

# CATAPULT

## Caribbean Artist Showcase

VOICES OF CONTEMPORARY CARIBBEAN ARTISTS



# — *Caribbean* — STORIES

10 Caribbean  
Contemporary Creatives



# Welcome to the Caribbean Artist Showcase

## EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 1: STORIES



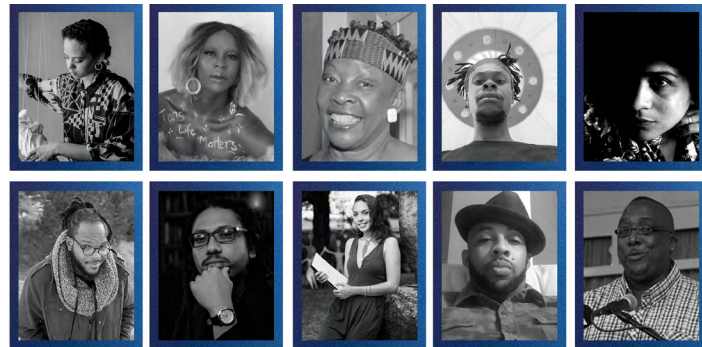
This has undoubtedly been a difficult period for many. The creative who is reliant on social events, audience engagements, organisational support, free and unfettered movement and community has undoubtedly also found this period particularly challenging.

The Caribbean being a region which has always struggled with institutional, state-wide and social support of the Arts, is a place where artists have always had to be particularly tenacious. The creative engine and spirit could easily be dampened and quieted in this moment of COVID lockdowns and global socio-political transitions. The CATAPULT Grant, **a partnership between the American Friends of Jamaica, Kingston Creative and Fresh Milk** emerged at this most crucial of times to provide support and encouragement for the Caribbean creative. CATAPULT seeks to champion inclusivity of creatives from varying communities and also to cross former colonial divisions. In total, over 1,000 creatives benefitted from these COVID-19 relief funds which have allowed many to continue the integral work they are doing and developing.

The Creative Artists Showcase as one of the categories that Caribbean creatives were awarded presents a diverse cross-section of those actively involved in creating and enriching culture and our understanding of it. This accompanying magazine seeks to highlight and showcase the projects presented by the grantees as well as the resilience and sheer creative energy which this period has ignited.

I operate mainly as a visual artist engaging with Caribbean issues; an art educator; and Founding Director of an arts initiative dedicated to the visibility of Caribbean art practices, Tide Rising Art Projects. Being invited to act as Editor for this

magazine created an opportunity for me to revisit my thoughts on Caribbean art & cultural practice. I was being tasked with putting forward a way of thinking about the work that the creatives submitted. There are several ways that one could more traditionally frame this work. Perhaps by discipline or major themes that are often visited within Caribbean cultural writing. I felt this was as good a time as any to begin to personalise my perspective on the creative culture that is happening around me, that I am involved in teaching, documenting and contributing to. The world is in a transition and through my own experience and a quick survey of the events of 2020, creatives, cultural workers and cultural organizations in the region are also reforming and reshaping themselves. The work produced and shared with us for the Caribbean Artists Showcase may also be viewed through this lens and ostensibly seen as documents of transition.



In searching for a way to frame the work we received from the grantees it has become apparent that there is extensive interest by the artists in understanding the space they live in; seeking to have an impact on social structures that are often still in place even after colonization officially ended; resolving old societal issues and preparing and projecting new possible futures. In comparing the Caribbean to a body which through historic shaping has become fragmented and is now seeking to intuitively reconstruct and strengthen itself, I can also compare this process to that of Awakening and Ascension in Yogic/ New Age practice. In reality many of us are envisioning and working towards a New Age for the Caribbean. We hold court for these ambitions and guide it through the process of becoming its true self with its true potential being accessed and activated.

The stages to awakening and ascension are often thought to involve:

1. Watching the **stories** we tell ourselves which hinder an ability to shape a new reality for yourself.
2. Becoming aware and mindful of the **sensation** of being in one's own body and environment and its relation to how the world is experienced.
3. Beginning the process of exorcising traumas; **healing** old wounds which can affect progress; development and higher existence.
4. To **awaken** to the fact that we are fully capable of creating our own reality, stepping into our full purpose and power and attracting all that we envision for ourselves.



