

**FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT**

**THE HISTORY OF HAITIAN PHOTOGRAPHY**



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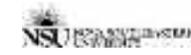
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Curator: Edouard Duval-Carrié with the assistance of Maggie Steber  
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## FOREWORD

This exhibition is the first to present a comprehensive history of Haitian Photography, from the mid-nineteenth century until 2012. The exhibition includes both photographers “within Haiti” and those considered outsiders. To a certain extent all photographers present their own personal perspective of their subject. Therefore, although this exhibition includes over 350 photographs and the work of more than 100 anonymous and known photographers, we recognize we have only scratched the surface. This is only the first exhibition to address this subject, and we hope there will be many more to build on the original research presented in the exhibition and its scholarly catalogue.

World-renowned Haitian-American artist Edouard Duval-Carrié has a long association with NSU Art Museum. As the museum’s first artist in residence, he created the installation, *Indigo Room or is Memory Water Soluble*, in our lobby in 2004 to celebrate the bicentennial of Haiti’s independence. *The Indigo Room or is Memory Water Soluble* brings to life the story of the historical and contemporary Haitian experience, incorporating vintage photographs as a key element. The exhibition *Within and Without* was begun five years ago during the tenure of my predecessor Dr. Irvin Lippman, but the exhibition, which presents a pictorial history of Haiti, could not be more timely. Its opening has coincided with a crisis in the Dominican Republic, in which residents of Haitian descent face mass deportation.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Duval-Carrié for his dedication to this historically important and moving project. Our thanks as well to photographer Maggie Steber, who provided

essential guidance and research and Alfredo Rivera for his outstanding participation. We thank the artists in the exhibition and the collectors who so generously loaned us their works. The museum’s staff played an exceptional role in all aspects of the exhibition and catalogue, and I especially thank Dr. Barbara Buhler Lynes, the museum’s Sunny Kaufman Senior curator, Luke Jenkins, Exhibitions Designer, Chief Preparator, Eddie Gardin, Museum Technician, Diana Blanco, Exhibitions Registrar, and Benjamin Smith, Curatorial Assistant, for their outstanding efforts to ensure the success of this project.

We are very grateful for the generous support received for the exhibition and catalogue from Funding Arts Broward, Inc. Additional funding was provided by grants from the Green Family Foundation, The Haitian Cultural Arts Alliance, Lisa and Steven Smith/SMITH Manufacturing, FOKAL (Fondation Connaissance et Liberté/Fondasyon Konesans Ak Libète), Wells Fargo and the Florida Humanities Council with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the David and Francie Horvitz Family. As always, I wish to thank the museum’s Board of Governors, chaired by David Horvitz, as well as Nova Southeastern University’s President and CEO, George L. Hanbury II, Ph.D., for their continued support and encouragement.

*Bonnie Clearwater*

*Director*

*NSU Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale*



## INTRODUCTION

Edouard Duval Carrié

This exhibition is an overview, though far from exhaustive, of visual representations of the Republic of Haiti through the medium of photography, not a travel brochure to some exotic destination in the Caribbean. From its invention in the mid-19th century, photography provided various discourses for the island nation, from the abject to the exceptional. It became a tool for elites, political leaders, occupying forces, ethnographers, journalists, and the masses (figs. 1-3).

Taken from the curatorial perspective of an artist, this exhibition places the artistry of photography in direct dialogue with its more documentary and popular forms, as well as with the work of photojournalists, and a number of contemporary photographers and Haitian artists. Looking at Haitian photography and art (Within), and photographs of Haiti made by others (Without), this exhibition asks how Haiti is imagined from behind the camera lens and in art.

We could not approach such a visualization of Haiti (formerly the French colony, Saint Domingue), without considering the geopolitical contexts in which the Caribbean island nation developed—within a discourse of colonialism whose roots have grown deep through the centuries. Following on the gamble of the North American colonists, who began to demand more rights from their

colonial tutors, the French went further in establishing the modern concept of the “rights of man.”

While the topic of slavery was overlooked in the American Revolution (1775-83), it was central to discussions taking place in Paris from the French Revolution (1789-99) onwards. From these discussions, the liberation of the slaves of Saint Domingue as well as that of French holdings in the New World were declared in 1794 with great pomp, only to be recanted less than a decade later by self-declared Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821).

His ambitions of propagating the precepts of the French revolution—Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité—to the rest of Europe went awry. To remediate and replenish the coffers of the French state, Napoleon sold its French-North American holdings of the Louisiana territory to the newly-formed United States (1803). He also attempted to reinstate slavery in the vastly prosperous island of Saint Domingue, forcing the newly-freed slaves of that colony to embark on a fierce resistance that resulted in the liberation of the territory now called Haiti (January 1, 1804).

In this battle against the greatest military might of the time, a ragtag force of former slaves managed the impossible, which was to liberate the island of the Napoleonic scourge. Hundreds of thousands perished in this violent revolt, leaving the island’s



means of production totally destroyed and devoid of any semblance of social order, as many of the slaves were recent arrivals to that colonial plantation system.

Many of the rebel leaders, whose impressive leadership in the battle against Napoleon's armies could have harnessed and directed a reconstruction program, had been either eliminated or imprisoned and deported back to France to face their fate for having caused the loss of the most prosperous colony in the New World. Many say that the French organized and invented an industrial system for the production of agricultural commodities, but unfortunately it was not based on the steam engine as was the case in England but rather on the sweat of enslaved Africans.

Though most Haitians regard this heroic feat as the genesis of their nation, one has to emphasize the simple fact that they were starting on an experiment that has proven very difficult in view of what they were confronting: a void of governance, an unsympathetic group of neighboring nations that regarded this upstart country with great trepidation, and a totally ransacked and demolished system of agricultural production. In reorganizing itself following the destruction of its colonial order, local elites were no longer land based but became a coastal merchant class. The economy of Haiti drew from land-based peasants, who continued the production of agricultural goods that were funneled to the international markets via this newly formed merchant class. As Lau-

rent Dubois highlights in his essay for this catalogue, this led to a fractured nation where 11 regional poles based around port cities garnered an autonomy that challenged the power and stability of the nation state.

Photographic expression appeared in Haiti at a moment of simultaneous impacts. There was the official recognition of Haiti's independence by King Louis-Phillipe of France (1773-1850), through a treaty in 1838, which imposed a monstrous debt. At the same time photography emerged as a new form of representation creating a new visual history. This is evident in the ten-year reign of Haitian Emperor Faustin Soulouque (1782-1867), which began in 1848, when a series of photographs were taken to celebrate his coronation. A lavish album of engravings, based on now missing daguerrotypes by A. Hartmann was printed for the occasion (fig. 4). This type of photography is indicative of a standard form of representation for political elites and Haiti's wealthy merchant classes during the 19th century to convey an image of grandeur and respectability.

The propagation of these prints shows how the new technology of photography informed older technologies of mass media, namely printmaking. The styling of these images presents a reverence for the *ancien regime* of France, and became fodder for political satirists at the start of the Second Empire led by Napoleon III (1808-1873), who reigned from 1852-70. This is most evident

3. **Anonymous** *President Dartiquenave of Haiti and Cabinet*, n.d. Gelatin silver print. 4 x 5.25 in. Courtesy of Edouard Duval-Carrié

4. **Hartmann (dates unknown; American)** *Faustin I, Souloque, Emperor of Haiti*, 1852. Lithograph from Imperial Album, Haiti. 4 x 5.25 in. 16.25 x 11.25 in. Courtesy of New York Public Library

5. **Eugene Mevs (Eugene Mevs Studio, Port-au-Prince)** *Untitled (Five Siblings)*, n.d. Gelatin silver print. 6.375 x 4.75 x in. Courtesy of CIDIHCA Collection, Montreal Canada

6. **Anonymous (F. Wyss Studio)** *Nina Auguste, Mother of Lilas Nemours-Auguste, Nina: 1st marriage Alphonse Pouget; or 2nd marriage to Alfred Nemours-Auguste) August, 6 Boulevard Poissonniere, Paris*. July 28, 1916. Gelatin silver print. 8 x 6 in. Courtesy of CIDIHCA Collection, Montreal Canada

7. **Anonymous** *Untitled (Dapper Man in White Suit and Hat)*, n.d. Postcard. 5.25. x 3.25 in. Courtesy of CIDIHCA Collection, Montreal Canada

8. **Anonymous** *Arthur Durosseau*, n.d. Gelatin silver print. 6. x 4 in. Courtesy of CIDIHCA Collection, Montreal Canada

9. **Louis Doret (Louis Doret Studio)** *Lescot with Ladies*, n.d. Gelatin silver print. 5.25. x 3.5 in. Courtesy of CIDIHCA Collection, Montreal Canada



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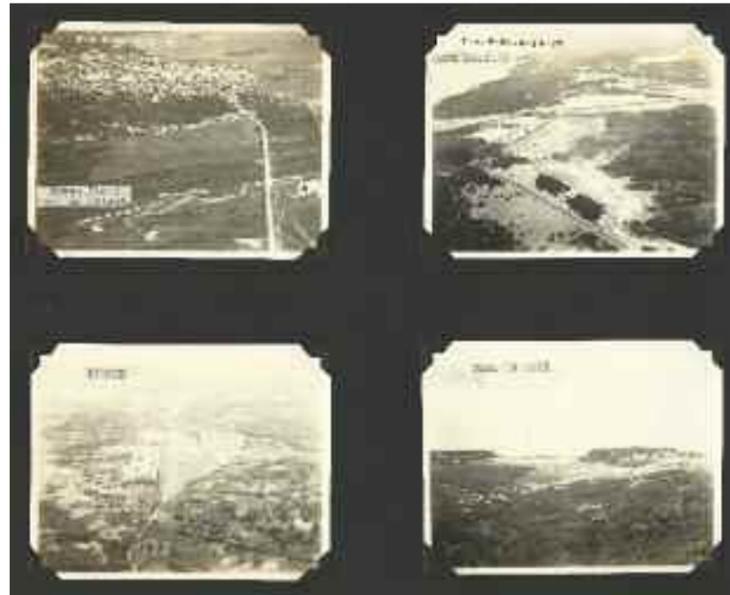
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in the work of artist, Honoré Daumier (1808-1879), whose caustic and often racist illustrations of Soulouque were just as critical of his regime as they were of the Second Empire in France. This was reiterated by philosopher, Karl Marx, who referred to Haiti's emperor to critique the semblances of power for leaders such as Simón Bolívar (1783-1830) and Napoleon III. He referred to the latter as "a noisy, disreputable, rapacious bohème that crawls into gallooned coats with the same grotesque dignity as the high dignitaries of Soulouque."<sup>1</sup> The images of Soulouque's coronation, intended to establish a visage of republicanism abroad, instead became symbolic of an infantilism and corruption tinted by European racism.

By the late 19th century, photographic studios had been set up in major cities throughout Haiti, such as the Mevs studio in Port-au-Prince, and later the Doret studio (figs. 5-7). The wealth of photographs of this era displays a mobile and affluent elite, whose photographs were taken at prominent studios in Haiti, New York, Paris, and elsewhere (figs. 8-9). They have been generously loaned to the exhibition by CIDIHCA (Centre du Documentation et D'Information Haïtienne, Caraïbienne, et Afrocanadienne, Montreal, Canada).

