

Towards a model of community co-curation in the Caribbean: Developing a community of curatorial practice at the Barbados Museum & Historical Society

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Summary In 2018, the University of the West Indies and the Barbados Museum & Historical Society embarked on a project to facilitate a community-led composite history of the Caribbean migratory experience to Britain. This was the museum's first attempt at an intentional large-scale community collaboration across the diaspora. The resulting outputs – the Virtual Museum of Caribbean Migration and Memory and *The Enigma of Arrival: The Politics and Poetics of Caribbean Migration to Britain*, a rare Caribbean-based travelling exhibition on post-war migration from the Caribbean territories to Britain and the subsequent post-independence rejection of Caribbean migrants, and the process which generated them, are models for how Caribbean museums with global communities and audiences can incorporate an inclusive practice model. This paper chronicles how the museum has evolved from small community interventions and collaborations to this major project as examples of a 'community of curatorial practice' (Lave and Wenger 1991) and explores next steps for imagining the truly inclusive museum in our curatorial practice going forward.

Keywords socially engaged practice, community of practice, multivocality, multifocal

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It is not enough to be free
of the whips, principalities and powers.

– Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy*

Introduction

In 2018, the University of the West Indies and the Barbados Museum & Historical Society embarked on a project to facilitate a community-led composite history

of the Caribbean migratory experience to Britain. This was the museum's first attempt at an intentional, large-scale community collaboration across the diaspora. One of the resulting outputs – *The Enigma of Arrival: The Politics and Poetics of Caribbean Migration to Britain* – was a rare Caribbean-based travelling exhibition on post-war migration from the Caribbean territories to Britain and the subsequent post-independence rejection by the United Kingdom of Caribbean migrants. In this paper we propose a cyclical model for how Caribbean museums with global communities and audiences can incorporate inclusive practices. We begin by chronicling how the museum has evolved from small organically evolving community interventions and collaborations to a major project with a formal practice framework as examples of a 'community of practice'¹ which is a participatory model for community co-curation. We conclude by briefly exploring next steps for imagining the truly inclusive museum in our curatorial practice going forward.

Context: Philosophical underpinnings

Most people (in the Caribbean) have learned their history through the filter of an education based on a colonial framework which makes for a unique relationship with that history. This excludes, for the most part, the voices of their direct antecedents, providing a Eurocentric perspective that often leaves local audiences disassociated with their national histories. Although independent nations in the Caribbean have introduced regional testing, many Caribbean schools still teach a wholesale English colonial curriculum. The job of the Caribbean historian, and by extension Caribbean museums, is to give voice to the experiences of the ancestors of current communities and audiences, rather than reflect the dominant, hegemonic views inherent in previous colonial governance and history.

This more contemporary mode of interpretation has its roots in the work of Haitian anthropologist and historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot. He notes:

Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance) [...] To put it differently, any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique

process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly.²

A primary consideration in uncovering Trouillot's 'silences' and mitigating these imbalances in historic power is the telling of untold stories from our pasts, which reveal new historical information previously overlooked by the telling of histories from the colonial nucleus. This analysis of centre versus margin places the imbalance of power between the two at the crux of our modern understanding of our historic circumstance. Earlier texts³ identify this paradox of being – expressed daily in our culture, our literature, and our values created within this state – as problematic at best and critically destructive at worst.

It is in the deconstruction of these histories centred on the colonial perspective and the accompanying silences identified by Trouillot, as well as Fanon and James, and the reconstruction of a more inclusive interpretation that is centred on the experiences of the historically disenfranchised, that the practice of community involvement in interpretation and narrative are most potent. Constructivist education models, which make space for the creation of knowledge by the learner based on their experiences and between learner and instructor, allow for real-time analysis, experimentation, and retelling. This allows for a more embodied experience for the museum and its community co-curators, who also form its audience.

Early beginnings: Organic approaches

To understand the progression of our model's development, it is first necessary to understand the early evolution of the model. The framework for community co-curation developed at the museum, with which we started working in 2015 and was later formalised in 2020, is based on the idea of a community of curatorial practice. This framework is derived from Lave and Wenger's (an anthropologist and education theorist) concept of a community of practice, which speaks to a social theory of learning through 'a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice'.⁴ The framework partners this with participatory practice museum models⁵ and the social responsibility of museums.⁶

The Barbados Museum & Historical Society (BMHS), located in the World Heritage Property Historic Bridgetown and Its Garrison, has functioned as the de facto national museum of Barbados for over 90 years, and it has been a place

of particular national importance since independence in 1966. Under its most recent director, Alissandra Cummins, who was appointed in 1981, the museum has prioritised community collaborations and the inclusion of stakeholders such as community organisations, artists, and individuals in the exhibition development process.

Transoceanic Visual Exchange

A first intentional attempt to work within a model of co-curation, and a community of practice specifically, came through a 2019 collaboration with the Transoceanic Visual Exchange (TVE)⁷ project, which was established in 2015. Spearheaded by the Fresh Milk Art Platform,⁸ TVE was a groundbreaking new media and experimental film project that aimed to 'negotiate the in-between space of cultural communities outside of traditional geo-political zones of encounter and trade'.⁹ Through the TVE project, BMHS designed a model for a community of curatorial practice in a Caribbean museology context to explore the effectiveness of a lateral approach to curatorial practice. This contrasts with the traditional hierarchical approach, as it values input from all stakeholders on the same level when developing the exhibition and programming framework.¹⁰

The TVE project was set up to operate on an open-call format, where artists were invited to submit works made in the last five years leading up to the iteration. There was no curatorial theme decided at the point of the open call. A series of workshops with artists and community stakeholders in all participating regions then occurred, where contexts of artistic practice were discussed, including trends in video art and current discourse in art in each country. From this, a series of connecting themes were then drawn out that align with the works that have been submitted. So instead of a singular curator or just one institution determining a curatorial framework that artists' works need to fit into, the framework was derived from the conversations and connections between the works and communities themselves.