To borrow this schema we can really describe any organism, body or collective on a journey of development and growth. In particular this can be applied to the Caribbean with its diversity and vibrancy but also the legacy of exploitation and the often praised resilience of the people and culture. I see these stages as being particularly relevant because there is a great desire for an evolutionary stage to occur for this particular body. It is in this vein that CATAPULT seeks to not just rely on the often mentioned tenacity and resilience as is often the case with the Cultural Sector but rather to practically support, nurture, encourage and motivate the Caribbean creative during these challenging times.

In this first volume we focus on 'Stories' as a central theme. The artists showcased in this volume are speaking to the historic and social importance of story and storytelling as is the case with Amina Blackwood Meeks. It is in her performance which weaves in and out of painting pictures through words, sharing wisdoms and creating experiences that we realise the absolute treasure that storytelling is within culture. She reminds us that a storyteller is equivalent to a library and therefore the holder of our culture, history and knowledge.

In other visions of how we approach stories in the culture, Shannon Alonzo uses drawing and traditional making methods as well as non-traditional materials to create work which mines the historic data to both create and question the stories of historic representations of women in the region. Everyday integral materials such as wooden clothespins activate an installation as visual texture but also as contextual objects.

Emani Edwards, in her contemporary and conceptual image-making via creative direction asks us to question the story of the Caribbean person and the possibility and range of identities and representations. 'The Black Madonna' as a creative look pushes classic religious understandings of who the hero and heroine can be. Ethnicity, identity and gender are flipped to create a new contemporary version.

Our creatives are actively involved in questioning and re-framing both old and new. What is the Caribbean and how can they help examine the stories we tell ourselves about this place that we co-exist in. In this magazine we are proud that each creative has been able to share about their discipline, genre and craft as well as the ethos and concerns that drive their work.

**Oneika Russell, Editor**

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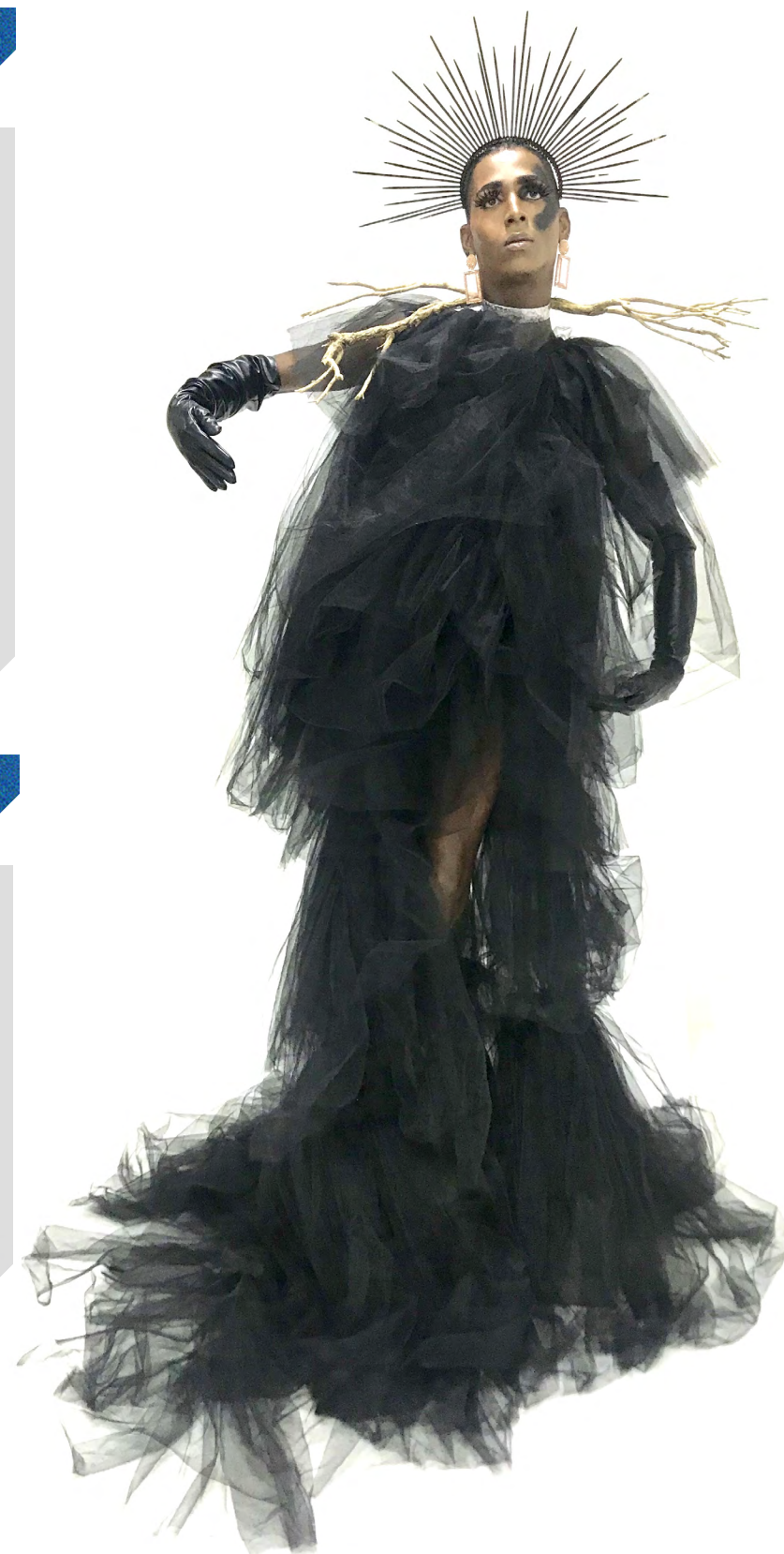
Environmental Specialist

