



# Stay Home Artist Residency

## RESIDENT BLOGS Issue 1, Vol. 1

**La Vaughn Belle**  
*US Virgin Islands*

**Taisha Carrington**  
*Barbados*

**Natusha Croes**  
*Aruba*

**Maria E. Govan**  
*The Bahamas*

**Patrick Lafayette**  
*Jamaica*

**Daphné Menard**  
*Haiti*

**Sofia Gallisá Muriente**  
*Puerto Rico*

**Reginald Senatus**  
*Haiti*





# La Vaughn Belle

[lavaughnbelle.com](http://lavaughnbelle.com)

US Virgin Islands

*Post #1*

strange gods before thee

The title of the piece is taken from the first commandment of the decalogue: “Thou shall have no strange god before me”. Yet it’s a challenge to the singular notion of exclusive worship and it inverts the subject to thee. The commandments were offered after God brought the Jews out of Egypt and out of bondage. It beckons a rejection of divination, venerating the ancestors, working with the natural world for healing, and all manner of magic and ritual that intervenes in time, space and history.

I went to visit the tree. I had been there once before to scout it out, to see if I could find it. It was strange stopping and asking someone, “I’ve been looking for this tree where women were burned in the Fireburn, do you know where it is?” Who asks these questions? If feels one **mustn’t** ask these questions. So the next person I see I asked instead, “Do you know where the large baobab tree is?” “A boa-wha?” gets tossed back at me. These are also not questions we ask. We are not familiar with these histories. They have sunken into the recesses of our collective forgotten.



Baobab trees are hollow which is why you cannot measure their rings to access their age. You must look at their breadth and at 20 feet this one is estimated to be 300 years old. I film at a distance, then close up, and then walk around it and then from in it. In it, there is an opening to see the hollow. It's big enough to go inside but I would never dare enter. It **didn't** feel empty. I left there feeling a tightness around my throat which my friend told me is what happens when spirits attach themselves to you. Later that night he sent me a song by Miles Davis to listen to and I cried. I felt so much grief and it didn't feel wholly mine.

When I told him about my throat and the crying, he shared with me a ritual to perform with an egg, to trace circles around my body with it from my head to my feet so that I could clean off whatever energy might have attached to me from the tree. He said I should then go to a crossroads away from my house and toss the egg there and **don't** look back.

But I did look back - not at the egg, that would have been foolish. I looked back into the archives, at the pictures of the *obis* - the obeah men - the men of magic and divination, and healing and the ancestors, the interveners of time, space and history. I realized that the ritual was the archive, that the gesture my friend was sharing with me, was likely what made people walk across sugar plantations a century or two ago to consult with them, the ritual masters, the keepers of the archives, the ones who would help them with the things that seized their throat.

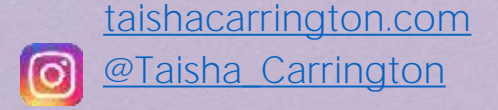




# Taisha Carrington

Barbados

*Post #1*



Recently, I've been reflecting on writings I did during the pandemic, often on the whim - whenever I was hit with the need to 'get it out'. So much of my practice takes lengthy planning periods that I've found comfort in the immediacy and accessibility of writing. Usually two-to-ten minute bursts of thought is how it goes, then these writings sit in the notes of my phone indefinitely.

I'm uncovering recurring themes of 'lack' and 'worth/value' in my work and it has caused me to consider the historical circumstances that have shaped the Caribbean and make us very appreciative of the bare minimums in life.

I remember watching a video on the aftermath of Dorian in The Bahamas. It was a common line of thought among the survivors that sparked these wonderings I've been having. Many of the survivors' phrases started with 'at least': 'at least I'm still alive', 'at least I found this area to sleep until we are rescued'. Their focus was on qualifying what they had and being contented, all the while my focus was on the magnitude of their loss. Since then I haven't been able to shake the idea of the upper and lower limits of 'tolerance' for hardship and challenging circumstances in the Caribbean. I don't purport to speak for the entire Caribbean but I can speak for many whom I know personally where their general attitude is to truly cultivate happiness through getting the most out of the least and often not by choice.