The second half of the 19th century also became a period of growth for the United States, which expressed an interest in Haiti as early as 1862, when it formally recognized Haiti's long won independence. As noted by Haitian writer and intellectual Anténor

Firmin, the United States expansionism posed as much of a threat to the future of his nation as racism and authoritarianism.<sup>2</sup>

From *Within and Without* presents for the first time photographic albums from the collection of photographer and antiquarian Pablo Kislev (b. 1955). These albums represent the various interests of France and the United States in Haiti, mostly as a site of economic and commercial ventures (figs. 10-11). They were made by United States military operatives and recall the "colonial archive" the United States created in other island territories and nations of the era, such as Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Cuba.<sup>3</sup>

In an untitled album from c. 1890 we find photographs of various sites of interests, such as pictures of historic landmarks (fig. 12). Contrary to the merchant and political elite's portraiture, these photographs show an expanded view of Haiti, including peasants from the countryside. While some photographs featured Haitians within the vistas of speculative interest, others focused entirely on Haitian subjects and even nude bodies in manners akin to late 19th century "scientific" ethnography (fig. 13).

In an accompanying album dated around 1914, just prior to the United States Occupation (1915-34), we are witnesses to Haiti's political turmoil through the lens of a United States pho-

13.



10. **Anonymous** *Cap-Haïtien*, c. 1862. Gelatin silver print from album. 5.5 x 8.75 in. Courtesy of Pablo Kislev

11. **Anonymous** *Jacmel*, c. 1862. Gelatin silver print from album. 4.5 x 7.5 in. Courtesy of Pablo Kislev

12. **Anonymous** *Sans Souci*, c. 1890. Gelatin silver print from album. 4 x 6 in. each. Courtesy of Pablo Kislev

13. **Anonymous** *Nude Figures*, c. 1890. Gelatin silver print from album. 4.75 x 3.5 in. Courtesy of Pablo Kislev

15. **Anonymous** *Aerial Views of Haiti*, c. 1929. Gelatin silver print from album. 4 x 6 in. each. Courtesy of Edouard Duval-Carrié

tographer stationed in Haiti who captured the entry of a “rebel” or Caco army in the capital (fig. 14).<sup>4</sup> The critical aspects of the situation that the photographer did not document suggest his role as a witness of a seemingly unruly Haiti, before the 1915 coordinated resistance against United States forces by the Caco movement emerged. For the first time, imagery of the Haitian masses emerged as a subject of photographic interest.

Another album (c. 1929) made during the Occupation period, reveals a more overtly militaristic venture, where the camera is assessing the Haitian terrain for the benefits of strategic intelligence. Photographs featuring aerial views of cities, roadways, bridges, and other significant infrastructure and geological figures are prominent throughout the album (fig. 15). These images show how photography provided a way to make territory appear tenable for economic exploitation. In this album we also witness the everyday lives of the occupying forces within an unfamiliar terrain. One of the tenets of the Occupation period was to secure agreements with the Haitian authorities regarding the possible use of the Môle St. Nicolas as a United States military base, which proved to be too complicated to realize.

This period of American expansionism, which ultimately failed, did mark an ongoing United States presence in the island nation’s economic and political matters, as seen throughout the region.

The resistance of the Haitian peasantry was more than consequential; it proved that their presence could not be denied, be it through the photographic medium or through politics.

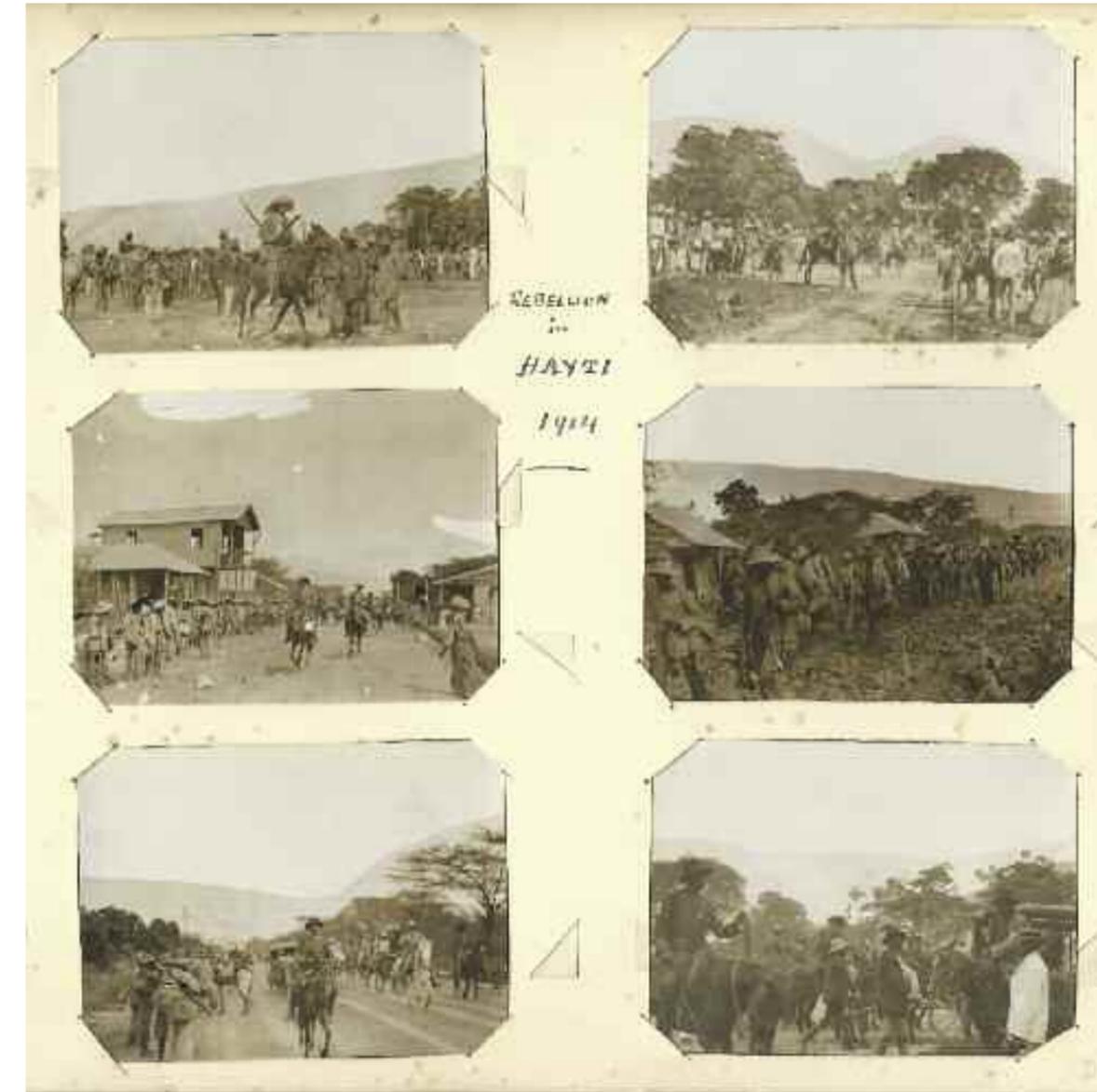
In his essay, “Power and Martyrdom,” Laurent Dubois addresses this period of Haitian history poignantly, highlighting the case of Charlemagne Peralte (1886-1919). In a singular staged photographic image, the captured Caco rebel becomes the symbol of the Haitian peasantry who wanted to assert its presence on a national stage (fig. 31). Dubois’ and Edward Sullivan’s essay show how this particular photograph of Peralte’s “crucifixion” has become not only a symbol for the Haitian populace, but also how it evolved to inform subsequent generations of artists, in particular Philomé Obin (1892-1986; fig. 32).

Photographic books such as *Port-au-Prince, Haiti* by Tamerlyn T. Chamberlain of the United States or *Haiti Today* by the United Haiti Corporation from 1907 display systematic attempts to present Haiti as governable by its leaders and ripe for economic exploitation (figs. 16-17).<sup>5</sup> These nonetheless came into being alongside various traveler accounts filled with stereotypical reflections on the Haitian populace.

William Seabrook’s account of Haiti in the book, *The Magic Island* (1929), is a prime example.<sup>6</sup> Its titillating narrative and photographs created a twisted, barbaric vision of African-based

14. Anonymous *Haiti Rebellion*, 1914. Gelatin silver print from album. 2.75 x 3.75 each. Courtesy of Edouard Duval-Carrié

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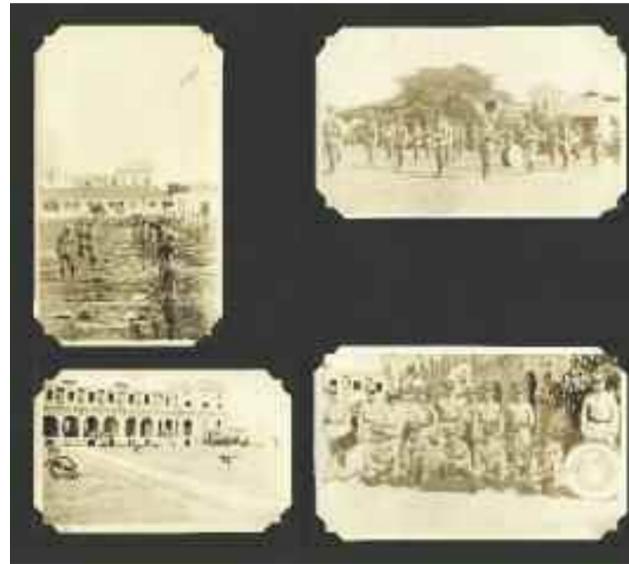
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practices in Haiti that contributed to popular, stigmatizing stereotypes of the rural population and its traditions, particularly the Vodou religion (fig. 18). A growing interest in Haiti's peasantry – as a spiritual and cultural force – also became apparent in the work of scholars, researchers, and development agencies.

This interest points to a greater awareness by the United States of how their occupying presence in Haiti was at odds with the realities of the terrain (figs. 19-20). It was obvious that the inherent racism of the occupying forces stationed in Haiti was a pervasive problem, despite serious efforts on the part of the United States to build an infrastructure that would permit Haiti to maximize its resources. It became evident that African Americans could and should be part of some sort of solution to the distrust of the majority of Haitians towards the occupying forces. From the start the United States made such efforts, sending Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) as its Haiti Ambassador from 1889-1891.

At the turn of the century and into the Occupation, many black writers and thinkers looked towards Haiti, with black-run publications, often considering the place of Haiti in relation to United States racism. For those who traveled to Haiti, many returned with the desire to show more complex and humanized images of the world's first black nation, as described by Frederick Douglass in

his speech regarding Haiti at the Haitian Pavilion in the 1893 Columbia's World Exposition in Chicago. For black Americans this awareness of Haiti reached beyond stereotypes often imposed onto themselves, even into the realm of the mythological.

For artists of the Harlem Renaissance, for example, Haitian culture came to express aspirational ideals. In his regarded 1938 *Toussaint L'Ouverture* series, painter Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000) depicted the history of the Haitian Revolution in 41 painted panels, serving as a precursor to his future series regarding African American history. Artists such as Lois Mailou-Jones (1905-1998) and Aaron Douglas (1898-1979), amongst others, traveled to or engaged with Haiti as a place of freedom and black modernity.