## SIMONE HARRIS

Queer Artist, Activist  
& Creative Consultant

## JUAN FRANCISCO PARDO

Caribbean Filmmaker



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Creative Director / Stylist: Emani Edwards

IG @emanithegenderlessstylist

Title of Look: Black Diamond for the Black Dress

Date: December 2020

Photographer: IG @mxleoworld

Model: IG @kyy\_m\_savage



**Artist:** Shannon Alonzo  
**Title:** Detail of 'Salt 1'  
**Date:** 2018  
**Medium:** Mixed media drawing  
**Photo credit:** Marlon James

## SHANNON ALONZO

Visual Artist  
 Trinidad & Tobago

My artistic practice embodies the exploration of Caribbean identity, specifically, the tension created through historical omission and the desire to re-imagine a collective sense of self. My interest in these themes stems from several years of work in a diverse cross-section of visual arts fields in Trinidad and Tobago, including fine art, costume design, production design, and arts education. Through these experiences, the works have taken shape as illustrations, garment sculptures and fabric collages, that draw heavily on archival photographs and contain renderings of symbolic artifact, cultural expression and bodily adornment.

My current work as an artist researcher focuses on investigating the connections that bind land and shared sentiment, a vessel where inherited memories commingle and the identity of Caribbean peoples is re-shaped and reclaimed.

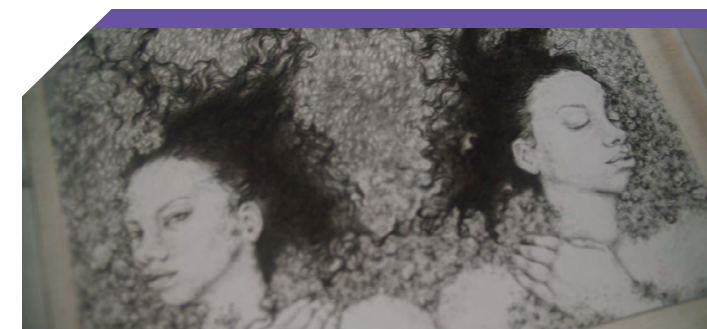
The viewer is encouraged to dwell in the discomfort of historical erasure and to reflect on our complex relationship to the past, as well as the triumphs that regenerate our sense of collective belonging.