Of course this 'least' is imagined, as that 'least' often means what bare nature has to offer or what our bodies have to offer. But it's in this general attitude of 'make do' that I've found comfort. It has softened the blow of the pandemic, where I have lost access to many career opportunities, places to go, the way I interact with people, etc.

For a period of time we were left with some minimums. Just the beach, just the parks, just the persons in your house, just conversations. Acknowledging this 'stripped down' version of life is shifting my work; as I carry out my practice of interacting with the land and collecting materials and experiences I am using a new pair of eyes, a new sense of touch, a new way of documenting and collecting these 'minimums' that have become of the highest value to me. I wish to honour these materials however best I can, and as I work through what that art work looks like, I'll keep documenting these bursts of thoughts.

I find myself seeking refuge in knowing I will not starve to death.

I find myself fantasizing about surviving in a world where the systems that made us have collapsed,

I find myself making peace with a reality I've only come to imagine in 6 months of my 27 years.

I find myself settling.

I find myself acknowledging that this has always been the plight of the black Caribbean folk;

Finding ourselves.

Finding ourselves contented.

Resolving that the bare minimum is perhaps more than enough,

Parading and celebrating with nothing but our bodies, to sing dance and tell stories,

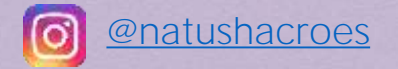
I find myself regressing.

I find myself preparing to defend,

As I find myself thinking they will soon see we've grabbed the stick in the middle, and the shitty end is still swinging.



# Natusha Croes



Aruba

*Post #1*

Wellness is becoming an intrinsic part of my practice. The deeper I delve into a site-specific performative state, the clearer it becomes, the sense of wholeness it wants to generate. Belonging to Aruba has never been easy, for my artistic aspirations always went against the waves. There is such a gap in between us, however there is also a longing to diminish this. I have departed many times, but the calling was grander than what was keeping me away. I have been told many times that the artistic climate is too dire for me to exist. And even so, I choose to be here, and from here, generate.

It hasn't been a prosperous year in material gain. It's been more the immaterial that is guiding me deeper within into this practice that honours the need to engage fully with the Aruban landscape; to understand what grows here, what lives here, and how my child-like curiosity wants to perform because of this. I use the entirety of my body as a scanner, as a transmitter of the mystery. The timelessness of the natural-scape. The avid curiosity that lives within my fingertips led me into a partnership with the elemental traits I would find along my way. Each component and its corresponding interaction became a story, manifesting itself through multi-disciplinary ways: performance, drawings, installations, artefacts, traces, so I can remember what it was trying to say. The rolling hills are an incentive to dance, the sunshine urging me to sing. An elemental exchange, awakening a deep sense of reflection. Craving for the creative immediacy and honesty that these immersions would generate. A confirmation that the body is an ancient vessel that remembers how to integrate.





When I first got back to the island I was all over the place. Like a desperate lover, not knowing where to begin. And that's when intuition came into play. I was brought continuously to where the sea and the land meet. From the margins looking in, I was brought to the realisation that an acute elemental awareness was charging a heightened state. I started my interaction with the borders of the island, the weather cycles and specifically water, how it moves me, how it moves, through me, how it changes, how it creates change, was holding my attention. It is mesmerising what happens to our entire nervous system, when we submerge ourselves into the liquid sphere from which we were born into existence. It's as if our entire body remembers that water is our centre, from which vitality emerges. So I followed the routes created by it.





*(screenshots & following research video from upcoming films: CARICIA)*

The guttural veins created by the water rushing down the hills, best known in my native language Papiamentu as “rooi”, became the route that I was taking. Wandering and listening to the life that manifested there. The aliveness of the ecosystem, which thrives within. Something that will continue, beyond this body, beyond what singularises this body. And somehow, no matter which ever manifestation I become again, it will remember from which source it came to exist. These dots connected me to my first location which I have been honouring since April. Engaging and creating as a means of understanding better the island where I am living and the deeper layers of culture that connect me to it. And so I am tracing, caressing the Aruban landscape, one site at the time.



