Afterword

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How can a journal nourish a discourse? How might it stimulate new engagements of concepts visible in artistic practices but not fully rendered in critical conversations? How might it center this work on a method that allows an artwork to author itself? How might we think of art at its own point of emergent criticality? And how might this encounter be marked?

In 2014 the Small Axe Project began thinking about a series of artworks that engaged or exhibited what we soon began to describe as Caribbean queer visualities. The fluidity of this concept shadowed but did not contain the possibilities of this work. The Caribbean is a space in which entire languages have been created in the modern age, languages that continue to evolve. Therefore, rather than viewing *queer* as something fixed, owned, or imposed on the region, the term became a suitable sign for a generative alterity, one that allowed us to momentarily think through irruptions of form in the works of artists from a globally conceived Caribbean. As these works made their way into public and critical spaces and quietly asserted their presence, we came to see them as radical expansions of Caribbean artistic practice that demanded attention.

The exhibition builds on the initial "Caribbean Queer Visualities" gatherings at Yale University in fall 2014 and at Columbia University in spring 2015. It is expressive of our desire to have the ethos of those conversations radiate far beyond the confines of the rooms where we met—beyond the academy, onto the page, across the Internet, and into the galleries and the public sphere.

At the Yale gathering, filmmaker Kareem Mortimer provided a queer libation over the room and our efforts as he and every artist who followed shared their work in an open, direct, and personalized manner that was unusual, unexpected, and perhaps undervalued in an academic setting, in *that* setting. Mortimer spoke of an emergent understanding of himself as a gay man whose work is guided by the desire to create "stories that have meaning" in "a visual language" accessible to his parents. The short film *She (2008–2014)* accomplishes this by centering on the experience of transgender women, who at great personal risk choose each day to enunciate themselves by pushing against what the filmmaker Richard Fung describes as "the notion of normativity." Fung recognizes queering's potential to become a tool that unsettles and disrupts through a visual language capable of crafting an avant-garde artistic practice grounded in humanism. For him, Trinidad (and, by extension, the Caribbean) is a queer space, partly because its narratives often exceed the limits and frames of normativity imposed on it.

All the works in this exhibition emerge from visual languages that unsettle and disrupt. Using Google Earth, Ewan Atkinson hovers above the island of Barbados and comes to understand how space has been transformed to such a degree that the expectations of binding and bonding, standard notions of belonging—to a place, to a home, to a village—may no longer apply. Seeing from a distance allows Atkinson to untether the romance of physical and national bonds in his work.

For Andil Gosine, the village Atkinson resists travels via personal bonds, intimacies, and self-fashioning. Gosine's work defies and disrupts "the dehumanizing ways in which the desires of the poor are explained" and the efforts to deny them a complex subject position. Through formal reappropriation and narrative transformation, Gosine's art embraces the vulnerabilities of a migrant's struggle against trajectories of historicization. It works to build a visual archive of a place, position, and

experience that disentangles across the globe in the bodies of residents of George Village, Trinidad, and the descendants of those born in places like it.

The artist Charl Landvreugd draws on the "more was just more" aesthetic and philosophy of 1990s drag and club culture to push against rote notions of vision, meaning, and being. In his work, queer becomes normative through the visual articulation and disarticulation of the artist's own body. Nadia Huggins, like Landvreugd, thinks through the disruptive possibilities of being, reinventing notions of self-portraiture and re-presenting her body stripped of tropes associated with the feminine. In the process, Huggins moves outside the ontological bounds of identity, queering expectations of gender through the processes of displacement and defamiliarization.

Queering is intrinsically iconoclastic. It can conceptually challenge its own validity and allow for the possibility of its own erasure. Jean-Ulrick Désert's work pauses in this critical space. While Désert asserts that his practice is not overtly queer, his work is squarely positioned within the same radical ethos Fung described. Désert situates his practice "outside the margins of heteronormative or gay-art clichés." In the work *Neque mittatis margaritas vestras ante porcos, Mat 7:6*, the artist wryly employs "clichés" of gay iconography as form to engage LGBT longing for Judeo-Christian, heteronormative tropes such as marriage. In so doing, Désert brings attention to the asymmetries of this desire and the kinds of freedom he chooses to affirm.

In Leasho Johnson's hands, asymmetries produce a space for artistic invention. Johnson draws images from downtown lives and places them, without permission, in uptown sites in which society has deemed they do not belong. The limited shelf life of Johnson's public works indicates a conceptual queerness that disrupts through clandestine exhibition practices. In these public spheres, Johnson's work sheds light on the hypocrisy that underlies public anxieties of sexual nonconformity and respectability politics in Jamaica.

Jorge Pineda queers form in his work, consciously embracing gender ambiguity and producing art on the borderlines of unsettled identities and relations. In works such as *Zapatos de ceramica*, Pineda redeploys familiar signs in new configurations. The work unmoors coded meanings and normative expectations of form, reflexively challenging his audience's rote encounters with art and evoking something new.

While in conversation with these works' emphasis on the discursive potential of form and process, Ebony G. Patterson extends her engagement with the use of skin bleaching by young male offenders as a tool of disidentification, going far beyond that initial point of departure. Is this work literally or narratively engaging a "queer aesthetic" as commonly imagined? No. Instead it moves beyond this aesthetic frame, dissembling meaning with bodies that dematerialize into light. Patterson's work puts into relief the discursive possibilities of *queering* as critical practice as it brings to the surface of Caribbean visual discourse what remains unspoken.

What is normative in the Caribbean is often "queer" elsewhere, but like the artist Ewan Atkinson, through this exhibition we seek to rethink the limits of our bindings and bonds by cultivating connections with broader publics willing to engage the innovative possibilities of queer visualities.