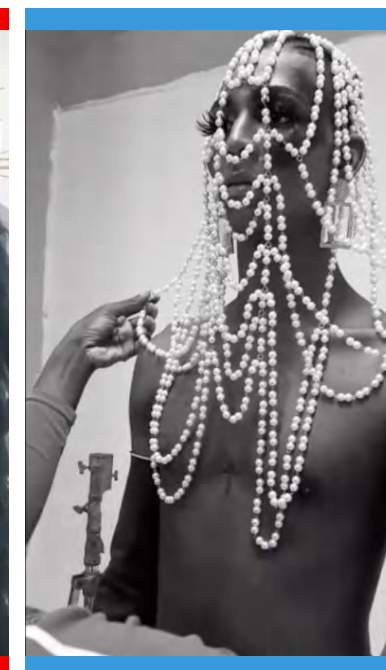
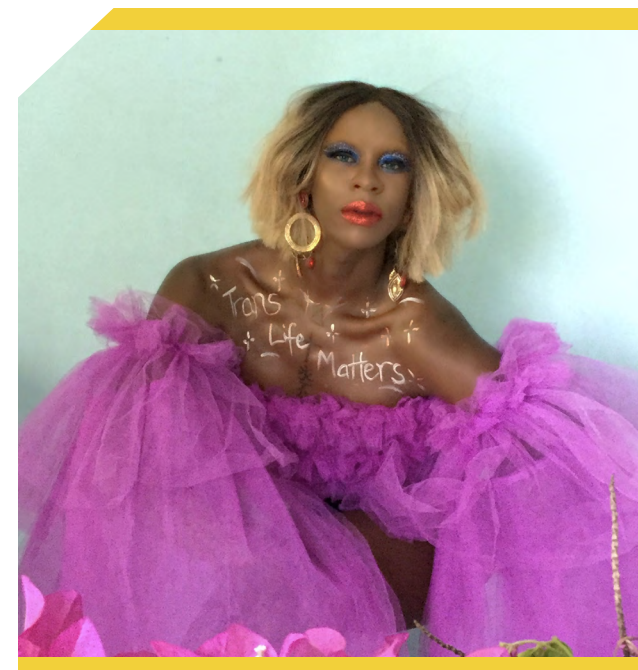
...Working across the mediums of drawing, sculpture and installation, I investigate the possibility of creating an 'imagined archaeology' of collective experience, one which challenges unbalanced historical narratives, as a means to reclaim agency. Just as excavation presents the archaeologist with physical remnants of material culture, this practice attempts to bring a physical dimension to the intangible connection shared and expressed by Caribbean peoples...



**“The viewer is encouraged to dwell in the discomfort of historical erasure and to reflect on our complex relationship to the past, as well as the triumphs that regenerate our sense of collective belonging.”**



**Creative Director / Stylist:** Emani Edwards  
**IG @** emanithegenderlessstylist  
**Title of Look :** Genderless for the Denim look.  
**Date:** December 2020  
**Photographer:** IG @mxleoworld  
**Model:** IG @kymm\_savage



## EMANI EDWARDS

Creative Director & Stylist  
 Jamaica

The streets of Kingston and around Jamaica are filled with opportunities for people to show off their unique styles, and this is exactly what Emani counts on when she thinks about styling. "I started my adventure into fashion and styling at a young age, and then later explored other skills such as creative directing/assisting and photography. My passion comes from developing my technical skills and using my work to help people discover their unique approach and creative edge.

Today, I am a certified photographer and fashion stylist who explores the Queer scene of Kingston and expand

my network with other Queer Creatives. Holding the positions as Creative Director and Fashion-Stylist at Karib F.U.N.Q., I currently use my work as a protest, with the focus of advocacy and Activism, which includes models and clients of marginalised and vulnerable groups - the majority from the trans community.

My photographs are all illustrations of my creative ideas that will increase visibility and break the barriers that exist between being LGBTQIA+ and being a creative living in Jamaica. All the photos are taken using the most vulnerable people of the LGBTQIA+ community in Jamaica, which is constantly used as a tool for increased visibility, networking opportunities amongst LGBTQIA+ artists and creatives and the overall social inclusion of LGBTQIA+ in society. The illustrations are aimed to ensure that the representation of the community that exists in Jamaica is highlighted with the best quality of creative direction and production, in which credits are extended for every partnership and collaboration."

