artist, writer, speaker, and educator aiming to understand representation and the limitations of his own recollection. Driven by the fragility of memory, his research explores our relationship with technology and the reliance we have on external devices. Sahadeo's current practice consists of using photography, digital video, and installation to explore his dependency on consumer technology as external memory apparatuses. He has exhibited internationally in both the United States and the United Kingdom as well as in Guyana. In 2014, Sahadeo returned to Guyana after 24 years and placed third in the Guyana Visual Arts Competition and Exhibition. He is currently a faculty member at the E. R. Burrowes School of Art in Georgetown where he teaches photography and graphic design.



[www.keishascarville.com](http://www.keishascarville.com)

**KEISHA SCARVILLE** (b. United States 1975) is a photo and mixed media artist based in Brooklyn, New York. She is currently an adjunct faculty member at the International Center of Photography in NYC. Scarville's work has been included in the Studio Museum of Harlem, New York (2012); Rush Arts Gallery, New York (2011); BRIC Arts Media House, New York (2015); and The Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York (2001). Additionally, her work has appeared in publications such as *Vice*, *Transition*, *OF NOTE Magazine*, *Nueva Luz*, *ARC*, *Small Axe*, *Oxford American*, and *The New York Times* where it has also received critical review. In 2006, she was awarded a grant through the Brooklyn Arts Council's Community Arts Program. She has also been an artist-in-residence at The Center for Photography at Woodstock, Lightwork Artist Residency Program, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Workspace Program, Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, and Vermont Studio Center.

# Works in the Exhibition

**Kwesi Abbensetts**  
b. Guyana 1976

*Pieces of Land, From Where I  
Have Come From*, 2016  
Mixed media, painting, and  
photography on canvas  
8 x 10 in. each (9 pieces)

**Khadija Benn**  
b. Canada 1986

*Chrysalis*, 2013  
from the series *Wanderer*  
Archival pigment print on canvas  
48 x 48 in.

*Kanuku*, 2013  
from the series *Wanderer*  
Mixed media, painting, and  
photography on canvas  
48 x 48 in.

*Amalivaca*, 2012  
from the series *Wanderer*  
Archival pigment print on canvas  
48 x 32 in.

**Frank Bowling**  
b. British Guiana 1934

*Bowling's Variety Store, Main  
Street, New Amsterdam, British  
Guiana*, 1966  
Archival image  
11½ x 15¾ in.  
Not for sale

*Bowling's Variety Store, Main  
Street, New Amsterdam, British  
Guiana*, 1953  
Archival image  
11½ x 15¾ in.

*Mother's House with Beware of  
the Dog*, 1966  
Acrylic on canvas  
55½ x 47½ in.  
Courtesy of the artist and Hales  
London New York

**Sandra Brewster**  
b. Canada 1973

*Place in Reflection*, 2016  
Photo gel transfer on wood  
8 x 6 in. (3 pieces)  
6 x 6 in. (13 pieces)  
6 x 8 in. (10 pieces)

**Erika DeFreitas**  
b. Canada 1981

*The Impossible Speech Act*, 2007  
Digital photography  
40 x 40 in.  
On loan from The Canada Council  
for the Arts, Arts Bank

*The Impossible Speech Act*, 2007  
Digital photography  
40 x 40 in.  
On loan from The Canada Council  
for the Arts, Arts Bank

**Marlon Forrester**  
b. Guyana 1976

*Vitualamen Sculpture*, 2011  
Archival print  
60 x 20 in.

**Roshini Kempadoo**  
b. United Kingdom 1959

*Face Up*, 2015  
Video, 11:25 mins

**Michael C. Lam**  
b. Guyana 1973

*Devotion Point (Bushy Park,  
Parika, Essequibo, Guyana)*, 2013  
from the series *Oniabo*  
Archival pigment print on canvas  
30 x 20 in.

*Seaward Bowline (Kingston,  
Georgetown, Guyana)*, 2014  
from the series *Oniabo*  
Archival pigment print on canvas  
30 x 20 in.

*Contemplative (Thomaslands,  
Georgetown, Guyana)*, 2013  
from the series *Oniabo*  
Archival pigment print on canvas  
20 x 30 in.

**Donald Locke**  
b. British Guiana 1930 - 2010

*Songs for the Mighty Sparrow:  
The Ballad of Monkey Mountain*,  
1998  
Mixed media on canvas  
18 x 24 in.  
Courtesy of the estate of  
Donald Locke

**Hew Locke**  
b. United Kingdom 1959

*Mount Sinai*, 2014  
Acrylic paint on C-type photograph  
50 x 65 in. (framed)  
Courtesy of the artist and Hales  
London New York

*Rose Hall*, 2016  
Acrylic paint on C-type photograph  
50 x 65 in. (framed)  
Courtesy of the artist and Hales  
London New York

**Maya Mackrandilal**  
b. United States, 1985

*Alapadma Mudra*, 2015  
from the series *Mudra Erasure*  
Pigment print on bamboo paper  
20 x 26 in.

*Kappitha Mudra*, 2015  
from the series *Mudra Erasure*  
Pigment print on bamboo paper  
20 x 26 in.

*Yoni Mudra*, 2015  
from the series *Mudra Erasure*  
Pigment print on bamboo paper  
20 x 26 in.

*Kal/Pani*, 2014  
SD Video with sound  
8:53 mins

**Karran Sahadeo**  
b. Guyana 1986

*Untitled (blue 2)*, 2014  
Archival pigment print on canvas  
24 x 34 in.

*Untitled (blue)*, 2014  
Archival pigment print on canvas  
24 x 34 in.

*Untitled (fire 2)*, 2014  
Archival pigment print on canvas  
24 x 34 in.

*Untitled (wind)*, 2014  
Archival pigment print on canvas  
24 x 34 in.

**Keisha Scarville**  
b. United States 1975

*Untitled*, 2013  
from the series *i am here*  
Archival digital print  
24 x 24 in.

*Untitled*, 2013  
from the series *i am here*  
Archival digital print  
24 x 16 in.

*Untitled*, 2012-2016  
from the series *Passport*  
Mixed media  
2¼ x 2¼ in. (unframed in archival  
sleeves; 29 pieces)

*Untitled*, 2012-2014  
from the series *Passport*  
Mixed media  
5 x 7 in. (framed; 3 pieces)

# *Un* | Fixed Homeland

Grace Aneiza Ali, Guest Curator

On View

July 23-September 23, 2016

**Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art** fosters excellence in the visual arts through exhibitions and educational programs that serve as catalysts for inclusiveness and diversity, promote cross-cultural dialogue, and enable us to better understand the time in which we live. Public understanding and support of the visual arts are strengthened through collaboration and community-based educational programming. Aljira seeks out the work of emerging and under-represented artists and brings the work of more established artists to our community. Through the visual arts Aljira bridges racial, cultural and ethnic divides and enriches the lives of individuals.

## **aljira** A CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

Empowering Artists, Engaging Community

Newark, NJ 07102-4403

p. 973-622-1600

f. 973-662-6526

[www.aljira.org](http://www.aljira.org)