This is also seen in all fields of cultural expression, from dance to literature. Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and dancer Katherine Dunham visited Haiti at various times and took photographs of the country and its people or collected those made by others. When the Occupation failed, the United States funded travel for many African Americans and others to travel to Haiti to better understand the nation. Hurston, for example, received a Guggenheim Fellowship for anthropological research in Haiti and Jamaica, resulting in her book *Tell My Horse* that included various photographs (figs. 21).<sup>7</sup> The Occupation and academic interest in

- 16. Anonymous** *General Montreuil Guillanne*, 1907. Photographic print. 6 x 4.5 in. From: Anonymous, *Haiti Today: An Appreciation*, Philadelphia, Pa.: United Haiti Corp. (1907). Courtesy of Edouard Duval-Carrié
- 17. Anonymous** *The Late General Justin Carrie*, 1907. Photographic print. 6 x 4.5 in. From: Anonymous, *Haiti Today: An Appreciation*, Philadelphia, Pa.: United Haiti Corp. (1907). Courtesy of Edouard Duval-Carrié
- 18. Anonymous** *Papa Nebo, Hermaphrodite Oracle of the Dead, Garbed as Half Man, Half Woman*, 1929. Photographic print. 5.25 x 3.5 in. From: William B. Seabrook, *L'île magique*: traduit de l'anglais par Gabriel de Hons, Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1929. Courtesy of Edouard Duval-Carrié
- 19. Anonymous** *Military Figures*, n.d. Gelatin silver prints from album. 5.5 x 3.5 or 2.875 x 4.875 in. Courtesy of Edouard Duval-Carrié
- 20. Anonymous** *United States Marine Officers Stationed at Marine Barracks, Port-au-Prince*, n.d. Photographic print. 3.25 x 5.5 in. From: Tamerlyn T. Chamberlin, *Port-au-Prince, Haiti* (no publisher or n.d.). Courtesy of Edouard Duval-Carrié
- 21. Rex Hardy (1915-2001; American)** *A Houngan "Mounted" by a Loa*, n.d. Photographic print. 8.25 x 7.75 in. From: Zora Neale Hurston, *Voodoo [sic] Gods*, London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd. (1938), later published as *Tell My Horse*. Courtesy, Edouard Duval-Carrié

Haiti from abroad had reverberations within Haiti as well, with members of the upper class realizing that their vision of their own country somewhat echoed the stereotypes formed abroad. Members of the Haitian elite and intellectual class suddenly began to show a greater interest in the nation's popular culture.<sup>8</sup>

Post-Occupation Haiti became a site of intense ethnographic research from *Without* and *Within*, as captured in many photographs of the exhibition. The work of anthropologists Alfred Métraux, Odette Mennesson-Rigaud, and photographer Pierre Verger (1902-1996) concentrated on understanding the religious aspects of Haitian culture, which was African-based (fig. 46). A cue had been given by writer and ethnographer Jean Price-Mars, who tried throughout his life to reconcile the various religious traditions in Haiti, as seen in his book, *So Spoke the Uncle*.<sup>9</sup>

In his essay "Artists Before the Lens: Painters and Photography in Haiti", Edward Sullivan looks at how this growing interest was presented in the realm of painting and its relationship to photography, opening with the example of Verger's striking photograph of regarded painter houngan (Vodou priest) Hector Hyppolite (1891?-1948) on his death bed (fig. 33). This interest in Vodou and popular expression is also seen in the work of United States ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax, as recounted by Kimberly Green in her essay, "Alan Lomax and Haiti." His extensive recordings and photographic documentation attest to the vitality of Haiti and its

popular culture (figs. 43-44).

A counterpoint to this growing interest in Haitian popular culture is seen in the expansive compositions of Edouard Peloux's (1901-1994) ambitious photographs (figs. 22-25). Working at the height of World War II and its aftermath, these photographs concentrate in presenting an orderly, modern urban society. Using aerial photographs, as had earlier foreign visitors, these photographs go beyond the interests of surveillance and economic enterprise, claiming the capacity of the state to engage in serious economic and social development. Lomax can be seen as a counterpoint to the study of Haiti from abroad, presenting a dignified order that was unfortunately not long lived. Such images translated to the political missions of military dictator Paul Magloire (1907-2001), who ruled from 1950-56 and placed great emphasis on presenting Haiti as a potential tourist destination.

At the same time Peloux was showing idealized, top-down images of the Haitian social and political terrain, photography was becoming a more democratic force within the island. While photo studios had previously existed largely for the middle and upper classes of Haiti, by the 1960s popular photo studios emerged throughout the island, particularly in Port-au-Prince in vicinity of the Notre Dame Cathedral. In her essay on photographs collected by Marilyn Houlberg, Emilie Boone discusses the titillating and intimate kinds of images that emanated from "popular" photo stu-

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23. Edouard Peloux (1901-1994; Haitian) *Aerial View of Citadelle La Ferrière, Haiti*, n.d. Gelatin silver print. 8 x 10 in. Courtesy of Estate of Edouard Peloux

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dios, many of which are featured in the exhibition (figs. 39-43).

When Haitians were having themselves portrayed with confidence and dignity, the Duvaliers were having photographs made of themselves to legitimize the authority of their regimes. From the beginning of his reign (1957-71), François Duvalier (1907-1971), better known as Papa Doc, made every effort to create a public image through photography. A very adept student of popular culture, Duvalier appeared in many official portraits bedecked with a top hat—an image akin to that of the Vodou god of death, the infamous Baron Samedi (fig. 60).

Dr. Margaret Mitchell Armand's text about Vodou and photography addresses the role of Vodou in Haitian politics. Official state photographers such as one known only as Dietz, and others captured very eloquently this type of official display, underlining the conscious use of the more nefarious aspects of Vodou as a means of repression by the Duvalier regimes (1957-1986). This subverts the relationship between Vodou and photography, a reality discussed extensively in Donald Consentino's essay, "Vodou Made Visible."

Because of the longevity of the repressive and corrupt Duvalier regimes and Haiti's descent into political chaos and social unrest, the country became a topic of interest for the international press. Following the 1971-86 reign of Papa Doc's son Jean-Claude Duvalier (1951-2014), or Baby Doc, Haiti entered a period of political uncertainty and unrest. The AIDS crisis, various coup d'états, political

repression, internal violence, and the assassination of prominent figures contributed to an image of Haiti as a failed state.

A semblance of normality seemed to emerge with the election of popularly elected priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide (b. 1953) in 1991 (fig. 27). Yet, he was ousted by the Haitian FADH (Force d'Armée d'Haïti), precipitating a United States embargo that was repealed when Aristide was reinstated in 1994, with the aid of President William Jefferson Clinton that year, reigned until 1996, and ruled again from 2001-4.

A plethora of photojournalists descended upon the small nation over this broad period of political chaos, covering the trials and tribulations of the Haitian people, some more sympathetically than others. In her essay, Maggie Steber (b. 1950s) focuses on two newspapers – *The Miami Herald* and the *Sun Sentinel* of South Florida – to give an idea of how this period was covered by the press. This press coverage of the ongoing turmoil in Haiti was made even more poignant given the repercussions events in Haiti had on South Florida and its large Haitian population.

The exhibition also includes reference to a website that historian and Florida International University, Miami, Adam Silvia established and that is maintained by the Digital Library of the Caribbean at the Florida International University: "Haiti, An Island Luminous." It presents the history of Haiti from sources such as rare books, manuscripts, archival photographs with the com-

**22. Edouard Peloux (1901-1994; Haitian)** *Sans Souci Palace with Two People, Milot, Haiti*, n.d. Gelatin silver print. 15.5 x 20 in. Courtesy of Estate of Edouard Peloux

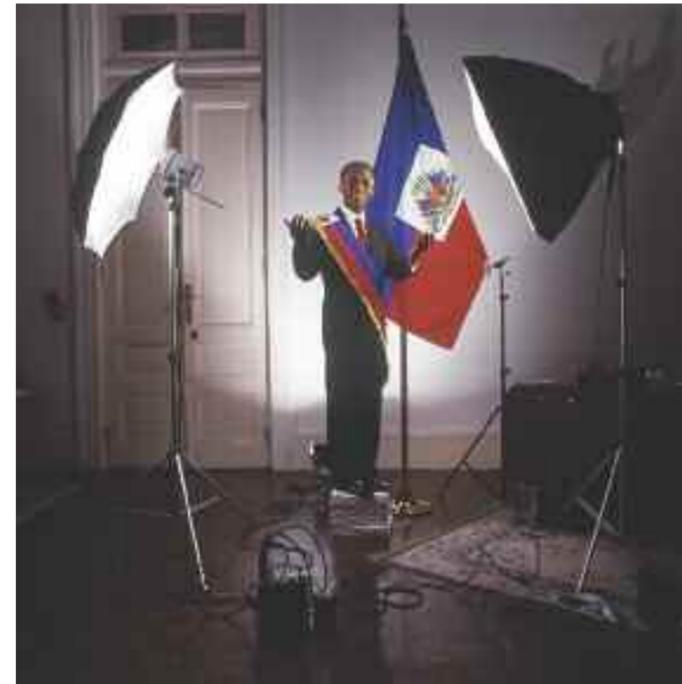
**24. Edouard Peloux (1901-1994; Haitian)** *Waterfront, Cap-Haïtien*, July 19, 1953. Gelatin silver print. 12 x 19 in. Courtesy of Estate of Edouard Peloux

**25. Edouard Peloux (1901-1994; Haitian)** *Parade to Honor Caribbean Congress Delegates, Port-au-Prince*, April 27, 1944. Black and white inkjet print. 20 x 24 in. Courtesy of Estate of Edouard Peloux

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mentary by authors and scholars from around the world.

To bring these issues into the present, the works of contemporary Haitian and non-Haitian artists and photographers were selected to offer a current perspective on Haiti's visual panorama. In his essay, "Haiti Through A Contemporary Lens," Alfredo Rivera discusses the diversity of these works, exploring how the medium of photography continues to inform visions and perceptions of Haiti from within and without.

In the contemporary world, photography has been elevated from being considered an artless, mechanical process to the status of art. Is it fair to ask if photographs could synthesize the complexity of Haiti's evolution? Can we detect discrepancies between an internal vision in the work of Haitian artists and photographers throughout the diaspora and the external visions of non-Haitian artists and photographers who made Haiti a subject of their work? Do these photographs and works of art function as objective, visual records, or do they work subliminally to define and display the internal virtues of a very complex people? Whether documentary or artistic, what powers do art and photographs hold, and what do they reveal about Haiti?

To conclude, Haitian writer Edwidge Danticat has written about her appreciation of photography as it concerns Haitians. *Her My Misery is Mine!* looks intimately at our personal relationship with photographs in an attempt to answer these questions

from a Haitian perspective.

It is indeed very painful to be the subject of permanent scrutiny by a medium that can be coldly objective and emotionally aloof, no matter how sympathetic the photographer or viewer. This exhibition intends to demonstrate that photographs and art keep long-forgotten moments alive and current and that they should be confronted and claimed. My Haitian brothers and sisters will be the judges.