The Black Madonna" has become an icon many activists and socially conscious people in Trinidad and Tobago have identified with. The icon is significant particularly in these times where there is a great demand for change.

“**All the photos are taken using the most vulnerable people of the LGBTQIA+ community in Jamaica, which is constantly used as a tool for increased visibility, networking opportunities amongst LGBTQIA+ artists and creatives and the overall social inclusion of LGBTQIA+ in society.**”



Performance: Closing Gala,  
Ananse SoundSplash 2018, Little Theatre  
Photo Credit: Sara Gentis / Black Ibis Photography

# AMINA BLACKWOOD MEEKS

Storyteller & Performer  
Jamaica

Writer, performer and director, of children's plays and contemporary stories for adults and children; award-winning actress, and custodian of the oral tradition. Dedicated to exploring the connections between the ancient wit and wisdom of traditional tales and the ways in which this heritage has immediate redemptive applications for the growth, development and continuation of civilisation

## THE MAKING OF A STORYTELLER...

With Amina Blackwood Meeks

Recurrent themes are the environment, children and the direction of human development. These parables for the theatre benefit from my education and training as a political scientist, teacher and cultural studies specialist.

Amina's performances have been described as:

**“An outrageous combination of education and entertainment, of glitz and thoughtfulness.”**

*Ken Corsbie (New York)*



**“A Storyteller's storyteller.”**

*Henry Muttoo, Cayman National Cultural  
Development Foundation*

**“Her telling brings the meaning of the stories from the heads of the ancestors to the mouths and pages of contemporary writers, showing how stories were used to pass on traditions, teach morals and preserve culture.”**

*WISPA/WILDE (UK)*



**Director:** Lovenson Saint Juste

**Title:** A little road with Ti Foli

**Year:** 2018

**Duration:** 3:40 min.



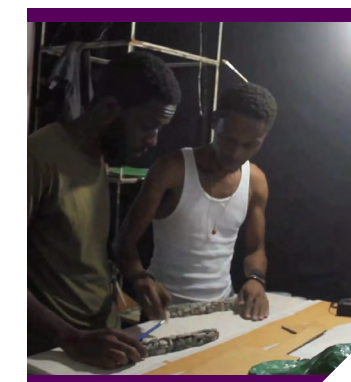
## LOUVENSON SAINT JUSTE

Artist - Filmmaker  
Haiti

Louvenson Saint Juste is an artist-filmmaker graduated from the National School of Arts in Port-au-Prince (Haiti) where he learned theater, drawing and modeling. In 2011, he was accepted to a multimedia training program to study journalism and get a bit closer to documentary cinema. In 2012, he benefited from an introductory course in animation cinema with teachers from the Superior School of Image in Belgium (Le Septente Cinq) and discovered the world of animation in which he works tirelessly. Louvenson has already directed several animated short films including "Zone Safe" and he has several other films in progress and on social networks. Today he works in collaboration with an important cultural institution in his country, the Knowledge and Freedom Foundation (FOKAL) by making fables of Jean de LaFontaine in cartoons for the enjoyment of children. For his video submission Louvenson has recorded a few steps in the making of stop motion elements as well as how to animate.



“..the most important thing is that as long as art exists, love and the joy of living continue to blossom... I share my art for love”





**Artist:** Caryana Castillo  
**Title:** "Una Rosa para el Yaque"  
**Date:** July, 2020  
**Medium:** Video Performance  
**Duration:** 1:45 min.