*Click above to view video on YouTube*



# Maria E. Govan

The Bahamas

*Post #1*

[vimeo.com/mariagovan](https://vimeo.com/mariagovan)

## The Seeding of “Rain”

My name is Maria Govan. I am a writer director and producer of film and television, and also, on some days, an artist and painter. I hail from the island of New Providence in The Bahamas - my roots Greek and Scottish.

I won't go into my bio as I imagine it is easily available, but rather will share with you a little bit about my process. I am self taught. Some people take the carved path, the paved road, use the well endorsed map. I have been the wild woman with the machete in the bush, often in the dark, with little but the next step to lean into.





*Click above to view video on YouTube*

Most ideas come to me as an image, a strong visual element that opens a door and will carry an entire story and character on a journey that will change them and their circumstances forever. Some ideas have grown out of my time spent making documentary films, where I have listened and held space, allowing for the honest unfolding of things. "Rain" was born in both such ways - inspired by the four years I spent following a subject named *Glass*, who was HIV positive, crack addicted and a Mother of five. Though the story that I wrote was fictional, it is very common to our region - a child raised by her Grandmother. A child seeking the reconciliation of a lost Mother in a far land. A drug addicted Mother struggling with raising children she loves dearly, while battling the demon on her back. In the four years of making "Where I'm From; HIV and AIDS in The Bahamas," I came to touch the humanity of my homeland through my relationship with *Glass* and her community. She became my friend. She spoke in poetry and had wisdom beyond her ragged exterior. She was my teacher and to her I am eternally grateful.



*Click above to view video on YouTube*



*Click above to view video on YouTube*

As “Rain” began to take shape as a narrative film, I knew I wanted to evoke empathy for a drug addicted Mother as a way to honor my friend *Glass*, who had passed not long before, but it was not until I understood the character of her child, who I named “Rain,” that the project came together. I often sit with an idea for as long as it takes, walk with it, swim with it, dance with it, long before I dare to ground it in words. I remember the day when it came to me - Rain would be a runner – fast on her feet! This, a way of honoring our fast Bahamian women – our golden girls. I meditated on the opening, which came to me as a young girl racing against the weather, running to beat a storm making its way to shore, off the sea. That would be the metaphor for the entire film - would this child beat the storm on her back? The magic had arrived. I was given permission by the Gods to give life and blood to this idea. The writing then began.

I would argue that every film, in its own way and unique process of realization, is a kind of hero's journey. "Where I'm From" and "Rain," a part of the same experience, deeply connected to one another, was the hardest and most rewarding work that I have done. Though the fire was hot and night long, the gifts were many.



*Click above to view video on YouTube*





# Patrick Jerome Lafayette

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Jamaica

*Post #1*

**Capturing the beauty of Jamaica's music:  
The Heartbeat to Drumbeat feature series**

Jamaica is rich in culture and beauty. Its people have an indomitable spirit and are extremely creative. Over the past 15 years, it has been my personal mission to preserve Jamaica's musical culture. A great part of my decision to archive the history was because I knew that I was in a unique time and place. As a Radio Broadcast Announcer, Communications Specialist and Content Producer, I had access to a number of the major players responsible for the development of Jamaica's musical culture.

People like renowned record producer Clement 'Coxone' Dodd of Studio One and the godfather of rocksteady, the great vocalist Alton Ellis. There was also the Crown Prince of Reggae, Dennis Brown, and female producer Sonia Pottinger, just to mention a few. It became my greatest passion to document the stories told to me by these truly iconic individuals.

This led me to creating a series for radio which I called 'From Heartbeat to Drumbeat.' It features interviews and anecdotes from those who actively participate in indigenous cultural development while capturing the rich genres of Jamaican music from Mento through Ska, Rock Steady, Reggae, and Dancehall. It traces the music's development through its people both as individual artists and producers.