This partnership with TVE was therefore very much in keeping with the museum's evolution toward a more inclusive, socially responsible institution, which was taking shape at the same time, with its long-time practice of uncovering silenced or hidden histories and perspectives within Caribbean museological practice, interpretation, and history-making. The project's community of curatorial practice as the design framework, which encouraged multivocal

models of exhibition making, resonated with both the museum's leadership, and its curatorial team.

This opened the way to a number of collaborations with other arts entities such as the National Cultural Foundation (NCF).¹¹ The most notable of these include a full-length feature play, which accompanied an exhibition chronicling the history of Barbados's 1816 rebellion told from the point of view of the enslaved,¹² a yearly collaborative project documenting an aspect of the annual festival Crop Over, and a theatre project that involved historical vignettes or installations in the museum spaces performed by the NCF performing arts ensemble.¹³

Artistic Interventions

The next major opportunity to continue to uncover, interpret, and share the silenced history of the communities we represented came with the International Museums Day in May 2018. Using the theme of 'Hyperconnected museums: New approaches, new publics', the museum designed activities to help its audiences investigate the existing galleries and provide feedback through fine art, craft, performance, and other interventions into the space.

One particularly successful aspect of this programming was 'Artistic Interventions',¹⁴ an opportunity for local contemporary artists to critically engage with its collections through a series of interventions.

Six artists' works were interwoven in the museum's galleries, interrogating and re-contextualising the historical narratives on display. The artists approached the galleries with enthusiasm and were able to choose freely from a wide variety of subject matter.

Within our social history gallery, one of the artists re-centred the traditional narrative of the Transatlantic Slave Trade to focus more on the humanity of the enslaved persons. Artist Adrian Richards performed a dramatic piece entitled *Boxhill*, which was based on a photo of one of the last remaining enslaved persons from the early 20th century located in the gallery. In addition, he inserted an artistic piece depicting a working-class man entitled *King* into the gallery alongside more commonly displayed objects that represent the wealth, entitlement, and power of the plantocracy, such as glass and silver objects that were purchased with the profits they gained through enslavement. This juxtaposition was a distinctive critical commentary on visibility and representation of the descendants of enslaved persons within the museum.

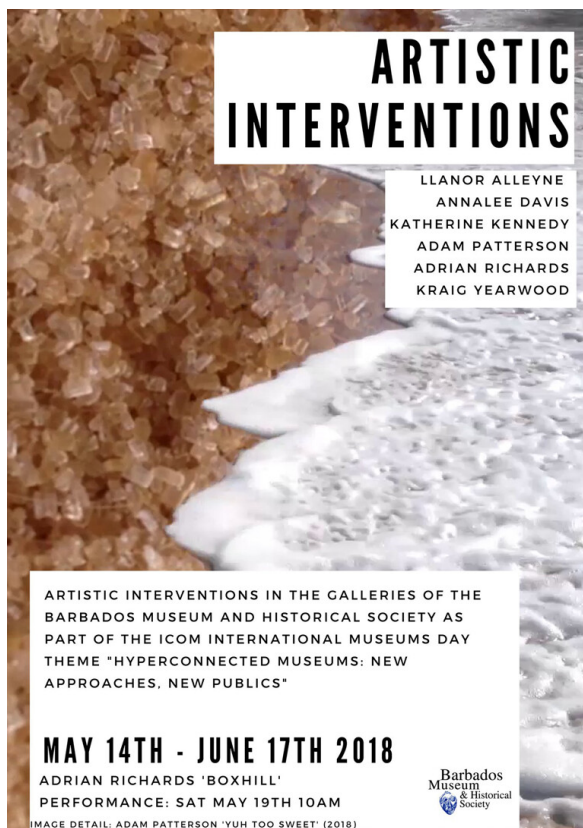


Figure 1 Event flyer for Artistic Interventions

In our Cunard Gallery, visual artist Llanor Alleyne inserted modern collage pieces about Black women which centred the gaze on the imagined face and features of the enslaved through the eyes of their descendants. These pieces shared space with the traditional prints by Agostino Brunias that depicted plantation life and the landscapes of plantation economy. In our Warmington Gallery traditional plantation chinaware was juxtaposed with the (re-)created pottery pieces based on shards from the plantation yard by contemporary artist, Annalee Davis.

The 'Artistic Interventions' project shied away from presenting dichotomies between ideologies such as the grassroots and government, art and history. It created instead a museological ecosystem, or network of museum theories, that provided a practical application for Caribbean audiences who struggle with contested and painful histories, thereby demonstrating that a 'conversation' about



Figure 2 Artistic intervention in one of the BMHS Jubilee gallery plantation artefacts Cases by artist Adrian Richards entitled *King*, 2018

the histories of the centre and margin in the Caribbean context could take place, and propelled the thought that this framework could be applied in other post-colonial societies. This school of thought is also aligned with what museologist Vivian Golding describes as an 'affective museum', which

works with poetics to assist visitors to look through that which was hidden and rendered opaque in traditional linear displays, such as the colonial histories that have disadvantaged Black people and women, but which creolized voices can bring to the fore.¹⁵



Figure 3 Artistic intervention in the Military gallery by artist Katherine Kennedy entitled *Burst*, 2018

All the artists' interventions privileged the story of the enslaved human experience as central to the telling of Caribbean history, above the narratives of economic, industrial and colonial development usually associated with enslavement.