## CARYANA CASTILLO

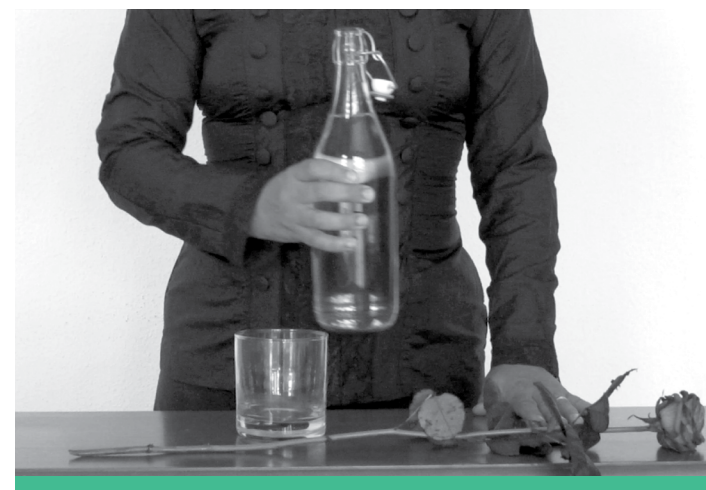
Visual Artist & Cultural Practitioner  
 Dominican Republic

The purpose of Casita del Alma is to be an effective business model, in terms of supporting the creation of works that contribute to the transmission of the historical memory of the Dominicans and the establishment of awareness in terms of conservation of our architectural, natural, cultural and intellectual heritage, as well as to showcase the beauty of our country and its highest values at the international level. "La Ciudad del Yaque" is a project of Casita del Alma, a traveling exhibition in constant development of visual and textual content, by Caryana Castillo as artist and Ana Agelán as curator and museographer.

This exhibition shows the beauty of the popular architecture of the end of the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century, commonly known as "Caribbean Victorian Architecture. Other details are present in the exhibition as the skylights that with their ornaments describe the exuberance of the Caribbean nature. On the other hand, we present the endemic and common flowers in the country, which we show together with a brief description of their uses, and we accompany them with ancient Antillean legends. In addition, we talk about the Yaque del Norte River, which is currently in danger.



“  
 ...supporting the creation of works  
 that contribute to the transmission  
 of the historical memory of the  
 Dominicans ... ”







Director: Vonley 'V-uture' Smith  
 Title: Ghost of Gunhill (Proof of Concept)  
 Year: 2020  
 Duration: 6:36 min.

## VONLEY 'V-UTURE' SMITH

Filmmaker & Digital Creator  
 Barbados

Standing out as a filmmaker within this current age is difficult however Vonley 'V-uture' Smith has managed to use his skills in editing and his creative eye to do this. At the age Of 14, V-uture began producing AMV's (Animation Music Videos). His work on AMVs has generated interest on the global video sharing platform, YouTube generating thousands of views. Smith continued to establish his connection to the film industry by studying a Bachelors In Fine Arts and majoring in Film. He later became a cultural practitioner in Barbados. The talents and skills which were fostered and his approach to cinematography, editing and directing have allowed him to emerge as a known filmmaker in his native, Barbados. The projects he has produced have earned him top local awards and seen him emerge as the winner of the 48hr Challenges. A few of his films have been shown at both regional and international film festivals.



By investigating the personal and political aspects of those themes, I use my practice as a means of questioning, defining and exposing the socioeconomic and historic challenges within my social environment. I also define my practice as a reclamation and/or an ownership of the totality of black womanhood. I reclaim and redirect the imperialist gaze by using traditional Western portraiture as my genre even though I grew up in a formerly colonized country.'



He says in his statement, 'I investigate the intersection of gender, race and culture through a multi-media practice inclusive of photography, video, painting, printmaking, and performance art. With this practice, I scrutinize the representation and social status of black women, specifically Barbadian women.

**“ I use my practice as a means of questioning, defining and exposing the socioeconomic and historic challenges within my social environment ”**



**Director:** Christopher Din Chong  
**Title:** Sanskara  
**Year:** 2016  
**Duration:** 97 min.

## CHRISTOPHER DIN CHONG

Filmmaker  
Trinidad & Tobago

My video takes the form of a short biography similar to the HBO Spielberg documentary. This short documentary contains interviews with family members that speak to the early days of reenacting movies with action figures as well as writing, directing and producing my first play while attending secondary school.

I am exploring my past works, present and future endeavors. Within the time allocated I delve into the events of my childhood, my education (BSc. Physics and B.A. Film) and hobbies such as down-hill mountain biking. I am also sharing the inspiration for my work as well as the life decisions that led me to become a Writer, Producer and Director.