1. See Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Rockville (Maryland: Wildside Press, 2008), 134.
2. See Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012).
3. See Javier Morillo-Alicea, "Looking for Empire in the United States Colonial Archive," in *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*, ed. Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003), 129-143.
4. Cacos were generally "peasant brigands" hired to accomplish the different of various political factions. The Cacos carried out the assassination or forced the exile of six Haitian presidents between 1911 and 1915, which prompted the United States' Occupation of Haiti (1915-37). The Cacos strongly opposed the United States presence under the leadership of Charlemagne Pèralte (1886-1919) and then by Benoit Batraville (1877-1920). 1920 is considered the year that hostilities ended.
5. See Tamerlyn T. Chamberlain, *Port-au-Prince*, no publisher or publication date indicated.
6. See William B. Seabrook, *L'île magique*: Traduit de l'anglais par Gabriel de Hons (Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1929).
7. See Zora Neale Hurston, *Voodoo Gods: An Inquiry into Native Myths and Magic in Jamaica and Haiti* (later published as *Tell My Horse*, London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1939).
8. See Krista Thompson, "Preoccupied with Haiti", *American Art*. 21:3 (August 2007), 74-97, and Laurent Dubois, *Ibid*, 286.
9. See Jean Price-Mars, *So Spoke the Uncle*, 1928, reprint, Pueblo Colorado: Passeggiata Press, 1990.

**26. Anonymous** *President François Duvalier Waves to Crowds from Palace Grounds*, 1959. Gelatin silver print. Gelatin silver print. 8 x 10 in. Courtesy of CIDIHCA Collection, Montreal Canada  
**27. Maggie Steber (b. 1950s; American)** *Aristide Poses for Presidential Portrait, Port-au-Prince, Haiti*, May 1991. Inkjet print. 20 x 16 in. Courtesy of Maggie Steber

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## POWER AND MARTYRDOM

*Laurent Dubois*

The first half of the 20th century saw a series of dramatic transformations and upheavals within Haiti. By the late 19th century the central government was beset by a concatenation of pressures. Early in Haiti's history, there had been long periods of political stability under the regimes of leaders like Jean-Pierre Boyer (1776-1850; President 1818-43), and Faustin-Élie Soulouque (1782-1867; fig. 2; President 1847-59). After 1956, Haiti would again be under the control of a long-term, autocratic regime. But for the century in between, the presidency was occupied by relatively transient figures, almost all generals came into power through weapons not ballots. Haiti was largely organized around 11 regional poles, each with its own port, and local leaders emerged from these regions to claim presidency, often finding themselves overthrown not long afterward as they had overthrown their predecessors. There were 12 presidents and nearly as many constitutions between 1843 and 1889, and in the decades before the United States Occupation (1915-34), power changed hands constantly and violently. Military power was the only route to political power, and the armies of the country were used not so much to defend it from outside threats as to control the population (fig. 28).

The result of this ongoing conflict was the consolidation of a militarized and often autocratic method of rule in Port-au-Prince.

Opposition was seen as a threat to neutralize. Presidents evoked threat of coups to justify limiting parliamentary power. One of the longest serving presidents during this time, Lysius Salomon (1815-1888; President 1879-88, admitted with candor that he enjoyed coups d'état and felt governing without them was not possible. Presidents turned the National Palace into a garrison. President Sylvain Salnave (1826-1870) established himself as president after an armed uprising in 1867, ruled until 1869, and packed the National Palace with weapons and ammunition. In 1869, when opponents began shelling the palace, it exploded and was burned to the ground. The pattern continued. One observer noted in 1908 that they lived as if they were "camped in an enemy country," ready to carry out "extreme measures" against the population.<sup>1</sup> In 1911, the National Palace exploded again, killing the president in power. In the next four years, Haiti had seven presidents.

These internal conflicts were nourished by the broader international context. Haiti's burden of debt, the result of the 1825 indemnity forced on the country by France and the loans taken out (from France) to pay for it, was enormous and weakened the state immeasurably. By 1898, fifty percent of the state budget went to paying off debts, and in 1913-14 that number climbed to sixty-seven percent. Most importantly was the shadow of the United

28. Anonymous Faustin-Élie Soulouque, *Empereur d'Haïti, La beron colvert de lachade, Port-au-Prince, Haïti* (From the *Imperial Album*, Haiti), n. d. Lithograph. 10 x 8 in.

States. Throughout the 19th century, North American merchants, corporations, and military and political leaders became increasingly intent on exercising control over Haiti. Though an attempt to control of Môle Saint-Nicolas as a naval base was rebuffed by the great intellectual Anténor Firmin (1850-1911), then Minister of Foreign Relations, United States control and presence seemed nearly unstoppable. By the early 20th century, United States banks had replaced France's as the most powerful economic institutions in Haiti, and United States railroad and steamboat corporations were seeking and finding contracts there. These inroads would

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help set the stage for the Occupation.<sup>2</sup>

Photographs of Haitian political leaders during the first half of the 20th century condense and reflect the broader problems the state faced during this period. They project a symbolic vision of power that in many ways was largely lacking in practice. In many cases, they establish

a context for the military backgrounds of leaders, for good reason: military leadership was the justification for and path to power. The swords and elaborate uniforms in photographs remind us of this. But these portraits were also outward looking. Haitian leaders had long been the subject of denigration or marginalization outside the country, and the images they produced of themselves – going back to the famous portrait commissioned by Henri Christophe – were meant to assert their right to consideration and respect on the international stage. Photographs were part of a much broader and enduring combat by Haitians to be seen as respectable and legitimate within the larger political arena.

The stakes involved in photographs of Haitian state leaders were complicated and layered. These photographs were, like any posed photographs of a political leader, an assertion of the appropriateness and naturalness of power. The figure seems meant to be there, with the pose, clothes, and background confirming their place at the center of the state.

These traditions came together in portrayals of President Paul Magloire (1907-2001; President 1950-56), in the wake of the Occupation (fig. 29). His portrait on the cover of Time magazine was linked to a high-profile visit he made to the United States in 1954, when he was given a ticker-tape parade in New York and spoke to a joint session of Congress, declaring that Haiti's "destiny" was "for better or worse" linked to that of the United States. In the same year, Magloire organized an elaborate celebration of the 150th anniversary of Haitian independence, during which opera star Marian Anderson performed at the ruins of Sans-Souci palace (fig. 12). Magloire was a military man and appeared in photographs in an elaborate, traditional military uniform. This was not mere symbolism: his warm welcome in the United States was linked to his suppression of leftist activity in Haiti – "[Haitians] are immune to communism," he once declared. But the symbolism Magloire deployed was also of a long, deep Haitian tradition of self-presentation on the part of Haitian political leaders.<sup>3</sup>

In the long term, however, most of the images were fairly transient: pictures of power that lasted about as long as the power itself. The one photograph from this period that has had the largest impact and that is immediately recognizable to most Haitians was the result of a very different kind of project. Taken by an anonymous United States Marine, it was meant to crush and silence

29. Anonymous *President Paul Magloire Meets with United States President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Washington, January, 1955.* Gelatin silver print. 9 x10 in.

Haitian resistance to the Occupation (fig. 31). In the end, the image become something very different, namely a symbol of martyrdom.

There was almost no military resistance to the Occupation of Haiti initially. But within a few years that changed: the United States insisted on a change in the Haitian Constitution, eliminating a provision dating from Dessalines's time outlawing land ownership by foreign whites. In the face of parliamentary resistance, the Marines simply dispersed the parliament. Though there was still a Haitian president, the United States government essentially administered and controlled the state, as well as the local governments in the countryside. Having faced sporadic resistance in rural areas on their arrival, and in the hopes of improving infrastructure for economic development, the Marines began a large-scale road-building project. For labor, the occupying authorities revived old but essentially dormant Haitian laws allowing for *corvée* – forced labor. They rounded up men in the countryside, sometimes roping them together, putting them to work building road in often brutal conditions. Unsurprisingly, this incited increasing resistance to the Occupation. By 1918, a large-scale uprising began under the command of Charlemagne Péralte (1886-1919; fig. 31).

Originally from Hinche, Péralte had been educated in Port-au-Prince and served as an officer in Leogane. When the Occupation began, he refused to serve and returned home. He was eventually imprisoned, accused of resistance to the Marines, but escaped and in late 1918, began building a guerilla army that carried out successful attacks against United States outposts. The Marines responded with a concerted campaign against the rebels—who called themselves Cacos—that included one of the first aerial bombardments against camps and villages in the countryside. Ul-

timately, however, the United States forces were frustrated by their inability to stop the uprising, which was nourished by ongoing grievances against the United States, as well as inspired by a powerful sense of Haitian nationalism: the Cacos saw themselves as the true descendants of Dessalines, fighting once again to free themselves from colonial occupation.

The Marines decided to assassinate Péralte, recruiting a Haitian named Jean-Baptiste Conzé to help them infiltrate the Caco camps. Eventually two Marines disguised in blackface, sneaked into Péralte's camp and shot him in the heart at point-blank range,

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But Péralte had developed a near-legendary status in Haiti, and the Marines could not simply declare that they had killed him: they needed to prove it. So they carried his body down the hill and put it on display in Grande-Rivière. One resident of the town, a friend of Péralte's, later described how he had watched the procession enter the town. "I was penetrated with sadness," he recalled. "All at once, my hopes and those of my comrades had collapsed. The Americans would not be chased away."<sup>4</sup>

The next day, Péralte was brought by train to Le Cap and stripped bare. A piece of cloth was placed over his midsection, his body tied to a door and propped up against a wall in the police station. The Marines officially identified Péralte using the file filled out about him when he was in prison in Le Cap, which listed his

30. Anonymous *Execution under François Duvalier, Death by Gunfire, 1957-1971.* Gelatin silver print. 4.75 x 7.75 in. Courtesy of CIDIHCA Collection, Montreal Canada.

hair and eye color, his height, and scars. Then they gathered local residents to come and see the body, including the guard who had helped Peralte escape the previous year – now a prisoner himself – and the French priest serving in Le Cap. Afterward, a Marine photographer photographed the corps. Several hundred copies of the photo

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were dropped from airplanes over the countryside in the areas where Cacos were still active.<sup>5</sup>

Even after these displays, the Marines remained oddly obsessed with Peralte's body, which they didn't know where to put. Fearing that the Cacos would attempt to take it back, they created confusion by holding five different fake funerals in different places. Peralte's final resting place was carefully chosen: a prison camp at Chabert, not far from Le Cap. The carpenter hired to bury Peralte later recalled that the Marines did not have a coffin for him, as the prison had none.

Instead, the soldiers wrapped the body in a Haitian flag and laid it in the grave. They asked a laborer to pour concrete around it, apparently to make sure that the body to avoid easy disinterment. A Haitian guard who was among those who stood sentinel over the grave remembered bitterly: "Charlemagne was buried like a dog."<sup>6</sup>

The Marines thus unwittingly offered Haitians the most last-

ing, widely-known vision of the slain Caco leader. In the 1919 photograph, Peralte is nearly naked, a cloth covering his groin (fig. 31). His head tilts back to one side and with closed eyes, he almost seems to be sleeping. His banner is draped behind him and nestled against his head: the Haitian flag, mounted on a flagpole decorated with a crucifix. The similarity between the slain Peralte, killed at the age of thirty-three with the crucified Christ is striking. If the photographer had consciously tried to create a picture of martyrdom, he couldn't have done better.