What we learned is that our artistic community wanted to – and indeed needed to – engage with their past at a visceral level to tell their history from their own perspective and experience.¹⁶ Given the opportunity, Caribbean-born creatives chose to engage with difficult and destabilising histories to (re)centre these narratives on themselves, their enslaved ancestors, and the unique perspectives of that experience. This was borne out over the next few years by a number of smaller projects through which we engaged our wider Barbadian national and overseas diasporic communities, and which yielded increasing interactivity, as they learned we were willing and able to include and assist them with telling our stories. It was at this point that we began to realise and appreciate that if we documented our processes and implemented our strategies in a more mindful and purposeful manner, what we were developing could positively impact other communities facing similar challenges as a formal framework.

Applied theatre programme

Developing almost simultaneously with these fledgling exhibitory efforts was an applied theatre programme at the museum. What started out as an opportunity for students to engage with, analyse, and interpret history for themselves became a collaborative community education and entertainment experience geared towards connecting the wider community with its history and heritage. Eventually dubbed the Torchlight Experience, the museum began a series of collaborations initially with the NCF and then the Theatre Arts Programme of the Barbados Community College (BCC). This project aimed to provide students with an opportunity to engage directly with the museum's objects and depicted histories and use elements of theatre – such as role playing and imaginative exercises – to allow them to create a meaningful and personal interpretation of their history and heritage.

The students were encouraged to do their own research and collaborate with elders in the local community who had been a part of the Windrush migration¹⁷ experience. The students shared their experiences both in the discovery of their family history through the informal oral histories they gathered, as well as their own journeys of self-discovery as descendants of those who would have lived through the Windrush experience, both at home in the Caribbean and abroad.

The highlight of this project was a theatrical performance by the students entitled *Windrush*,¹⁸ which was based on their own interpretations of these composite inputs and on the new understanding they gained of the history involved.¹⁹ In this instance, it was thought that allowing the students to interact with the exhibition content being developed through a community of curatorial practice framework would provide them with the opportunity to connect with aspects of their history with which they were largely unfamiliar as well as provide the museum with youthful feedback as part of our community co-curation process.

This collaborative applied theatre and heritage programme was immediately successful in a number of ways. First, there was the launch of a series of public programmes through which, under the joint guidance of the museum's research team and their theatre arts tutors, the students (re)interpreted history for themselves and the wider community. The students immediately saw the value and impact of this direct engagement with history and heritage on their craft; they commented positively on the authenticity they were able to bring to their roles through the oral history research as well as a review of literature when approaching a project. In addition, they appreciated the opportunity to safeguard intangible

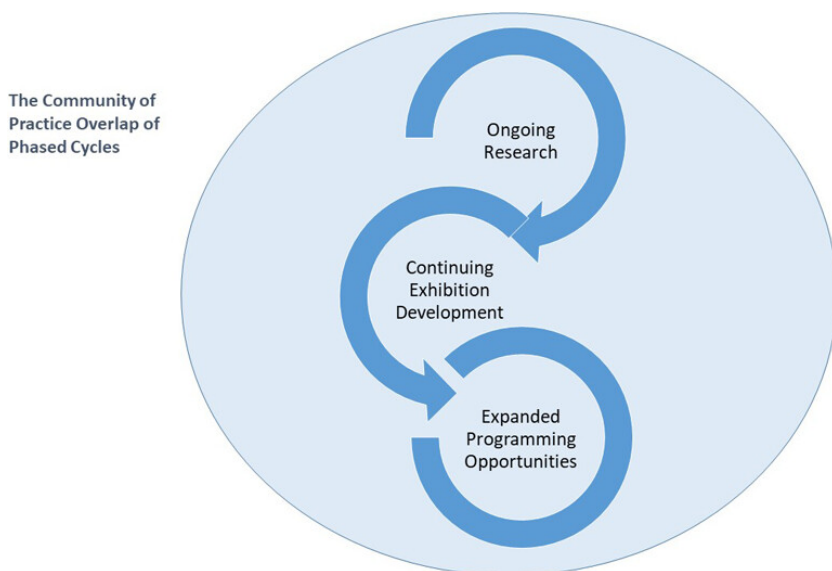


Figure 4 The cyclical and interlocking approach to the various phases of content development in the community of curatorial practice

cultural heritage through the incorporation of traditional theatre practices such as call and response as well as other unique heritage skills like stick licking²⁰ and other oral traditions into their meaning making.²¹ Further, the visceral engagement of audiences allowed them to connect in ways they had not anticipated were possible.

Much of the content developed in the community theatre programme activity tied directly into exhibition development and community practices and operated as a way to increase youth engagement and access audiences who would not ordinarily be drawn to a museum. The audience essentially chooses what it wants to see in the museum space when it visits and provides feedback, and this feedback is encouraged at every part of the process. This interaction is best explained in the diagram in figure 4 above.

Audience researchers Monica Pendergast and Juliana Saxton note the use of museum theatre as an effective medium for ‘mediating knowledge and understanding in a museum setting’, including a number of opportunities for development.²² This applied theatre collaboration with the BCC has been built on the success of social practice seen in the Torchlight Experience and aims to continu-

ally and sustainably safeguard aspects of tangible and intangible cultural heritage through theatrical exploration.