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'Hitchcock said in a 1963 interview. "It comes under the heading that all villains are not black and all heroes are not white. There are grays everywhere".... This statement has continued to inspire my work as a writer, producer and director. All of my work to date has explored the duality in society and within the individual. Incorporating duality has been my greatest accomplishment while my greatest challenge as a Caribbean artist working within such an expensive medium would be financing my work/bartering resources in order to create.



I believe the first step in any creative endeavor is to produce work that would not only entertain but also inspire. Writing truly engaging subplots and well defined characters are skill-sets that come with patience, tutelage, constructive criticism and the humility to step away from the work and do what is best for the story to jump off the page and onto the screen. Over the past nine years I have shared all my contacts, experiences and knowledge with the youth participants of my Foundation, the Forward Ever Foundation (FEF). I have also tried to experiment with web-based graphic novels, literary fiction and theatrical forms of expression.



“  
**All of my work to date has explored the duality in society and within the individual.**  
 ”



Director: Maya Wilkinson  
 Title: Heist  
 Date: 2014

## MAYA WILKINSON

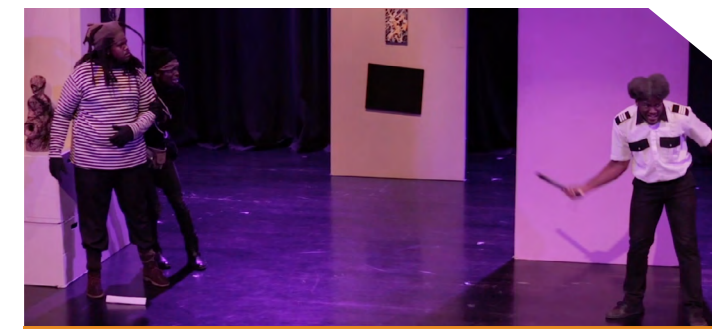
Writer & Director  
 Jamaica

During the quarantine period, I decided to share recordings of my theatre work online. I had shared some of my own independent pieces as well as collaborative work with QUILT (the local theatre company I am a member of).

I am sharing Heist for the CATAPULT Arts Grant Award. "Heist" is my first comedy originally written for stage in 2014 as a twenty minute play. It won Best Production among other awards at the Tallawah Dramatic Arts Festival hosted by the Philip Sherlock Centre for the Creative Arts, UWI, Mona Campus. I was inspired to develop it into a full length (2 hour) show a few years later in 2017. When I extended it, the cast expanded to an all male group of 16 actors. "Heist" promises for its audience a therapeutic experience by administering the universal remedy of laughter.



My first name, "Maya", means Divine Creative Power and my middle name, "Rufaro", means Happiness. I am a Writer, Director and Multimedia Artist and I believe my purpose is to create experiences of happiness through my work. I've spent most of my creative life in theatre and have more recently begun exploring film. I am a founding member and the Director of Multimedia at QUILT - a dynamic group of young creative artists who use transformative theatre as a means of tackling and curing social issues. I share the vision of the company in my own career journey. I am driven by my belief in the importance of storytelling and art as therapy.



“ I am driven by my belief in the importance of storytelling and art as therapy. ”



Photo credit: Shauna Kaye Campbell  
 Storyteller: Kyle Chin (filmmaker)  
 Year: 2019

## DANIEL EDWARDS

Creative Entrepreneur  
 Jamaica

Long Story Short is Jamaica's first and only storytelling showcase and live music experience. It was established September 7th, 2019 on the 100th birthday of Jamaican cultural icon, Louise Bennett - 'Miss Lou'.



The concept of the event was that nine storytellers each share a true story about themselves in five minutes or less and two artistes share musical offerings. Since then it has blossomed into Jamaica's latest and greatest cultural experience. Featuring some of Jamaica's best and brightest creative minds such as Mikey Bennett, Mutabaruka, Elaine Laughton, Craigy T, Dufton Shepherd and Krystal Tomlinson to name a few. All have fed us with a smorgasbord of stories ranging from overcoming adversity, comedy, travel, trauma, love and success. We consistently had an audience of around 250 to 300 patrons every month until the advent of Covid-19 in March, which was our best attended show to date. Since then we continue to grow the brand utilizing social media streaming on August 15th. We triumphantly returned with a rebirth edition of Long Story Short at our new home at the Haven located at 12 Hillcrest Avenue. It was a huge production so much so that we were sold out after a week of issuing tickets.



