

# Another esteemed artist-in-residence

Any kind of attachment to your own art is extremely regressive. The art is important on its own; the artist is not.  
— Dr Shah Rukh Khan, Bollywood film superstar.

After last week's launch of the **Transoceanic Visual Exchange**, I once again found myself with too much material, and too much I wanted to say and explain, for my allotted space in the ePaper — in this ongoing series featuring local art spaces. So

my benevolent Editorial advisor allowed me to take a portion of that launch and focus on one aspect that has always puzzled me: the concept of being an "artist-in-residence".

At its very basic level of linguistic decoding, it sounds like an artist who lives somewhere, or has a residence. Right? I had an inkling it was slightly more than that, but still didn't know what it meant.

I had first heard the term in reference to a character in an American television series, who was described by the dean of

the (fictional) California Art Centre as "our esteemed artist-in-residence" — a young deaf woman who enjoyed creating large, complex and controversial pieces out of discarded mechanical parts, but who also put her hand to delicate origami pieces and mixed media installations.

I tucked the term in the back of my head and wondered why someone like that would be described as "esteemed". Now, I'm lucky to have a Bajan artist on hand to explain the term and share her experience of being an artist-in-residence — both at home and abroad. But I'm getting ahead of myself. A quick **Google** search of the term explained that "artist-in-residence programmes and other residency opportunities exist to invite artists, academicians, curators, and all manner of creative people for a time and space away from their usual environment and obligations. They provide a time of reflection, research, presentation and/or production".

Further, founding director of the Fresh Milk Art Platform Inc., Annalee Davis, explains "there are many different kinds of artist residency programmes . . . Some may focus on ecological concerns, some on papermaking, bookbinding, land art or research". The types of residencies are as broad as their scope for fostering deeper conversations and forcing an artist to experiment and push the boundaries of his or her craft.

By most accounts, residencies seem to be crucial in bridging that gap between graduating from a tertiary-level institution with a degree in some form of art, and continuing to be a practising artist (and not the clichéd "starving artist" suffering for their craft). This was certainly true for Katherine Kennedy.

"Returning to Barbados after graduating from Lancaster University, UK with a degree in creative arts (specializing in fine art and creative writing) was an intimidating transition, because I wasn't sure what my options were in terms of continuing my contemporary art practice," Katherine said.

"Artist residencies weren't something I was familiar with either until my last year of university [when] a visiting artist came to speak to my class about her residency experiences."

At the time, it seemed a fantastic but unattainable dream and something reserved for the lucky few. A return to her country of birth, feeling out of touch and disconnected from the creative community, the happiness at being home again, and operating without the safety net of a studio environment all created the perfect storm for her work to grind to a halt. So the **Fresh Milk Art Platform** open call for residency applications in 2012

came along in the nick of time.

"I shared the studio that week with the other selected local resident artist Simone Asia; and it was great to not only have a studio to work in again, but to have another artist present to bounce ideas off of," Katherine explained excitedly.

And so her work blossomed, evolved and grew, and soon "Annalee Davis went on to recommend me as a candidate for an international residency at Vermont Studio Centre, USA, which I chose to undertake in May, 2013. This is where I created the piece **Anthesis**, which was part of the **Transoceanic Visual Exchange Exhibition** (featured in last week's column. The final showing was Wednesday, October 28).

By now the **Fresh Milk Art Platform** in its current incarnation was being moulded by Katherine's fair hands, alongside founding director Annalee Davis.

Seeing how residencies worked from the administrative side was the next phase of the artist's evolution.

"Even as creative and cultural workers, learning to manage residencies has been a learning curve for us too. As a way to improve our own programme here, in 2014 **Fresh Milk** applied for and was awarded a fellowship for me to spend three months at Akademie Schloss Solitude, a prestigious 25-year-old residency institution in Stuttgart, Germany."

With a veritable cornucopia of ideas, experiences, differences and similarities, Katherine returned with tips on residency best practice, experimental possibilities for the platform and transoceanic connections that led to artists from abroad taking up residencies in Barbados. It would appear that after two successful residencies, the sky was the limit for Katherine.

But the self-confessed juggler of many artistic balls (along with her work at the **Fresh Milk Art Platform**, Katherine is the assistant to the director and editor at **ARC Magazine Of Contemporary Caribbean Art**) has a lot more to say about the future of working artists, art space whether physical, transient or virtual, and why there should not be that panic over whether or not you will continue practising your craft after graduation.

"In terms of art spaces on a whole, I think even if you look at the entire Caribbean region right now, you'll see that a lot of the contemporary practice — which is people who are working in a way that doesn't necessarily fit the norm or the stereotypes that you think about when you think about Caribbean art on



Still Image From Anthesis — stop-motion animation, 2013.



Cosmopolitan Carnival — mixed media sculptural and shadow installation, 2012.



ABOUT TOWN with KATRINA MARSHALL ACROSS COUNTRY



Linear Growth — mixed media installation, 2013.



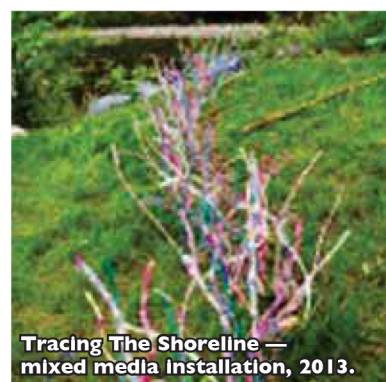
Cosmopolitan Carnival — mixed media sculptural and shadow installation, 2012.



Katherine Kennedy (Picture by Charles Phillips of Monochrome Media.)



Still Image From Anthesis — stop-motion animation, 2013.



Tracing The Shoreline — mixed media installation, 2013.

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