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Taking art to heart

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- photo by Anthea McGibbon


The months of December 2006 to January 2007 were unparalleled at the Hilton Hotel. Instead of the anticipated monthly exhibitions by artists, the current show which extends across two months, is being run by a non-artist. Titled **A Season of Art**, the show is arranged by Maxine Lundie, who quickly admits she is not a curator, but describes herself as 'the invisible exhibitor'.

Lundie's background in art is limited, but the zealous investment officer remembers always being passionately drawn to pretty paintings, especially of landscapes.

Lundie brings to the art world her trained skills in **marketing** and investment - well-needed tithes for the progress of Jamaica's artists who lack proper **business** sense. She relates her encounter in 2004, with the first artist, John Walters, who took full advantage of her skills. Walters not only indulged her assistance in his current show, but encouraged her to become an agent for other artists, she told **The Sunday Gleaner**.

Since then, she has been exhibiting a stock of artist's work under the theme **A Season of Art**, the first being at the New Kingston Shopping Centre. Currently in the Hilton Hotel lobby, **A Season of Art** has found new nest from which artists can grow.

The exhibiting artists are Alexander Cooper, Karl Abrahams (deceased), Ray Jackson Milton Messam, Leopold Barnes, Beverley Oliver, John Walters, Lancelot Ferron.



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Evidenced by the arrangement of the pieces, is one of Lundie's main challenges. There are too many rules as to where the art should be placed. Additionally, the area is poorly lit and hardly anyone will be convinced, from a passing glance, that the works are worthy of purchase.

The strength of the show is in the enterprising compositions of the individual works, which all reflect the unique techniques and styles of the artists themselves express to varying degrees.

dynamic pieces

The pieces exhibited are all dynamic; forgiving their unmerited placement. Although lobby exhibitions are set informally, an impacting sign, proper documents, and better utilisation of the available space would have provided better navigation into **A Season of Art**.

'The Advocate' is the best-placed work, and is Alexander Cooper's rendition of Bob Marley. Although the physical features bear little resemblance to the reggae icon, there is stark similarity in the characteristics portrayed. For the artist who has been painting for over 40 years, the emphasis is on the energy of the international personality who is illustrated against a huge globe showing the location of Africa, and superimposed over a miniature cheering crowd, representing the world. In his hand is a Rastafarian flag and the brush strokes are a welcomed slight departure from the artist's usual technique. The bright colours, especially in the background, are a vibrant contrast to Cooper's other displayed works — but all reveal the intellectual thinker Cooper is.

Nestled between Cooper's 'Wayside Market' and 'Peaches and Crème' is his former student, Ray Jackson's, 'Hilltop House' of a house in Daviton, Manchester, the artist has passed at least fifty times. The liberal strokes of the landscape depict an instant moment of crossing over, while the house seems to hold memories. Jackson's other works all hint at his former superb use of pastel crayons that he is popularly known for, especially in the highlights.

The artist's well-balanced use of colour and newly-adapted use of acrylics still detail his signature style. 'Ray of Hope' is particularly strong depicting a common man reaching for divine inspiration, yet offering hope to onlookers. Ray's treatment of the skin and good detail in the face of the ageing man, are a focal point from the long diagonal pointillistic strokes in the rest of the piece.

Lancelot Ferron's 'Hello' is a single flower in a vase also representing hope.

'Conversation Time' series

Three exhibiting pieces by John Walters fittingly bear names chosen by Maxine Lundie - as the 'Conversation Time' series. They illustrate different moments where conversation becomes necessary, with good line usage depicting form and movement. In 'Conversation Time', a Jamaican youth makes his move on a shy Jamaican girl.

Walters highlights a proportionately curved nude woman from behind in 'Innocence'. She attempts to cover herself with a sheer piece of cloth - unaware of her commanding sexual appeal. Unlike the pastel tones of the 'Conversation Time' series, the colours in 'Innocence' are intense, provoking intimacy. The background is an abstract seductive smear of colours such as fuschia pink and cerulean blue. In his only abstract 'Feeling Good' the usage of colours is again intense and very liberated, but this time taken from the warmer side of the colour wheel. There is a

hint of a full-figured voluptuous woman by incomplete black line drawing of breast and thighs against the vibrant yellows and oranges.

Two artists with captivating works were Leopold Barnes, also a former Alexander Cooper student and Milton Messam.

sanding technique

Leopold **exposes** his brilliant sanding technique. The canvas is texturised by the artists before paint **application**. 'It's the Song' is an imaginary instrument ... a combination of several musical instruments. Both pieces immediately signals musical notes with the combination of colour, technique and mood, while the pace is set by the artist's signature sun.

In Milton Messam's three pieces which are named by Lundie, there is no detail, but the adept palette knife application of paint in blocks outstandingly depicts what is. 'Sidewalk Experience' narrates vendors sitting along the sidewalk as a mother brings her child by. 'Hi There, Babes It's a Nice Day' is by the beachside where vendors are busy preparing or selling fish. In the foreground an unnoticed stooping schoolboy is lost in deep thought. 'Good Morning' narrates early morning activities in a canefield .

Other pieces that piqued interest were 'Isn't She Lovely' by Lancelot Ferron and the oil pastel works on friendship by Beverley Oliver.

Anthea McGibbon, a graduate of the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts has over 10 years experience in the fields of visual arts and journalism. Contact her at islandartattack@yahoo.co.uk or anthea.mcgibbon@gleanerjm.com.

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