Essentially, the social participatory method used to implement this project has encouraged ethical museum practice through multivocality and community inclusion, contributing to the development of best practices in the decolonisation of the Caribbean museum. Later iterations have included workshops that allow students to consider, examine and analyse history through their theatre craft,²³ and exchange programmes with students from North Uist and the Isle of Skye in Scotland.

The audience feedback was just as positive, with audiences willingly participating in the interactive elements of the plays as well as commenting favourably on the content and the events themselves.²⁴ The last event, held mere months before the Covid-19 pandemic, played to a sold-out theatre and had to be held again to accommodate the numbers of engaged members of the community, which reinforced the idea that working with and for our community yields sustainable results. The programme, now in its eighth year, has been through many changes but has also grown to include a summer internship that gives students immersive experiences over a period of six to eight weeks to engage critically with the museum's collections and critically analyse and interpret our heritage through performance,²⁵ which is then shared with the wider community, and engage in meaning making for themselves and others. Our community youth in general have also become an integral part of how the museum functions: they have become volunteers and interns, and they have provided valuable feedback²⁶ on how a museum can best meet their needs, as they grow and become contributing citizens responsible for our culture and heritage.

Other community-focused projects leading up to the formalisation of our research and programmatic activity into a practical model have included:

- working with community activists on an exhibition and programming around social activism in Barbados dating from early rebellions to the contemporary #MeToo movement;²⁷
- an international project to document diasporic experiences of Barbadian citizens;²⁸
- a project with the Barbados government to assist with documenting the life experiences of our elders (centenarians).²⁹

These ongoing community collaborations led to the museum being poised and ready to assume a much more pivotal role in other important initiatives such as the

EU-LAC Museums (European Union Latin American and the Caribbean Museums) project to examine gender and migration as a part of the colonial experience across the diaspora.

Formalising the process: Developing a framework

Subcontracted by the University of the West Indies (UWI) in 2016, which was partnered with the University of St Andrews in Scotland to assist on a project to research, interpret, and disseminate the work of community museums across the Caribbean, we immediately understood that we needed to formalise the process with which we had been interacting with our communities. This was to ensure that we continued to privilege the stories of our heritage and culture, which to date had only been done on a small scale but would now be incorporated into a much larger project. Our approach would need to be documented and systematically communicated and implemented for the project to succeed and remain sustainable.

In developing the *Enigma of Arrival: The Politics and Poetics of Caribbean Migration to Britain* exhibition under the EU-LAC project, the original design of the community of curatorial practice from Lave and Wenger, as developed at the museum by McGuire, was expanded and adapted into our 2020 framework (see below). In keeping with the evolving paradigm of museums as responsible social actors who engage with community concerns and global challenges, *Enigma* was intended to provide new opportunities for the Caribbean region's museums and communities to co-curate previously unarticulated national and regional narratives.

This new framework outlined the method for employing a community of curatorial practice as follows:

- **Input on exhibition content.** Broadening the scope of who got to contribute to and create exhibition content. Moving beyond museum staff to include historians and community members, this approach deepened the meanings associated with the content and a sense of a shared identity.
- **Engaging a curatorial community.** Developing a sense of professional community in sharing research resources.
- **Practice.** Having a reflexive approach to exhibition making, where objects and materials are revisited by community contributors and feedback is provided on their relevance to the narrative.

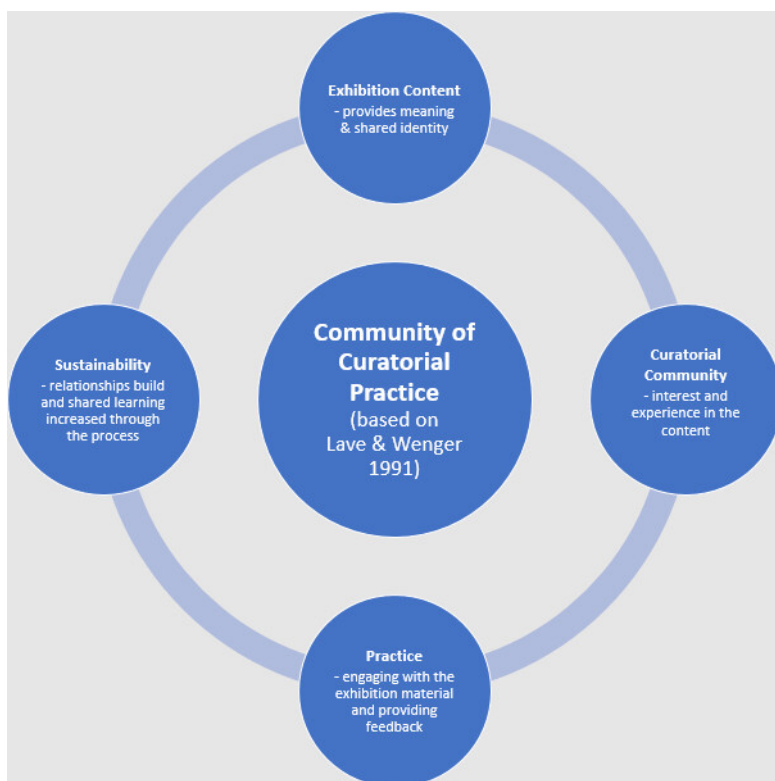


Figure 5 Community of curatorial practice model

- **Sustainability.** Viewing working with communities as an endeavour that extends beyond the project time frame, and that can springboard future collaborations.

