

Press Release
Grenada National Pavilion 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia

25th Oct 2021
St. George's, Grenada

An Unknown that Does Not Terrify

Eduoard Glissant, French philosopher and poet from the Caribbean island of Martinique in speaking about the civilization of the Caribbean said,

“We know ourselves as part and as crowd, in an unknown that does not terrify. We cry our cry of poetry. Our boats are open, and we sail them for everyone.”

Amplifying this ideal, The Ministry of Culture has appointed Dr. Susan Mains BEM as the Commissioner for the Grenada pavilion at the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia in Venice, Italy, which will take place from 23 April to 27 November 2022 (pre-opening on 20, 21 and 22 April). The appointed curator of the Grenada pavilion is Dr. Daniele Radini Tedeschi a professor of art from Rome, and a very experienced curator. This prestigious event puts Grenada on the International stage for visual art once again.

In the past the Grenada artists who have participated have been chosen through an application and vetting process, then a Contemporary exhibition in Grenada. It has been an open call for artists living anywhere in the world, and the response has been great. However, with the limitations that the pandemic has made, for the first time, a Collective of artists has been commissioned to represent Grenada. The artists of the Grenada Pavilion will be joined by international artists, who will interpret and make their own the theme of the Grenada review: Giancarlo Flati; Identity Collective; Anna Maria Li Gotti; Nino Perrone; Rossella Pezzino de Geronimo; Marialuisa Tadei.

The **Cypher Art Collective of Grenada** comprises artists from several genres. Billy Gerard Frank, Ian Friday, Samuel Ogilvie, Asher Mains, Oliver Benoit, Angus Martin, and Susan Mains have been zooming together for the past year, preparing the presentation.

Examining the annual ritual of the playing of Shakespeare Mas, they have explored the many inputs that have created the unique synthesis that is the culture of the tiny island of Carriacou, a sister island.

This intuitive performance art has been passed down through generations, sporting colorful costumes, lively physical exchange, and the quoting of the scripts of Shakespeare, particularly Julius Caesar. Crowds gather around the players, chanting encouragement. Stick fighting has been an essential part of the display — the punishment for making an error in the quoting. Much of the meaning of these components has been lost to the regular people who participate. Their participation is part of the ritual that has been passed down, and they themselves do not

know how this started. Consultation with the cultural leaders in Carriacou has been part of the process.

The artists in the collective have in their research found the influence of west Africa, France, England, Scotland and even Venice in Italy. The purpose of the pavilion is to portray this synthesis in a way that embraces contemporary visual art. It is not a display of anthropology, but a starting point for the imagination.

The location of the Grenada Pavilion will be in the beautiful “Il Giardino Bianco” in via Giuseppe Garibaldi, Venice. Steps away from the Arsenale, it is an ideal place for visitors to attend. The art pieces on display will be of a film, abstract paintings, installation, a document of research from an historian and a performance. Billy Gerard Frank will present a film revealing the little known life of Cugoano/John Stuart— enslaved, servant, and abolitionist. Asher Mains will contribute a multi layered installation, paintings by Oliver Benoit and Susan Mains, and a performance envisioned by Ian Friday and Samuel Ogilvie. Angus Martin is an historian, and will share the document he has researched for this project.

Major support for the pavilion comes from StART, an Italian company specializing in the organization, production, and organization of contemporary art exhibitions at national and international level through a highly qualified team of experts.

This is the 5th consecutive time Grenada has participated as an official National Pavilion in the International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, proving by its tenacity the determination of its artists to lead the conversation in the Caribbean in Contemporary Art. “Our boats are open, and we sail them for everyone.”

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Susan Mains, Commissioner

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