We witnessed a rare performance by Tanya Stephens and heard amazing stories under the theme, 'How I met my purpose'. We at One Eighty Events are now accepting the harsh realizations that our live event may be indefinitely affected by the ravages of this pandemic. We understand the cultural significance of 'Long Story Short' and are determined to keep this movement going.

“ All have fed us with a smorgasbord of stories ranging from overcoming adversity, comedy, travel, trauma, love and success. ”



From left to right: Fabian M Thomas and Leonie Forbes (detail of original)  
Photo credit: Karl Hart  
Year: 2006

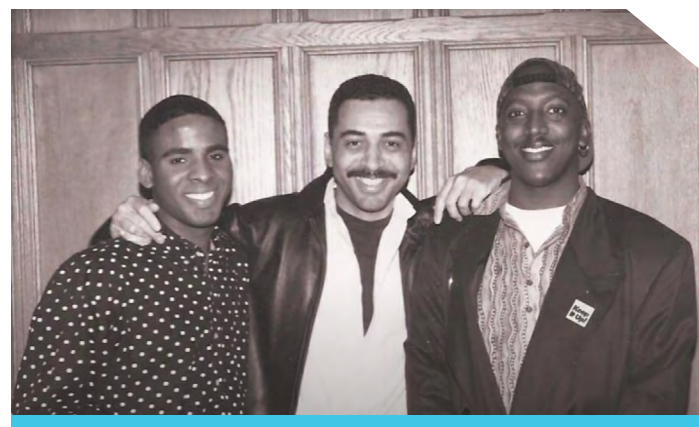
## FABIAN THOMAS

Writer  
Jamaica

Trained at the University of the West Indies and Fordham University in the USA, Fabian has made his mark across the arts as a writer, especially in the fields of poetry and theatre. Painting with words, he gently draws his audience into worlds they have not experienced before. Powerful and lyrical, his works have garnered awards both for his published literary pieces as well as staged productions.



He has successfully created quiet, intimate pieces and developed original works for stage and screen, using performances as a platform to enlighten his audience while giving a voice to the stories of his nation. He believes in the transformative power of the Arts, and time and time again proves it with every new work he has created as a writer. Fabian is a Calabash Writers Workshop Fellow, who has been published in several collections and is currently putting the final touches on an anthology of spoken word poetry. In July 2018, he self-published a collection of gratitude verses, affirmations, spoken word and prose entitled *New Thought, New Words*. Fabian is the founder and Artistic Director of the performing arts collective Tribe Sankofa.



For his CATAPULT submission he has selected to design and format a few chapters of his new book 'Chapta an Verse'. This is a collection of memories and moments to be shared online and combined with a reading or voicing which will then be used to engage a publisher. In addition to the verbiage the finished product will also include photos. The book includes chapters about Leonie Forbes, Lorna Goodison, Charles Hyatt and Louise Bennett-Coverley.

**He believes in  
the transformative  
power of the Arts..**



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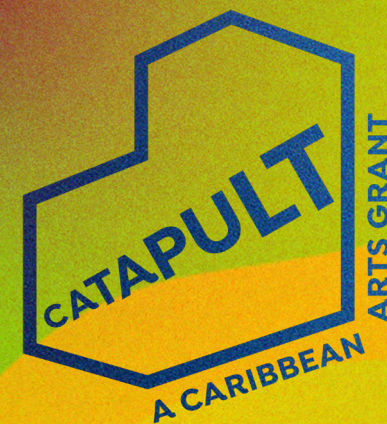
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Narada Fearon



# Caribbean Artist Showcase

## CATAPULT | A CARIBBEAN ARTS GRANT

COVID-19 Arts Grant Supports 1,200  
Creatives in 25 Caribbean Countries

**CATAPULT | A Caribbean Arts Grant** is a COVID-19 emergency relief 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 provided direct support to over 1200 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.