Passed from hand to hand, copies of the photograph of Peralte's corpse circulated throughout Haiti. The United States remained in power, though in the face of increasing resistance, they eventually allowed an election that swept opposition leader Sténio Vincent (1874-1959) into the presidency in 1930. But the memory of Peralte – the man who had insisted that it was he who represented Haiti, rather than the collaborationist leaders in Port-au-Prince – haunted Haitian political life. In 1932, when Félix Viard wrote a poem in honor of Peralte, dubbing him "the last maroon," the publication was illustrated with a sketch of the same photo. In 1934, Peralte's bones were taken out of his grave at Chabert, his skull identified by his mother, thanks to a gold tooth. He was buried in Le Cap, given a state funeral, and honored as a patriot.<sup>7</sup>

But it is his photograph as a martyr that has ultimately occupied Haitian memory and visual art. Indeed, though the name of the Marine photographer who snapped the photograph in 1919 is unknown, he had taken what might be the most famous photograph in Haitian history. The image he produced, whose purpose was to frighten the Haitian population into submission and subdue the rebellion, remains the most widely recognized photograph

31. Anonymous (United States Marines) *Charlemagne Peralte*, 1919. Inkjet print. National Archives Photograph No. 127-n521221.

of the Occupation, the ultimate monument to its cruelty and to the resistance it inspired.

In subsequent decades, the image was taken up by Haitian artists, who transformed the photograph into paintings. Philomé Obin (1892-1986), a painter from Le Cap – once arrested by the United States Marines on suspicion of sympathy with the Cacos – created several works based on the image (fig. 32). In Obin's paintings, the black and white of the original is transformed into color, so that the blue and red of the Haitian flag and the yellow of the crucifix stand out against the sky. Obin also added Peralte's mourning mother, clad in black to the scene. And the title of his work, written directly on the painting, expressed what so many had long seen in the image: "The Crucifixion of Charlemagne Peralte for Liberty."<sup>8</sup> The painting is a reminder that photography not only captures a moment, but it also has the ability to generate imagery for future generations in its own and other mediums.

1. Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012), 168–71, 209.
2. Dubois, *Ibid*, 175.
3. Dubois, *Ibid*, 18–19.
4. Roger Gaillard, *Charlemagne Peralte Le Caco* (Port-au-Prince: R. Gaillard, 1982), 298–309; Dubois, *Ibid*, 248–60.
5. Gaillard, *Ibid*, 317–18.
6. Mary A Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 150; Roger Gaillard, *Hinche Mise en Croix* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie Le Natal, 1982), 26–27; Gaillard, *Charlemagne*, 323–23.
7. Gaillard, *Charlemagne*, 340–42; Matthew J Smith, *Red & Black in Haiti: Radicalism, Conflict, and Political Change, 1934-1957* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 10.
8. My thanks to LeGrace Benson for providing me with details about Obin's paintings of Peralte.

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32. Philomé Obin (1892-1986; Haitian) *Crucifixion de Charlemagne Peralte pour la liberté*, 1970. Oil on Masonite. 19.25 × 15.5 in. Gift of Richard and Erna Flagg. Courtesy of Milwaukee Art Museum.

## ARTISTS BEFORE THE LENS: PAINTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN HAITI

Edward J. Sullivan

A haunting image of the deceased painter Hector Hyppolite (1891?-1948) by French photographer Pierre Verger (1902-1996) dramatically commands our attention (figs. 33). It serves to enhance the aura of otherworldliness that has surrounded Hyppolite's artistic production as well as his persona since he began to show his work at Port-au-Prince's Centre d'Art in the mid-to-late 1940s. Perhaps more than any other artist, Hyppolite and his legacy embody the qualities that many consider quintessential to Haitian painting. At the same time, however, his work may also be analyzed in terms of the many essentialist clichés that have grown up around the conventional story of Haitian art.

First, let us examine the photograph. Hyppolite died on June 9, 1948, in the Haitian capital at 57, as attested by his death certificate in the National Archives.<sup>1</sup> Verger, the fabled photographer of black cultures throughout the Americas (especially those of northeast Brazil), had spent part of 1948 in Haiti, working at the Centre d'Art. He knew Hyppolite, the Centre's most famous artist, and captured his face bathed in caressing, almost romantic light and shadow. The artist is clothed in a white shirt, open at the neck. White lilies surround his body. Verger suggests an aura of sanctity befitting a man of art and religion. This image is by no means a simple recording of the facts of an individual's demise. It is a pro-

jection of mystery, an embodiment and an extension of the myths and legends of Vodou created by Hyppolite in dozens of paintings of that religion's *Lwas* (spirits) that guide all aspects of the lives of their adherents.

Verger presents the countenance of a man whose work had appealed widely to diverse audiences. Hyppolite, the *oungan* or Vodou priest was a self-taught artist. His work came to the attention of Philippe Thoby-Marcelin, who first promoted his art. Thoby-Marcelin was a poet, novelist, political activist, and co-founder of the influential journal *La Revue Indigène* (created in part as an act of intellectual resistance during the American Occupation of Haiti (1915 to 1934).

In 1943, the American expatriate artist, Dewitt Peters, a substitute English teacher in the military service and a conscious objector came to Haiti and was soon drawn to the long-established traditions of modern Haitian art that had flourished since the 19th century. He founded the Centre d'Art on the rue de la Révolution in 1944, as a place where artists of all stylistic tendencies could show their work and where their more experienced elders could instruct aspiring painters. He gave Hyppolite's work pride of place in the gallery.<sup>2</sup> From 1945 until his death, Hyppolite consistently exhibited at the Centre d'Art. The popularity of his color-

33. Pierre Verger (1902-1996; French) *Hector Hyppolite, Port-au-Prince, Haiti*, 1948. Gelatin silver print. 9.25 x 9 in. Courtesy of Fundação Pierre Verger.

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saturated canvases was attested to by many sales to legions of American tourists, who during the Presidency of Paul Eugène Magloire (1907-2001) from 1950-56, flocked to Haiti for its tropical exoticism. They wished to purchase souvenirs of their time in the “tropical paradise.” Many of these well-heeled visitors were serious art connoisseurs, who succeeded in forming substantial collections of Haitian art, which, in some notable cases, have found their way into North American museums such as those in New York City, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Davenport, Iowa.<sup>3</sup>

Hyppolite was also a great favorite of intellectuals and artists from other parts of the world. Cuban painter Wifredo Lam (1902-1982), who had a successful exhibition at the Centre d'Art in 1946, purchased several canvases.<sup>4</sup> André Breton (1896-1966), the so-called High Priest of Surrealism, wrote evocatively of his first encounter with Hyppolite's work at the Centre in 1947. Breton's essay was later published in the 1965 anthology *Le Surréalisme et la Peinture*.<sup>5</sup> It served to extend interest in Hyppolite's art beyond the Americas, a fascination that has continued to the present, culminating in the substantial representation of his work and a new monograph to accompany the exhibition in Paris at the Louvre, *Le Musée Monde* (November 5, 2011- February 6, 2012), conceived by Nobel laureate, J. M. G. Le Clézio. The art of Hyppolite also figured significantly in the recent exhibition *Haiti: Deux Siècles de Création Artistique* at the Grand Palais, Paris (November 19, 2014 - February 15, 2015).

Another photograph by Selden Rodman (1909-2002), the United States writer, collector and art dealer, shows Hyppolite with Peters (fig. 34), whose Centre d'Art was by no means a starting point for modern Haitian art, as is often cited in the literature. Throughout the 19th century various art schools had existed,

some with foreign instructors (principally French) and the participation of artists from other areas of the Caribbean. At the time of the Occupation, the arts, both literary and visual, had flourished in a particularly spectacular way. Themes evocative of the unique forms of Haitian life were the subjects of novels and paintings by the members of the group known as the Indigénistes (which included the well-known artist Petion Savain [1906-1975]). Distinguished Haitian art historians such as Gérald Alexis, Carlo Célius, and Michel Philippe Lerebours have told this story in their well-documented texts on the complex picture of the development of visual art in Haiti.<sup>6</sup>

The Centre d'Art (which was severely damaged in the devastating 2010 earthquake) served as a catalyst for the development of a number of new trends. At first, artists such as Luce Turnier (b. 1924), Lucien Price (1915-1963), Géo Remponeau (b. 1916) and others associated with Expressionism, Cubism, and other more contemporary forms of art were active participants in the Centre's activities. Their works were reproduced, alongside those by the self-taught artists, Philomé Obin (1894-1948), Rigaud Benoit (1911-1986), and others, in the journal *Studio*, which documented the early exhibitions at the Centre, one of which included a self-portrait by German Expressionist Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945).<sup>7</sup>

Nonetheless, Peters and Rodman, who codirected the Centre from 1949 to 1951, developed a preference for the self-taught artists. These artists and their work constituted what came to be known as the “Haitian Renaissance,” a term that engendered much controversy among scholars. Their striking works, which gained some of them the major commission in 1950 to decorate the Episcopal Cathedral of Sainte Trinité near the Centre d'Art, were evidently more salable than those of the “internationalists” or “modernists.”

This led some of the modernist artists to establish their own schools and artist groups, such as the Foyer des Arts Plastiques, cofounded by Luce Turnier (1924-1994) and Dieudonné Cedor (1925-2010). Other members of the Foyer included Max Pinchinat (1925-1985) and Roland Dorcelly (b. 1930), who eventually left Haiti, as did their younger contemporary, Hervé Télémaque (b. 1937) who during his long career in Paris rejected in his art what he conceived of as the false “folklorisms” of the “Haitian School.”

Rodman took many photographic portraits of Haitian artists of the mid-20th century (figs. 34-37). He often used them to illustrate his numerous books, including his *Where Art is Joy*, a volume that helped cement the image of Haiti and Haitian art as naïve, defined by their exuberant color and exaltation of the festive.<sup>8</sup> Even its subtitle, *Haitian Art: The First Forty Years*, suggests that Rodman conceived of Haiti's older art history as either non-existent or of marginal interest. Rodman's books and essays helped to further strengthen the pervasive stereotypes of Haitian culture that have become very difficult to move beyond. Nonetheless, the images he and other photographers, such as Pablo Butcher (b. 1955), made are instructive in that they allowing us views into their studios and, sometimes, their studio practices (fig. 38).

An evocative portrait by Butcher of Georges Liautaud (1899-1991; fig. 45), the best-known sculptor of the mid-century “Haitian Renaissance” artists, portrays the solemn-faced artist dressed incongruously in an elegant white suit (which he surely would never wear in his studio in Croix-des-Bouquets near Port-au-Prince). He is flanked by his iron sculptures depicting both Lwas and “types” drawn from the Haitian countryside. Liautaud is seated on a simple chair in a gallery setting, an image reveals the tension between the artist and his works vis-a-vis the market-dri-

ven forms of their display and exhibition. In this way the photograph stands as a metaphor for a certain kind of dislocation that must have been felt by artists, whose creative impulse was initiated by their own imagination and their absorption of oral traditions, rural legends, and religious beliefs. In contrast, Haitian and foreign art dealers and curators found the “Haitian School” easily promotable for the ostensibly decorative and commercially appealing nature of their work.

Liautaud's sculptures were exhibited throughout his long life in individual and group shows on both sides of the Atlantic. Only two years before his death in 1991, at the age of 92, a number of his pieces were selected for the highly controversial exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre*. This show, curated for the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Grand Halle at the Parc de la Villette in Paris by Jean-Hubert Martin, was meant to position artists from developing nations with those from the so-called “first world.” While undeniably thought-provoking, the exhibition elicited complaints of ethnocentricity and accusations of the promotion of primitivism versus “sophisticated” art. We are not certain if Liautaud was aware of either of these debates or what he thought of these theories of display. Nonetheless, the photograph succeeds in suggesting a certain ambivalence on his part at being in a location that may have felt alien to him.