I show in these features, how Jamaican music evolved, the labels that produced it and how that music conquered not only the Jamaican audience but the world. This set of features focuses on capturing the experiences of noted Jamaican musicians whose stories have not been fully told. For many of the older Jamaican musicians, their contribution to the island's musical development has gone unnoticed and the younger generation is not aware of them.

As a musical historian, I recognize the value of documented truths and facts. Often, I find that it is more impactful to have the actual individual tell his or her story. For the next couple of months, I hope to have four major contributors to Jamaica's musical culture share the story of their lives. I shall examine their musical contributions, and the forces that motivated and inspired these persons to create and share their God given talents. Interviews will be done with four of Jamaica's vintage artists and musicians.



The following artists have been identified as candidates for features:

1. Pam Hall
2. Grub Cooper
3. Leroy Sibbles
4. Judy Mowatt

While only four features will be done for this project – eight artists have been chosen to allow for unavailability etc of some of the artistes. These features are a part of the CATAPULT Stay Home Artist Residency Grant that I was recently awarded. My fellowship will run from mid-September to mid-November. I will be sharing that journey with you through this blog and the features. Stay tuned.

1.



2.



3.



4.





# Daphné Menard

[daphnemenard.com](http://daphnemenard.com)

Haiti

*Post #1*

Je pense beaucoup. Trop peut-être.

Le concept de statut d'artiste.

L'une des choses qui semblent le plus fragile en temps de crise. Mais au fait, qui tient ce discours sinon les artistes eux-mêmes ? A-t-on les compétences pour en parler ? Cela reste une question. Est-ce que la question se pose en Haïti ?

Notre pays est toujours en crise.

Vraiment, déjà est-ce que le statut d'artiste vaut quelque chose même en temps dit « normal » en Haïti ? Est-ce déjà normal de s'être engagé dans cette aventure ?

Beaucoup d'artistes pensent qu'il leur faut donc un job. Pas un autre job. Un job tout court.

A qui en parle-t-on ? Qui est placé pour écouter ce genre de préoccupations ?

Et toujours pourtant ce complexe par rapport à l'idée de travailler dans un bureau qui revient chez l'artiste. Comme si c'était une attaque par rapport au standard que lui accorde le sacerdoce de l'art.

*On y va ? Qu'y a-t-il de disponible avec un Cv aussi atypique ? Qu'y a-t-il tout court déjà ici ?*

*On n'y va pas ? On se retient. Pour la cause. Il faut bien se sacrifier puisque l'artiste joue un rôle central dans notre société. C'est ce qu'on dit.*

Certains meurent de l'avoir fait. Leurs rêves je veux dire.

Rester

Se caser

Hésiter semble être la meilleure option adoptée.



# Sofía Gallisá Muriente

Puerto Rico

*Post #1*

I'm writing from Puerto Rico with hope and excitement for this opportunity to be in dialogue with thinkers and makers from throughout the Caribbean.

The timing of this Catapult residency has been ideal - the acceptance letter came at a moment when I'm immersed in editing a new film that has kept me busy and somewhat distracted throughout the quarantine. I began work on this project last year, asking myself

what the visible trace of disaster is, after the myriad calamities we've had recently, from historic hurricanes to earthquake swarms and political upheaval. For years I've heard visitors coming to Puerto Rico comment that things "*don't look so bad,*" even though we're a bankrupt colony ruled by a fiscal control board with a shrinking population and a crumbling state apparatus.

[hatoreina.com](http://hatoreina.com)



[@hatoreina](https://www.instagram.com/hatoreina)

## COPLA JÍBARA\*

Primero la guerra,  
Después los temblores  
Luego la influenza  
No hay que hablar de amores

*Photo: Poem from the 1918 pandemic*



After Hurricane Maria, it seemed like the full extent of our crisis was finally visible, and this idea that we could finally see the truth of who we were became one of the recurring themes of post-Maria debate. Most trees grow back leaves pretty quickly (it's actually an emergency instinct in plants) and humans try to regain a sense of normalcy as soon as possible, but **there's** a trace all around us, and I was interested in documenting what that looked like. It struck me as an issue that was closely related to photography, and I hadn't felt comfortable pulling out my professional camera for a long time after Maria, so I wanted to push myself to think about that.

Last year I bought a 16mm Bolex camera thanks to a grant, so that I could shoot some rolls of film that had been preserved in my freezer and started rotting after the hurricane took out power for weeks. I was hoping the humidity, mold and rust of old film would also make themselves visible somehow, that they would add information outside of my control to the resulting images. The power of corrosion and decay all around me was particularly present since the storm, and so was the tension between climate and memory, at a time when so much had succumbed to rain, wind and government negligence.

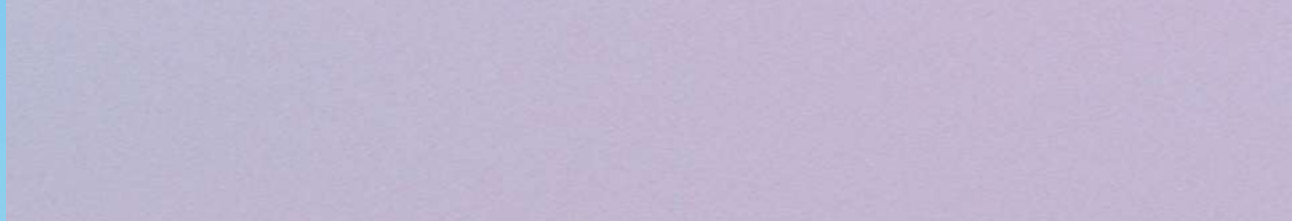
*Photo: Pedro Pietri - Help me I can see - reference*

I shot on the expired film but I felt like I needed to film much more. I was busy with too many other things, so I had it on my list of pending work when the pandemic began. Like most people, my plans were postponed and I had to shelter in place. I would only leave the house for small errands, and the city of San Juan was like a ghost town. I began bringing a Super8 Camera that had been recently gifted to me on these short trips, originally because I wanted to film all the empty highways. As the weeks went by, and road trips continued to be one of the safest ways to get out of the house, I started driving to other places I had been meaning to visit or film, that I felt somehow related to this accumulation of political and environmental disasters. The quarantine continued and the project kept growing, which I'll talk more about in my next blog post.

*Photo: Filming in Guyama*









*Photo: Sofia filming 2020 - still by Kathryn Ramey*



# Reginald Senatus (Redji)



[@redji\\_plasticien](https://www.instagram.com/redji_plasticien)

Haiti

*Post #1*

My creations are the reflection of my generation, struggling between a historical discourse and anchored in the current socio-political environment. I am an artist committed to the influence of my country and its culture, to the living conditions of my colleagues ...

So for writers, there need to be twenty-six letters of the alphabet to get over their boredom. For me, it is through my works that I express my sorrows, my means, my shame, my worries and my hopes.

My artistic residency is from September 21 to November 13, 2020.

I start to work by flattening, by cutting and nailing the rubber plates to the plywood. Subsequently, I have already found the median force to be able to illustrate the drawing in the rubber by means of a pen and a blade, accompanying me with geometric tools to draw lines, circles or any other features suggested by my intuition and improvisation to achieve my artistic intention.

Here is how the work progresses for the first week.





*Click above to view video on YouTube*



CATAPULT | A Caribbean Arts Grant is a COVID-19 relief programme conceptualised by Kingston Creative (Jamaica) and Fresh Milk (Barbados) and funded by the American Friends of Jamaica | The AFJ (USA). Designed as a capacity building initiative it will directly provide financial support to over 1,000 Caribbean artists, cultural practitioners and creative entrepreneurs impacted by the pandemic and working in the themes of culture, human rights, gender, LGBTQIA+, and climate justice.

[kingstoncreative.org/catapult-arts-grant](https://kingstoncreative.org/catapult-arts-grant)  
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