The multi-year project to develop the *Enigma of Arrival* exhibition was aimed at examining the phenomena of migration across several jurisdictions across the English-speaking Caribbean (Jamaica, Trinidad, etc.) and including as many experiences and historical perspectives as possible. To this end, the project team reached out to the public asking them to share their experiences of migration as well as to researchers across the region to document this history.³⁰ Our approach combined multivocal, co-curatorial methods with ‘poetics’ – language and cultural expressions through literature, music, theatre and visual art – in the development of these exhibitions.³¹ We encouraged everyone from the Windrush descendants

themselves, to the academics who have researched the Windrush phenomenon, to share their stories and provide feedback on our draft content. We also asked other museums to add their own stories and the stories of their communities. We encouraged the growth of the exhibition to move away from our first-draft ideas and embrace the realities within the diaspora up to and including the Windrush scandal.

This allowed for the further development of distinctly *Caribbean* ways of knowing in exhibition making and agency in the sharing of the Windrush generation narratives. Elements such as the inclusion of oral histories in the research and exhibition process, and the establishment of literary and artistic corroborative recordings as significant to the ethos of the histories being portrayed were key elements of this methodology. This approach spoke to the manner in which the Caribbean and Latin American culture form a part of our thought processes and therefore our academic ethos. Nowhere more so than in the Caribbean does art go beyond imitation of life to the infusion and recording of its existence, and it therefore infuses Caribbean approaches to the recording and interpretation of our history – through our literature, through our dramatic process and through our handed-down oral traditions and stories, which have carried our ancestral knowledge across the Atlantic from the countries of the African continent where the enslaved originated and have been passed down through the centuries of our complex, challenging and contested histories to emerge from the silences in the colonial records.

Key outcomes of the project included:

- an international conference for all interested parties (but in particular practitioners) that allowed practitioners across the diaspora to exchange and develop ideas;³²
- a travelling social history exhibition that interrogated the migration experience of Caribbean to Britain;³³
- an art exhibition that spanned the Anglophone Caribbean experience with migration;³⁴ and
- a virtual museum to document Caribbean experiences with migration.³⁵

The continuing value of these and other project outputs demonstrate the sustainability of the model applied to the practice, and investigation and interrogation of our hidden histories, driven by a community-centred, multi-focal/vocal approach to the unearthing and dissemination of knowledge. Not only is the application practical but its cyclical nature allows for an ongoing process of interrogation with

continual adding and expansion of outputs during ongoing community engagement. The project is relevant to people and to the history and will be, indefinitely.

This is evidenced by the requests to host iterations of the exhibition and to add research content to both the exhibition itself as well as to the Virtual Museum of Caribbean Migration and Memory. Not included in the key outcomes listed above, but certainly pertinent as exemplification of the ongoing consistency with which this practice continues to deliver is the successful facilitation of two lecture series on Caribbean UK migration and then on Barbadian migration across the world in 2019³⁶ and 2020³⁷ respectively and the archiving of both of these online as well as in a physical publication.³⁸

Due to the model's accessibility, the body of research continues to grow with the continual addition of exhibition points across the diaspora. Its flexibility is demonstrated in its applicability to other projects initiated since the inception and indeed conclusion of the migrations research, which have spanned Black portraiture dating back some 200–300 years between Barbados and Europe,³⁹ Barbados' Intangible Cultural Heritage,⁴⁰ educational programming around civilian internment during WWI Caribbean,⁴¹ and the cross-disciplinary archaeological and cultural exploration with the post graduate students of the Performing Arts Faculty of the Errol Barrow Centre for Creative Imagination who worked with the community to create an immersive film experience based on their community research of the Newton Enslaved Burial Ground⁴² which is on the tentative lists as part of a serial world heritage nomination on the Barbadian elements of the Triangular Trade. At this stage it is not a question of the model's usefulness, relevance, facility, variability, or sustainability but rather its accessibility and dissemination, and it is towards facilitating the latter that the decision has been made to document it as a formal model.

The cyclical process: Evolving/perfecting the model

Given the nature of the evolving stories associated with our history – namely, Caribbean and Barbadian history, diaspora experiences, the legacy of enslaved peoples after forced migratory experiences to the Caribbean as well as out-migration in the post-apprenticeship period to the current day and their relative invisibility in memory for local Caribbean narratives, the question arises as to how a museum-based reading of this history, for an international project, can demonstrate empathy and inclusiveness for the communities involved and ethically collaborate with the living communities who continue to experience that



Figure 6 Our stories our museum – mind map

history and memory. Within this framework, it becomes critical to reconsider models of museum practice, especially exhibition development, to explore how they could empower more Caribbean ways of knowing by making visible historical narratives that have previously been submerged.

Trouillot’s perspective on the entanglement of silence and history holds particular significance for Caribbean museum practitioners because it speaks eloquently of the Caribbean’s historical context, which has been shaped by the experiences of enslavement and colonisation. In fact, it could be argued that any authentic representation of a historic phenomenon that forms part of Caribbean experience must always bear the legacy, or the taint, of that experience. Migration, by its nomadic nature, is poignantly a part of this experience of colonisation. The deliberate separation of the colonised from their cultural roots; the overlay of Eurocentric systems of law, governance, and process; and the adherence to

a binary perception of being and power, with the empire at the centre and the colonies and colonial subjects on the margins, create unique circumstances that must be a primary consideration in any interpretation of history originating from these regions. This is true both in terms of inherent bias within these systems and any attempt to redress the imbalance of power and presence historically. We cannot tell our history unless we examine how it has been shaped by past 'outside' interpretations.

While working on the EU-LAC Museums project, the museum was able to access grant funding under a national tourism development project to redevelop its core galleries, which date to the 1970s. Within the context of the newly developed model of community of curatorial practice, this presented an exciting opportunity to engage the community in the curatorial and interpretive direction of the museum's safeguarding and interpretation of heritage. We therefore reached out to our global community through media and personal interactions to understand what they wanted and needed in a national and inclusive museum that represents our small island developing state through the 'Our Stories, Our Museum' project.

Our most succinct responses have come from young people who have interacted with the museum in the past which is, for us, a tremendous validation of our engagement with them in meaning making. They have noted gaps in the history we have chosen to interpret thus far and identified those areas that mean the most to them for future inclusion and investment. We have been thrilled and excited to receive these criticisms and recommendations because they are an indication of our investment repaid with interest, which resulted in their investment and ownership of 'our stories' and 'our museum'.⁴³

This project, though still in its initial research stages due to a shift in the timelines as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, is viewed with much anticipation by our museum team and our community partners as we believe that the cyclical model applied to the structuring of some of our permanent gallery space will lead to a more dynamic experience for museum visitors first and foremost within our close and supported communities but also across our wider diaspora.

Conclusion

These evolutions of the community of curatorial practice over the lifetime of these varying and largely sustainable social practices have convinced us that the model meets the needs specific to the experiences as Caribbean museology practi-

Barbados Museum & Historical Society

OUR STORIES, OUR MUSEUM

THE BARBADOS MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Barbados Museum & Historical Society is about to embark on one of our most recent exciting projects called 'Our Stories, Our Museum' and we need your help!

WHAT IS OUR STORIES, OUR MUSEUM?

Our Stories, Our Museum is a project where the Museum's three permanent exhibitions on natural history and history will be re-conceptualized, redesigned and revitalized.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Retelling the stories of our heritage should include hearing all of our voices. Share with us your ideas and images, memories and mementos, emotions and experiences. Give us feedback on other themes and stories you would like to see in our Museum. We want to hear from you!

The Museum is one of Barbados' National Treasures and it belongs to all of us, so what would you like to see displayed in our Museum?

GUIDELINES!

Have a look at our mind map to get an idea of themes that we would like to develop and grow with your input.

The Mind Map shows examples of how stories can connect and intersect beyond the traditional display of the current gallery structure. As we hear from you, we intend to expand the branches of each group on the mind map.

WHO CAN CONTRIBUTE?

We are coming to you the people of the island; all Barbadians both at home and abroad, yes those in the wider diaspora can also feel free to submit their contributions as we work together to re/create our Museum.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

You get to be a part of shaping what our stories are and how they are told in our Museum. Your story or memory, image or object could be included as part of the new exhibitions on display.

You can be a part of our Museum history as the names of all who contributed ideas to the narratives used in the galleries will be acknowledged and appreciated for years to come.

In addition, as the mind map grows, we will be developing various exciting ways to feature and celebrate the testimonies and contributions made!

HOW CAN YOU SUBMIT?

Send your ideas, photos or contributions to ourstoriesourmuseum@barbadosmuseum.org.bb

Deadline for submission:
Between
May 18 - July 18, 2020

We look forward to your contributions as we work together as a community, to develop Our Stories, Our Museum!

f i @BARBADOSMUSEUM

Figure 7 Community participation guidelines infographic – our stories our museum

tioners. It is our intention to continue to share the model with other museums within the diaspora as a model for community involvement and as a basis for the safeguarding, interpretation and education of Caribbean heritage and culture. Further, we acknowledge the many similarities Caribbean countries share with other small island developing states and wish to explore the ways in which this model can be appropriate for other contexts with similar colonial and postcolonial experiences, limited resources, and silenced, contested, and displaced histories. Thus far the model has proved adaptable, sustainable, and comprehensive across the Anglo Caribbean diaspora growing over a period of six years and multiple culture and heritage projects of varying size and complexity.

The model is firmly entrenched in the exhibition development process of the BMHS with several successful exhibition projects brought to fruition and continuing interest in utilising our model for the travelling exhibition. As such, we have collaborated with local artists and art students to develop an exhibition to examine the portrayal of Blackness in art which examined not just the art in and of itself but also representational models and activism and agency through art relating to the colonial period. We have also worked with local practitioners, heritage bearers, and communities in order to create an archive of our living intangible cultural heritage and to create a link between our citizens and this living heritage through community-based programming. In addition, we have worked with students to guide them through the process of exploring art and history heritage through community interaction, resulting in deeply interrogative cross-disciplinary theatre and film projects. We have taken suggestions on board from our partners, which have not always coincided with our initial vision when projects have been conceptualised. Nonetheless we have found that we have always benefitted from it in content, longevity, and significance of the work produced.

With the successful conclusion of the EU-LAC Museums project in early 2021, we have been given opportunities to observe projects, such as the travelling exhibitions that were initiated by or supplemented under the programme, grow and expand to accommodate the changing needs of the communities who have motivated their creation and existence. All of the projects initiated or modified under this model have proved sustainable and have continued to have life well beyond the general three- to six-month shelf life of temporary museum exhibitions of the past. In short, the community of curatorial practice works for Caribbean museums!

Notes

- 1 J. Lave and E. Wenger, *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- 2 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the past: Power and the production of history* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 26–27.
- 3 For example, Frantz Fanon, *Black skin, white mask* (New York: Grove Press, 1991); Frantz Fanon, *The wretched of the earth* (New York: Grove Press); C. L. R. James, *The black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963).
- 4 Lave and Wenger, *Situated learning*, 98.
- 5 Such as Nina Simon, *The participatory museum* (Santa Cruz: Museum 2.0, 2010) and Sophia Diamantopoulou, Eva Insulander, and Fredrik Lindstrand, 'Making meaning in museum exhibitions: Design, agency and (re-)presentation', *Designs for learning* 5 (2012), 11–29.
- 6 See Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the shaping of knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992); Richard Sandell, *Museums, society, inequality* (London: Routledge, 2002); Shahid Vawda, 'Museums and the epistemology of injustice: From colonialism to decoloniality', *Museum international* 71, no. 1–2 (2019), 72–79.
- 7 The Transoceanic Visual Exchange, based in Barbados, is a transnational collaborative project that brings artists from several regions together to interact in the postcolonial space. Past partnerships have included Nigeria, New Zealand, Melanesia and its diaspora in Australia, China, Costa Rica and Trinidad and Tobago. Their website is <https://www.transoceanicvisualexchange.com/>.
- 8 Fresh Milk is an artist-led collaborative space that originated in Barbados. Their website is <https://freshmilkbarbados.com/>.
- 9 Transoceanic Visual Exchange, 'About: Transoceanic Visual Exchange', accessed 10 May 2022, <https://www.transoceanicvisualexchange.com/about>.
- 10 Natalie McGuire, 'A community of curatorial practice', 2015, <https://www.transoceanicvisualexchange.com/tve-1>.
- 11 The National Cultural Foundation is a government department founded to support the functions of arts and culture in Barbados. Their website is <https://ncf.bb/>.
- 12 This production, which incorporated research information provided by the museum, was set at a temporary theatre space on a former plantation and included opportunities for touring the space with scripts, which were collaboratively developed to include the stories of the enslaved in the narrative. It can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/Xh7C-YSkUTo>.
- 13 These collaborations involved a number of community groups working in collaboration with the museum and other institutional arts entities, as our government prefers to funnel development funds through either its own departments or through NGOs like the museum.

- In addition, groups such as the performing arts ensemble are set up to assist community practitioners in accessing funding and building capacity at that level.
- 14 Artistic Interventions is acknowledged as a product of our Curator for Social History & Engagement's PhD research project, designed to coincide with the BMHS International Museum Day activities. An excerpt of findings in this research is included in the analysis of this project in this paper.
 - 15 Vivian Golding, 'Museums, poetics and affect', *Feminist Review* (2013), 97.
 - 16 Interview with students visiting the space during the Artistic Interventions can be viewed here: <https://www.facebook.com/barbadosmuseum/videos/1015644419148383>.
 - 17 The Windrush Generation denotes the people who emigrated from the Caribbean to Britain between the arrival of the HMT Empire Windrush on 22 June 1948 and the Immigration Act 1971.
 - 18 The theatre arts students of the Barbados Community College (BCC) developed and performed the 'Windrush' piece at the opening of the Itinerant Identities: Community Museums, Museum Communities Conference held in November 2018. This piece is now available in the online Virtual Museum of Migration and Memory (VMCMM): <https://eu-lac.org/vmcarib/virtualmuseum/videos.php>.
 - 19 Interviews with students participating in the Windrush theatre project can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/YQDITNN_xWU.
 - 20 Stick licking is a Barbadian martial art based on skills thought to have been passed down from African enslaved persons and brought to Barbados. It is recognised at the national level to be part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Barbados.
 - 21 This clip records the students acknowledging all the various heritage stakeholders and knowledge bearers from within the community who made their heritage performance possible to an enthusiastic community audience: <https://youtu.be/G9M0hGbeG6o>.
 - 22 Monica Pendergast and Juliana Saxton. *Applied theatre: International case studies and challenges for practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 153–154.
 - 23 One such workshop that explored civilian internment during the first world war in the Caribbean and relates it back to contemporary issues of confinement and racism can be viewed at https://youtu.be/suHPAB_yDTg.
 - 24 A video clip with an example of audience feedback can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/Hy6DAvJR6Cw>.
 - 25 Two of our student pieces inspired by gallery immersion are archived and can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/ltvKcmsNikl> and <https://youtu.be/vDqIOFpJbmQ>.
 - 26 Though there is not enough space to examine this programme in detail here, excerpts of performances and applied theatre workshop experiences can be viewed here: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL78w6HQoE5oz75VIE39QkHsDU8ZQ1tx0i>.

- 27 The digital iteration of this exhibition can be accessed here: <https://insurgentsexhibition.home.blog/2019/03/04/insurgents/>.
- 28 Barbados Beyond Boundaries (BBB) is a community-constructed digital space that maps contributions of the vast experiences people from Barbados and the diaspora. It is a project by The Barbados Museum & Historical Society in partnership with the National Museum of African American History & Culture – Smithsonian Institution and Barbadians wherever in the world they are located. The project can be accessed at <http://www.barbadosbeyondboundaries.org/>.
- 29 Centenarians of Barbados: Foundation Builders is intended to be an informative and interactive space for all Barbadians that highlights the significant milestone of becoming a centenarian and the contributions these elders have made to our society. This project is co-developed by the Barbados Government Information Service, the National Committee on Ageing, and the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, and can be viewed at <https://centenariansofbarbados.com/>.
- 30 This project involved the curatorial team at the BMHS (Cummins, McGuire-Batson and Hall), with collaborations from the UWI departments of Cultural Studies and History and Philosophy. It utilised a number of research resources including, but not limited to, the West Indies Federal Archives, the Sidney Martin Library, the UWI (Mona) Museum, and the University's Office of Research as well as the performing arts ensemble from the Barbados Community College. Also involved were a number of independent researchers with an interest in migration history (Emerita Mary Chamberlain, Rosalie Mayers, Marcia Burrowes, and Kenneth Walters), as well as journalist Claude Graham. The project also benefitted from the influence of the project team at St Andrew's University in Scotland, whilst the exhibition has also expanded to include content from the venues to which it has travelled, particularly Reading Museum and the UWI Museum, as well as contributors to the lecture series, Henderson Carter, Alan Cobley, and others.
- 31 See more about this approach in Kaye Hall and Natalie McGuire-Batson, 'Giving voice to a Caribbean history of migration – "The Engima of Arrival: The Politics and Poetics of Caribbean Migration to Britain"'. *Journal of the Barbados Museum & Historical Society* (2020), 171–207.
- 32 The conference website can be viewed here <https://eulacmuseumsconference2018.wordpress.com/>.
- 33 Virtual Tour (UWI Museum) <https://youtu.be/KIBcZibOgtE> and exhibit locations outside of Barbados:
- Virtual Museum of Caribbean Migration and Memory <https://eu-lac.org/vmcarib/>
 - Goldsmiths University of London <https://www.gold.ac.uk/calendar/?id=12821>
 - UWI Museum (mona Jamaica) <https://uwi.edu/museum/exhibitions/enigma-arrival-politics-and-poetics-caribbean-migration-britain>

- Vodaphone (UK) (private company wide intranet)
 - Reading Museum (UK) <https://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/resources/windrush-day/windrush-day-enigma-arrival>
 - St Andrews University (Scotland) <https://shared-histories.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/events-at-st-salvators/>
- 34 The link for the development blog for the exhibition can be viewed here <https://arrivantsexhibition.wordpress.com/>.
- 35 The link for the virtual museum can be viewed here <https://www.eu-lac.org/vmcarib/>
- 36 The lecture series “From Invitation to Deportation: 70 Years of the Windrush Generation” can be viewed at the playlist here <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWhAN50mfrKF0vzvpSVP27sk5yBMv4iW->.
- 37 The lecture series ‘Buhbadus ta de World: Exploring the Origins and Legacy of Barbadian Migration’ can be viewed at the playlist here <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWhAN50mfrKFdM8gcH6bhlEAM3TtU9QV>.
- 38 Henderson Carter (ed.), *From Importation to Deportation: 70 Years of the Windrush Generation – Selected Essays* (Bridgetown: Miller Publishing Company Limited, 2021).
- 39 Some videos which speak about the exhibition content and its curatorial practice can be found here: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWhAN50mfrKFw-05gcMpHdyx0Zui3KaLY>.
- 40 Excerpt on an interview we gave on the ICH exhibition project to one for the local media houses when we launched the exhibit can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/FsvZMKBMICs>. Associated programming included a local cosplay event developed with local youth and the cosplay community in Barbados with workshops by local cosplay entrepreneurs. The first few workshops can be viewed here: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWhAN50mfrKHrO6qnLnq4sqeU22t6xBW8>.
- 41 A student workshop interrogating the exhibit themes and concepts and relating them back to modern concepts of oppression, disenfranchisement and activism is here: https://youtu.be/su hpAB_yDTg. A performance they created, directed, and performed for the general public is archived here: <https://youtu.be/huOx6ys0ygU>.
- 42 The trailer for this collaborative community project can be seen here: <https://youtu.be/XKxs2HU41nc>. The final film expected to be released in 2023.
- 43 Listen to Ayele as he explains what he would like to see included in the museum’s exhibits: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UNIfPouwFIY>.

About the contributors

Natalie McGuire-Batson's curatorial work engages community-driven discourse in culture, through research in Caribbean museology. Having completed a BA in History of Art at the University of Leicester and an MA in Museums and Cultural Heritage at the University of Auckland, she is currently a PhD candidate in Cultural Studies at the University of the West Indies Cave Hill with a research focus on Anglophone Caribbean museums and community agency. She is the Curator – Social History and Engagement at the BMHS and serves on several committees, including as Public Relations Officer for ICOM Barbados, Board Member of ICOFOM LAC, member of the International Council of Revista Aleph Journal, and a member of the Board for the Barbados National Art Gallery.

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Kaye R. N. Hall is the Education and Community Outreach Officer at the BMHS where she very much enjoys her job of passing on history, heritage, and culture to her fellow countrymen of all ages. In this role she fosters partnerships with regional education bodies to ensure the propagation and revitalisation of heritage education, as well as with schools, colleges, communities, and individual students to ensure that the inculcation of heritage is a rewarding lifelong learning experience. She holds a Master of Education (MEd) Social Context and Education Policy from the University of the West Indies (UWI) as well as a professional training certificate in Heritage Culture and Human Resources from the University of Florence. She sits on the Executive of the local chapter of the ICOM, ICOM Barbados, as its Vice Chairperson and is the Moderator of the Heritage Education and Professional Development Forum for the Caribbean Heritage Network. She is also a resource person for the Ministry of Education Technical and Vocational Training in Barbados, where she sits of both the History and Geography Syllabus Development Committees.

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