Little has been posited regarding the use of photography by Haitian painters as a source for their compositions. There is one instance, however, in which I feel a well-known photograph may have played a significant role. In 1970, Obin painted one of his most dramatic works, *The Crucifixion of Charlemagne Péralte for Liberty* (Milwaukee Art Museum, figs. 32). Péralte (1886-1919) was a famous leader of the *Cacos* or guerilla fighters who resisted the

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Occupation. He was captured and tortured in the autumn of 1919. He escaped his American captors, but was betrayed by a fellow Haitian and ultimately gunned down. His body (with his hand gripping the Haitian flag) was tied to a door of police headquarters in Cap-Haïtien and kept there as a warning to the local population. A member of the United States Marine Corps took a photograph of Peralte exposed to the public in death. It was widely circulated in Haiti at the time and became a well-known image of political martyrdom and heroism (fig. 31).<sup>9</sup> Obin stated that he had witnessed this scene and produced his work through his memory of it some fifty years later. It would seem equally plausible, however, that Obin was stimulated to paint his image because of his familiarity with the photograph, which appears in this exhibition.

*From Within and Without: The History of Haitian Photography* attests to the strength of the Haitian photographic tradition. Through its contents we gain intimate knowledge of the individuals involved in Haiti's historical and cultural developments since the dawn of the photographic age in the 19th century. The testimony of photography's vital role as a visual art in Haiti is immensely relevant to our continuing understanding of the highly complex artistic scene in the capital as well as in provincial centers of visual production. As more images emerge from private collections and archives, we will undoubtedly be provided with a more nuanced understanding of Haitian art. Photographs of the artists, their studios, exhibition spaces, such as the Centre d'Art and oth-

ers, as well as shots of commercial galleries and personalities including art dealers and promoters of the visual arts of Haiti abroad, will continue to enrich our understanding of this society. Through such archival documentation, the originality and uniqueness of Haiti as one of the most productive art centers in the Caribbean, and indeed in the Americas, will become even more evident to scholars, collectors, and the general public.

1. Hector Hyppolite 1891?-1948 (Paris: Éditions Capri, 2011) n.p.; Annexe 2. The certificate states that the artist was 57 years old but there is confusion as to the actual date of birth.
2. For a discussion of the development of the Centre d'Art and its role within a complex panorama of modern Haitian painting, see Carlo A. Célius, *Langage Plastique et Énonciation Identitaire: L'Invention de l'Art Haïtien* (Québec: Le Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007), especially Chapter 2, 53-98.
3. Haitian works in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, include paintings by Wilson Bigaud and sculpture by Liautaud, but have not been exhibited in many years. The collection of Haitian art at the Figge Art Museum, Davenport, Iowa (formerly the Davenport Art Museum), began in 1967 with a donation of 19 Haitian paintings collected in the 1950s and 60s in Haiti by Walter E. Neiswanger. The collection now includes more than 150 works. The Milwaukee Art Museum Haitian collection dates from 1972, when Richard B. Flagg, owner of the Flagg Tanning Corporation and trustee of the museum, acquired Haitian art. He travelled to Haiti in 1973, where he purchased additional works. See "One Man's Love of Haitian Art is Delight for All," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, Friday, December 15, 1978, p.27; ([news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=1978](https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=1978). Accessed April 24, 2014).
4. Lam had an exhibition at the Centre d'Art between January 24 and February 3, 1946 accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by André Breton, "La nuit à Haiti," which, Lowery Stokes Sims has described: "[It] expresses a desire to find a modern Eden in the present-day Caribbean" in *Wifredo Lam and the International Avant-Garde, 1923-1982* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 83.
5. André Breton, "Hector Hyppolite," *Le Surréalisme et la Peinture* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 308-312.
6. See Gérald Alexis, *Peintres Haïtiens* (Paris: Cercle d'Art, 2000); Célius, *Langage Plastique*; and Michel-Philippe Lerebours, *Haïti et ses Peintres de 1804 à 1980: Souffrances et Espoirs d'un Peuple* (Port-au-Prince: Bibliothèque National d'Haïti, 1989).

- 34. Selden Rodman (1909-2002; American)** *Hector Hyppolite with De Witt Peters (top left)*, 1947. Gelatin silver print (reprinted 2015). 9.5 x 7.75 in. Courtesy of Selden Rodman Collection.  
**35. Selden Rodman (1909-2002; American)** *Castera Bazile in Rodman's Pool*, 1948. Gelatin silver print. 10.5 x 5.75 in. Courtesy of Selden Rodman Collection.  
**36. Selden Rodman (1909-2002; American)** *Roadside Bar with Doors Painted by Hyppolite*, 1946. Gelatin silver print (reprinted 2015). 9.5 x 7.75 in. Courtesy of Selden Rodman Collection.  
**37. Selden Rodman (1909-2002; American)** *Philomé Obin with his Brother Sens*, 1972. Gelatin silver print (reprinted 2015). 9.5 x 7.75 in. Courtesy of Selden Rodman Collection.  
**38. Pablo Butcher (b. 1955; British)** *Haitian Painter Jasmin Joseph at Centre d'Art*, n.d. Color slide 10 x 15 in. Courtesy of Pablo Butcher  
**39. Pablo Butcher (b. 1955; British)** *George Liautaud in his Studio with Sculptures*, n. d. Gelatin silver print. 20 x 30 in. Courtesy of Pablo Butcher.

## A HIDDEN WORLD OF IMAGES: MARILYN HOULBERG AND HAITIAN STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY

Emilie Boone

Marilyn Houlberg's seminal essay "Haitian Studio Photography: A Hidden World of Images," introduces readers to a world that is very different from the sights, sounds and movements one may experience on the urban streets of Port-au-Prince today.<sup>1</sup> She takes us into a visual realm of stillness, fantasy, and specificity that characterized the photography studios of Haiti. As Houlberg stated: "[inside them] there is no room for chaos, poverty, anger or fear."<sup>2</sup>

The facades of Haitian photography studios, such as Gamma Photo, Photo Apollo and Feeling Photo, were colorfully decorated. Dr. Houlberg recognized that the portraits of individuals and families were culturally significant, and thus collected them. They allow us to experience and understand the intimacy and highly staged character of Haitian studio photography.

The selection of photographs from Houlberg's collection in *From Within and Without* has not been exhibited since 1987, where these works were on view at the Atrium Gallery, University of Connecticut, Storrs from April 27 to May 15 in an exhibition of

Nigerian and Haitian studio photographs curated by Dr. Houlberg. These works demonstrate the depth of her extensive research on the subject, and on the art, photography, and culture of these regions.<sup>3</sup>

The images in Houlberg's numerous publications on the topic, although major in defining her unique contributions to the history of the African Diaspora, included only a small percentage of the more than one hundred studio photographs she had collected over the years.<sup>4</sup> They range in date from 19th century black and white studio portraits of formally dressed people to contemporary photographs of wedding couples and were mostly commissioned for display in Haitian homes, inclusion in family albums, or sent to distant family and friends. As a whole, these portraits reveal the sophisticated character of Houlberg's esthetic as a collector.

The manipulated images that were made in the many studios in the vicinity of the Cathedral in downtown Port-au-Prince, were also of great interest to Houlberg (figs.39-40). She collected differ-

40.



40. Anonymous (Casimir Photo Studio, Port-au-Prince) *Portrait Double Printed as to Appear Inside a Ceramic Fish*, 1986. Hand colored gelatin silver print. 3.5 x 5.5 in. Courtesy of Private collection.

41.



ent and distinctive images that included portraits of busts on top of Romanesque pedestals to portraits of babies encased in baby bottles (figs. 41-42). These fantasy-like, manipulated images display the visual innovations that went on in studios whose clientele came from popular neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince such as “Bas Peu de Chose” or “Carrefour Feuilles.”

Although Houlberg’s field notes from Haiti date from 1976, she did not begin research on its photography studios until 1981.<sup>5</sup> In more than five trips to Haiti, while building her studio photography collection, she collected prints of the facades of these establishments that were characterized by hand-painted signs, display samples, and colorfully painted entrances.<sup>6</sup> They tell us a great deal about what attracted Haitian clients to studios, such as those of Ginou Photo, Gamma Photo, and Casimer Photo.<sup>7</sup>

Houlberg’s exceptional portrait collection was put together with great patience and care. She sat inside the studios that were on busy streets next to churches or other places of social convening to watch the photographers pose their clients. Her curiosity led to her meeting Michelle Manuel (b. 1935), a noted local artist, who collected Haitian family albums and sold them through the Maison DeFly, a noted antiques store, located on the Champs de

Mars in the capital. Many of the works in Houlberg’s collection from the Mevs studio were purchased at Maison DeFly.

A key to understanding how Houlberg obtained important and culturally significant objects from Haitian friends was her ability to make people feel comfortable enough to part with their portraits. She had an incredible gift of building meaningful relationships with people.

Houlberg’s insights are also apparent in her many essays about the history of studio photography in Haiti and its interactions with the world. She collected and wrote about tintypes, cartes-de-visite, and cabinet cards that filled 19th century albums belonging to wealthy Haitian families. The cabinet cards in particular are

42.



often inscribed with the names of studios located in Morocco, Algeria, and Paris. The Mevs Photo Studio, established in Port-au-Prince prior to the 1890s, similarly attended to the Haitian elite and featured, as Houlberg notes, backdrops of architectural illusions. The highly regarded Abraham Photo Studio, established in 1922 by André Abraham, under the direction of photographers Jacques Augustin and Roger Françoise (1928-2013), was in operation as late as 1992. The black and white photographs produced by this studio were often described as being more artistic than those they made in color. Houlberg’s interest in this aspect of these photographs led to her to discover important historical details about the history of Haitian studio photography, namely that the char-

acter of the Abraham studio black and white photographs was the result of its photographers using the Parisian made Anastigmat Hermais lens on their cameras. Houlberg’s collection of Haiti’s studio photography also includes works in video that were made as the studios responded to the needs and changing tastes of Haitians strongly linked to the island’s larger diaspora.<sup>8</sup>

New research on the photography of current studios in Haiti continues to advance our knowledge of its complex history, such as of Monsieur Henri and Photo Denis in Port-au-Prince, the Michaela Studio Foto in Cap-Haïtien.<sup>9</sup> Speak with the proprietors of these studios and they will share accounts of changing visual trends in studio photography and how businesses were passed down from father to son. If you ask to look at their archives of photographs, a new world will reveal itself. Yet, we will always be indebted to Houlberg for her pioneering research in this field and its important contribution in the visual history of Haiti.



43.

- 41. Anonymous** *Four Portraits of a Child Dressed for Mardi Gras*, n.d. Inkjet print. 5 x 3.5 in. (each). Courtesy of Private collection  
**42. Anonymous** *Two Busts Superimposed on Podiums with Text “Le moment de réflexion,”* 1986. Inkjet print. 8 x 6 in. Courtesy of Private collection  
**43. Anonymous** *Lying Baby Double Printed to Appear as if Inside a Baby Bottle*, 1986. Hand-colored gelatin silver print. 5.5 x 3.5 in. Courtesy of Private collection.

- Houlberg was an art historian, anthropologist, and Professor Emerita at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, who co-curated ground breaking exhibitions including “The Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou” and “In Extremis: Death and Life in Twenty-First Century Haitian Art” and authored influential essays such as “Water Spirits of Haitian Vodou: Lasiren, Queen of Mermaids,” in *Mama-Wata: Arts for Water Spirits in Africa and the African Atlantic World*.
- MISSING FOOTNOTE.
- Houlberg also authored a short text for a young adult audience. See “Haiti through Haitian Eyes,” *Faces: The Magazine about People* (Peterborough, N.H.: Cobblestone Pub, 1992), 30-31. For an examination of African Diaspora art history, see Krista Thompson, “A Sidelong Glance: The Practice of African Diaspora Art History in the United States,” *Art Journal*, 70, 3 (Fall 2011), 6-31.
- Marilyn Houlberg, “Feed Your Eyes: Nigerian and Haitian Studio Photography,” *Photographic Insight* Volume 1, Issue 2-3 (1988): 8.
- Houlberg, unpublished field notes. Accessed given to the author by the Houlberg family, September 18, 2012, for which I am grateful.
- Houlberg, unpublished field notes. Accessed given to the author by the Houlberg family, September 18, 2012, for which I am grateful.
- Ibid.*
- Other photographs from Houlberg’s collection of Haitian and Nigerian research materials are currently being catalogued under the direction of Amy Staples, Senior Curator of the Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives at the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of African Art. Researchers can send inquiries to the archive at elisofonarchives@si.edu.
- Ibid.*, Houlberg, “Haitian Studio Photography.”
- Thanks to the support of a Northwestern University Center for Interdisciplinary Research in the Arts Award, visits to these studios, among others, were made in September 2012 and May 2013.

## ALAN LOMAX AND HAITI

Dr. Kimberly Green

In 1929, journalist William Seabrook (1884-1945) published *The Magic Island*, a sensationalist account of Haitian cultural practices that he allegedly witnessed.<sup>1</sup> His descriptions of Vodou, a syncretic mix of Catholic and West African religious traditions common in rural communities, captured the American public's imagination and sparked a Vodou craze that permeated popular culture during the 1930s. As Americans consumed images of zombies, ghosts, and black magic through comic books, film, and pulp novels, many others turned their attention to the island, such as anthropologists, archivists, ethnomusicologists, film makers, folklorists, oral historians, political activists, and writers.

During the 1930's, a period in which they were expected to remain subservient, many Francophile black intellectuals began to write about the vast injustices toward the black race in the history of their respective countries and to embrace their racial identities. The United States Occupation of Haiti (1915-34) also intensified the color question in Haiti. While it is important to recognize that color politics were an integral part of Haiti's political scenario long before the arrival of the Marines, the Occupation did exacerbate the problem.

It became more poignant because of the racist policies of the United States Marines, North America's general reputation for ne-

grophobia, and the overall preferential (although still racist) treatment of Haiti's "fairer-colored" elite. Haitian intellectuals, black and mulatto, tried to understand what had led to the humiliation the Occupation imposed on Haitians. How could the government and peoples of Haiti, a nation (at least in principle) founded on the equality of all, regardless of color and class, have failed to the point of being occupied by its powerful northern neighbor.

During the 1930s and 1940s, a rich ethnographic historiography began to develop around the study of African diasporic religions in North America, South America, and the Caribbean. Key African diasporic traditions had set the stage for this period of inquiry by writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Melville Herskovits, George Eaton Simpson, William Bascom, Katherine Dunham, Maya Deren, Roger Bastide (1898-1974), and Alfred Métraux (1902-1963). They created an important historiographical body of publications that addressed Haitian religious, folkloric, ethnomusicological, ritual, and performance traditions, that included images, such as these by Alan Lomax, the American field collector who viewed Haiti as a goldmine of imagery and folksongs.

1. See William B. Seabrook, *L'île magique*: Traduit de l'anglais par Gabriel de Hons, (Paris: Firmin-Didot et CIE, 1929).

44. Film Projector used by Alan Lomax (1915-2002; American). Magnasync Moviola, Model LVR-M. Courtesy of the Green Family Foundation. 0

44.



## VODOU MADE VISIBLE

Donald Cosentino

Vodou/Voodoo. What's in a name? For an ever-burgeoning Haitian urban proletariat and hard bitten peasantry, *Vodou* describes a complex of rites and beliefs regarding the *Lwa* (spirits, divinities) with whom they constantly interact. For others, foreigners and Haitians alike (these divisions are class-based as well as racial), Voodoo is something else: a "primitive" religion which does double duty as the most pervasive and potent metaphor for Haitian uniqueness: a thing simultaneously dangerous and demented, satanic and sexy.

As Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) famously observed, "It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see."<sup>1</sup> For most of a century, photographers, mainly foreign, have been doing the looking—if not the seeing. Arguably, their images have sustained and sometimes created the visual metaphors that continually re-script Vodou into Voodoo. But visual metaphors are not constant; they mutate with the *zeitgeist*.

Photography and anthropology came into being at roughly the same time in the mid-19th century, so it is not surprising that the earliest and most persistent photographs of Vodou are ethnographic, forming a visual basis for the historical study of the reli-

gion. Consider Pierre Verger's (1902-1996), photograph of an *oungan* (fig. 46). Verger, a.k.a. Fatumbi was a Franco-Brazilian photographer, ethnographer, and *babalawo* (Yoruba priest of Ifa) who devoted most of his life to documenting religions of the Black Atlantic. In this portrait, an *oungan* calmly faces his altar, ready to summon the *lwa* with bell in hand. If we wish to know what a Vodou priest and his altar looked like in 1948, Verger's photography provides ample evidence.

Now juxtapose Verger's image to the one that Canadian photographer Frank Polyak (b. 1961) shot during *Fet Gede* ceremonies in 2011 (fig. 47). In this portrait, a post-modern *oungan* is mounted by Gede, *Lwa* of the dead. Balancing skulls on either side of his body, and sporting the god's signature sunglasses, the priest looks as if he's awaiting a casting call from "Game of Thrones." What was interior in Verger's photo is now made manifest in the Port-au-Prince cemetery: Gede has achieved his apotheosis. Comparing these photos makes it apparent that the wildest and craziest of gods is now in charge of postmillennial Haiti.

Polyak's photo also reminds us that contacting the dead remains a central concern for *Vodouisants*, as it was in the 19th cen-

45. Frank Polyak (b. 1961; American) *Gede Wearing his Customary Sunglasses*, 2011. Color print. 20 x 24 in. Courtesy of Frank Polyak.

46.



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tury, when photography as a medium and Spiritism as a pseudoscientific technology explored techniques for manifesting the dead. Photographers discovered that double exposures or tricks of timing could result in the emergence of phantasmagoric images. Certain psychics claimed that such images were manifestations of a fluid substance called *ectoplasm*, from which nonmaterial beings or objects might

take form and be detected through the use of camera lenses.

Such photography was all the rage in Spiritist circles well into the 20th century, as is evident in photos shot by Gloria Rudolph during the 1970s that purport to reveal energy waves unleashed during Vodou ceremonies (fig. 48). Published in *Voudoun Fire*, Rudolph's light-streaked photo left at least one Amazon online critic unconvinced: "Junk like this makes me doubt the veracity of everything these authors have produced...the so-called photos are obviously faked."<sup>2</sup>

While few would now accept the veracity of Spiritist images, techniques for distorting images to create visual metaphors are sometimes used to great effect by contemporary photographers. Consider Maggie Steber's (b. 1950s) image of multiple dancers during Carnival festivities at the *ounfo* (temple) of Vodou priest and artist Silva Joseph.<sup>3</sup> Used to illustrate an essay by Karen McCarthy Brown, Steber's blurred but shimmering photograph of twirling transvestites is captioned "Vodou emphasizes freeing and energizing the body rather than disciplining it" (fig. 49).

Italian-Haitian artist Roberto Stephenson (b. 1964) uses digital

photography to similar effect, transforming the visage of his subject to suggest an altered state of consciousness (fig. 50). Although her green color is out of nature's palette, Anne-Louise appears neither creepy nor menacing. She looks directly at the camera, as self-assured in her unique identity as any of those deviant faces in paintings by Haitian artist Mario Benjamin (b. 1964).

Trying to come to terms with Vodou's "disquieting strangeness," other photographers have engaged various strategies to render visible the ineffable mysteries of spirit possession. Consider the surreal portrait of an *oungan* by Rex Hardy (1915-2001) for one of Zora Neale Hurston's publications (fig. 21).<sup>4</sup>

This *oungan* stands as static as the portrait of a Renaissance prince or cardinal. His eyes are hooded, enraptured perhaps by some closed-circuit apparition of his *met tet* (master divinity). Robert Farris Thompson describes a similar ocular distortion in Yoruba sculptures, calling their often-bulging orbs "possession eyes."<sup>5</sup> Note, however, that here those cool eyes are juxtaposed to the hilt of a sword sacred to Ogou, intense generalissimo of the Vodou pantheon. The juxtaposition of eyes and sword reminds the viewer that everything in Vodou is both Rada *and* Petwo, cool *and* hot.

Paris-born Martinican photographer David Damoison (b. 1963) also focuses on the eyes of a *manbo* (Vodou priestess) at a moment of truth: the sacrifice of a bull to feed Ogou (fig. 51). Unlike in Hurston's portrait, here we observe the eye-popping context of the ritual: all participants in the ceremony face the bull and the photographer, while the arm of an unseen toreador thrusts his knife forward. Still, amidst all this liturgical drama, it is the *manbo's* "possession eyes" that command our attention.

In a more ambiguous scenario, Paris/New York/Port-au-Prince

photographer and photojournalist, Chantal Regnault (b. 1945) records the trance-possession of a *manbo* and her *ounsi* during a water festival (fig. 52). The praying *manbo* centers the image, with eyes rolled back to some interior vision and fingers locked in a Vodou mudra. But others are not paying attention to her or her acolytes. Directly in back of them a man is stretched out on a tree limb, oblivious to the swooning maenads. The scene recalls W. H. Auden's description of a parallel indifference to Pieter Breughel the Younger's (1564-1636) painting, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* (1590-95).

...even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course  
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and  
the torturer's horse  
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.<sup>6</sup>

Toward the end of the last century, dominant metaphors about Haiti shifted. Reflecting the (ephemeral) hopes generated by the collapse of the Duvalier dictatorship (1957-86) and the election in 1990 of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide (b. 1951), photographic images became more celebratory. Ethnography no longer pretended objectivity. Cultural anthropologist James Clifford defined its new style as ethnographic surrealism: "Ethnography combined with surrealism can no longer be seen as empirical.... [It] emerges as the theory and practice of juxtaposition."<sup>7</sup> Photographer Diane Arbus (1923-1971) brought a similar sensibility to the lower depths of Manhattan and New Jersey, photographing her flamboyant others not as freaks but as aristocrats.<sup>8</sup>

45. Pierre Verger (1902-1996; French) *Vodou, Port-au-Prince, Haiti*, 1948. Digital image. Courtesy of Fundação Pierre Verger  
47. Gloria Rudolph (unknown; American) *Untitled*, n. d. Digital image. Courtesy, Melita Denning and Osborne Phillips  
48. Maggie Steber (b. 1950s; American) *Carnival Dancers at Silva Joseph's Peristyle*, 1987. Color inkjet print. 16 x 20 in. Courtesy of Maggie Steber.

47.



48.



*There's a quality of legend about freaks. Like a person in a fairy tale who stops you and demands that you answer a riddle. Most people go through life dreading they'll have a traumatic experience. Freaks were born with their trauma. They've already passed their test in life. They're the aristocrats.*<sup>8</sup>

The effects of the works of Arbus and Clifford are clearly apparent in the photographs of New York artist Phyllis Galembo (b. 1952), who began her work in Benin and Bahia but turned to Haiti as a project photographer for the celebrated traveling exhibition *The Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou* (fig. 53).<sup>9</sup>

In Galembo's portrait, *Manbo Esperancia*, Federic sits in her bedroom (a favorite Arbus *mise-en-scène*), dressed in red, the color of Ezili, *Lwa* of love. She is surrounded by the glittery little luxuries that Ezili craves. Elsewhere, staring serenely at the camera, Madame Federic looks every bit as poised as any aristocrat in Richard Avedon's (1923-2004) photographs. To appreciate how exceptional this moment of celebration was, compare Galembo's *fin-de-siècle* portrait to the post-apocalyptic photograph of

Madame Fifi shot by English photographer and videographer Leah Gordon (b. 1959; fig. 54). If you are looking for ethnographic surrealism, Madame Fifi delivers.<sup>10</sup>

It is one year past the great earthquake of 2010, the worst natural disaster in Haitian history, and the grotesque is now for real. Madame Fifi is possessed by Gede, sporting his telltale sunglasses, with a human skull as her chapeau. Fifi/Gede stares at us through unseeing eyes, leaning against the ruins of her Vodou temple on the Grand Rue. In this portrait we confront a female Gede as fearsome as Kali, as inexplicable as the Sphinx. Paraphrasing Clifford, we might say: shocking juxtapositions of cultural elements are the new norm.

As coda to this too-brief survey of Vodou-inspired photography, consider the photo by Marilyn Houlberg (1939-2012), the late doyenne of Vodou arts, which I have entitled *The Morning After* (fig 55). We are in an *ounfo* (temple), with a ritual drum standing in the corner and an enormous heart of Ezili painted on the wall. Under her divine heart a man lies collapsed on a flowery quilt. Next to him sits a woman, as weary and dejected as any lover who ever sang the blues. As the Haitian proverb goes, *Aprè bal tanbou lou* (After the dance the drum is heavy). The photo says so much about intimacy, between humans and gods, between men and women, between the photographer and her subjects. But so much is left unsaid. So much to see; so little to know. Perhaps that's what Arbus meant when she said, "Lately I've been struck

with how I really love what you can't see in a photograph. An actual physical darkness. And it's very thrilling to see darkness again."<sup>11</sup>

1. See Henry David Thoreau, *The Journal of Henry David Thoreau* (New York: New INCOMPLETE
2. See Melita Denning and Osborne Phillips, *Voudoun Fire: The Living Reality of Mystical Religion*, photography by Gloria Rudolph (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1979), plate 12, n.p. The review was posted by "Lost in Space" October 2, 2007, see Amazon on-line reviews of *Voudoun Fire*, last accessed June 13, 2015, where a reviewer offered a more technical explanation for the ectoplasm effect: "[Rudolph's images] are perfect examples of slow shutter speeds and hand movement. The majority of light sources in the photo show a streak from a candle or fire...when the non-light sources are relatively in focus."
3. Karen McCarthy Brown, "Serving the Spirits: The Ritual Economy of Haitian Vodou," in *The Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou*, ed Donald Cosentino (Los Angeles, The Fowler Museum, 1995), 217.
4. See Zora Neale Hurston, *Voodoo [sic] Gods* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1938), later published as *Tell My Horse*.
5. See Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Random House), 9.
6. See W. H. Auden, "Musée des Beaux Arts," first published in *Another Time* (New York: Random House), 1940.
7. See James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 147.
8. See Diane Arbus, *A Monograph* (Millerton NY: Aperture Foundation, 1972), 3.
9. This traveling exhibition curated by Donald Cosentino and Marilyn Houlberg, opened at the UCLA Fowler Museum (1995) and closed at the American Museum of Natural History (1999).
10. A different portrait of Madame Fifi by Frank Polyak is on the cover of the catalogue for the the Fowler Museum exhibition *In Extremis: Death and Life in Twenty-First Century Haitian Art (2012-2014)*. Madame Fifi has thus become an unofficial poster girl for the Haitian earthquake-apocalypse.
11. See Diane Arbus, *Ibid*, 9.

**49. Roberto Stephenson (b. 1964; Italian)** *Anne Louise*, 2004. Color print. 9 ft. 10 in. x 18 ft. 20 in. Courtesy of Robert Stephenson.

**50. David Damoison (1963; Martinican)** *Vodou Voyage: Martissant*, n.d. Gelatin silver print. 11.75 x 19.5 in. Courtesy of David Damoison.

**51. Chantal Regnault (b. 1945; French)** *Trance at LAKOU SOUKRI*, c. 1999. Gelatin silver print. 16 x 20 in. Courtesy, Collection of the artist

**52. Chantal Regnault (b. 1945; French)** *Manbo Esperancia Federic Dressed as Ezili in her Bedroom Shrine Dressing for Ezili, Jacmel, Haiti*, 1993. Ifochrome. 30 x 30 in.

Courtesy of Phyllis Galembo and Stephen Kasher Gallery, New York

**53. Chantal Regnault (b. 1945; French)** *Madame FiFi Possessed by Gede*, 2010. C-type print. 39.37 x 39.37 in. Courtesy of the artist.

**54. Marilyn Houlberg (1939-2012; American)** *Morning After Twin Ceremony on Epiphany, Carrefour, Pt-au-Prince*, January 6, 1982. Color print. 8 x 10 in. Courtesy of Private collection.

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## HAITIAN VODOU IN A FRACTURED SOCIETY FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Margaret Mitchell Armand

Photography plays an essential role in preserving cultures and memorializing and recording historically significant functions, activities, or events. The photographs in this exhibition tell stories of the Haitian people and their culture and serve as examples of the inviolability of photography archives. Archival photographs not only preserve the visual memories of the communities photographed, but also let us review, question, and assign new meaning to these past moments and the memories they hold, especially those portraying families, people, politics, colonization and moments of struggle or triumph. The stories they tell increase our understanding of the genesis and resolution of conflicts among groups, societies, and nations.

Jessica Senehi has pointed out: "Stories explain the birth of nations through narratives that may intensify social cleavages when they privilege some while silencing others; when they generate or reproduce prejudicial and enemy images of other groups; and when they mask inequalities and injustice."<sup>1</sup> Stories told from the perspective of conquerors always contain a grain of truth. Yet, it is camouflaged by layers of self-fabricated fables that amplify the prowess of the protagonists.

The story of the United States Occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) has been told by photographers who experienced it as the subjects

of the occupying forces (Within) as well as by foreign photographers (Without). Such stories, although often differing from one another in dramatic ways, also always mirror one another. They tell the story of the identity crisis that has and continues to plague Haitian society, which contributes to the difficulties Haitians face in order to survive in occupied Haiti. An identity crisis rooted in the colonial mental and structural violence that began in 1492, when Christopher Columbus (1450-1536) arrived in Haiti to the inhumane trafficking of African people to slavery there, and the miscegenation that developed as a result of the children of enslaved African women and their colonial torturers, surfaced as a fracturing of society.

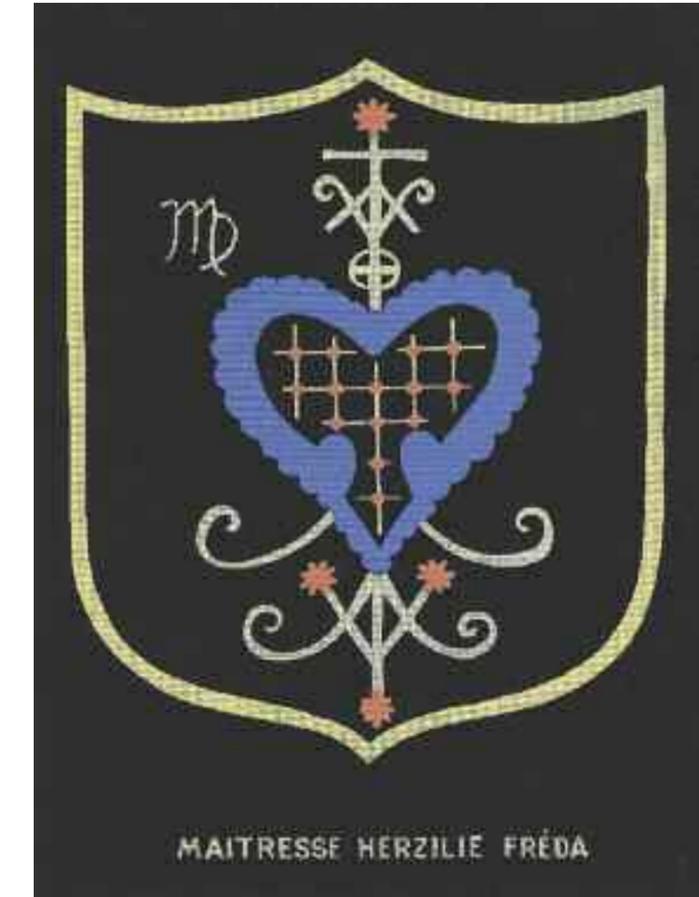
A number of Haitian historians of African and Afro-Europeans ancestry in search of their own identity were instrumental in contributing to understandings of Haitian history. Although their work is highly important, it is essential to point out that these individuals received a European or American education. Thus, their perspectives were colored by colonialized lenses that led to their downgrading and or completely ignoring the contributions made by their African ancestors. However, many truths are revealed in these works.

The ethnographic research of Haitian authors such as the de-

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tailed field notes of Odette Mennesson Rigaud's on Vodou ceremonies are of immense importance as are Philippe Sterlin's *Vodou Series I, II*, Alfred Métraux's and Milo Rigaud's ethnological fieldwork in North Haiti that have elucidated over 400 Haitian Vodou Vèvès designs, the beautiful line drawings that described doorways to spiritual elements (figs. 56-59).<sup>2</sup> This work emerged as a

result of the inquisition against Vodouists, which led to massacre and destruction, the launching of their Peristyle during the Occupation, as well as members of the Catholic Church trying to eliminate Haitian religious traditions by replacing them with their own. Many Haitian intellectuals felt humiliated by how they were treated during the Occupation because the Marines made no distinctions between the origins of African, Haitian masses, and the Mulattoes and understood Haitian intellectuals in terms of their African rather than their French colonial heritage and thus white backgrounds.

Contemporary authors from various countries and disciplines have written about the Haitian Vodou religious tradition. Maya Deren accomplished "the feat of delineating Haitian Vodou as an experienced and comprehensive initiation into the mysteries of man's harmony within himself and with the cosmic process."<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Karen McCarthy Brown has provided a structural analysis of Haitian Vodou Vèvès.<sup>4</sup> Lorimer Denis and Dr. François Duvalier's research on Haiti's African roots and that of Louis Maximilien, Milo Marcelin, and Harold Courlander explored Haitian Vodou Lakou and wrote extensively about their traditional and spiritual aspects.<sup>5</sup> Jean Fouchard chronicled the lives of the fugitive slaves and Haiti's slave uprising, while Michel Laguerre's study revealed new information about the origin of the Haitians' lifestyle in their relationship to the Lakou of Bel Air and political events.<sup>6</sup> Serge Larose researched the meaning of Africa in Haitian Vodou, and Hougan Gerdès Fleurant provided new knowledge about Haitian Vodou musicology.<sup>7</sup> