

Basel May 14, 2019

A great turnout for the inaugural Caribbean Art Salon in Venice!

During the preview days for the 58th Venice Biennale, the Caribbean Art Initiative hosted its first Caribbean Art Salon at the Navy Officer's Club which becomes the My Art Guides Venice Meeting Point during the opening week. The event was co-organized with Lightbox, and curated by Giscard Bouchotte.

The Caribbean Art Salon focused on the Caribbean presence in Venice: "The Caribbean in Venice: Connecting South". The two panels, highlighted voices from over six different islands, discussed which roles Venice and the Caribbean has within both within an international context and between the islands. Furthermore, as a response to the Haitian Pavilion not taking place, the Caribbean Art Salon was able to temporarily showcase the work of the official appointed Haitian Artist, Jean Ulrick Désert, at the Navy's Officer Club.

Through the Caribbean Art Salon and at a period where Venice becomes the world's cultural capital, the Caribbean Art Initiative created a platform, facilitating a reunion of the Caribbean with the world. Through the initiative's efforts, and Bouchotte's curatorial direction, the first edition of the Caribbean Art Salon emphasized how contemporary artistic expressions unites people, cultures and artistic voices.

In conjunction with the Salon the following works by Jean Ulrick Désert were on display at the Venice Meeting Point.

Moreover, a specially designed coaster (sottobicchiere) was distributed when having a drink. The work stems from Désert's well regarded Negerhosen2000 series, containing a seminal quote from Walter Benjamin.

The Waters of Kiskeya/Quiskeya, or Hispaniola's decolonized name, is a devised cartography of the Caribbean created by Désert. The nine-panel, unembellished, black and white map highlights the fractured boundaries of the Caribbean archipelago's nation states. Reflecting Creolized spiritualities, cultivated flora from a legacy of enslaved labour, yachts, cruise-ships, oil rigs and the current die-off of fauna. Furthermore, the viewer can recognize the voices of Bob Marley and Édouard Glissant, and other literary icons of the Caribbean.

The Love of God / El Amor de Dios is a large-scale word painting of beggar's plea. Painted in bronze, on a high-visibility-textile, the original text in Spanish, reads:

"hermanos por el amor de dios, les ruego que me ayuden con alimentos o lo que buenamentos o lo que buenamente puedan para mantener mis cuatro hijos. saben ustedes lo duro y triste que es para mi tener que es para mi tener que hacer esto, pero la necesidad me obliga a rogarles una limosna. gracias que dios se lo pague"

Désert observed the sign while in Madrid with Dominican artist Jorge Pineda in December 2018. Reading the plea as an emblematic act of protest, regardless of borders, when the seemingly powerless resort to grand gestures of display, such as the nude protest of Pauline Lumumba on the assassination of her husband, Patrice Lumumba, in 1961. As the late poet Audre Lorde wrote, "there is no hierarchy of oppressions" and thus Désert's amplification of a voice associated with Spain's indignados speaks for us all.

The artist Jean Ulrick Désert is represented by *espace d'art contemporain 14°N 61°W* in Fort de France, Martinique FWI.



Jean Ulrick Désert, 2019, Negerhosen2000 Venice Edition



Jean Ulrick Désert, 2019, The Love of God / El Amor de Dios, Bronze Paint on High Visibility Fabric



Jean Ulrick Désert, 2017, The Waters of Kiskeya/Quiskeya, xerography on vellum paper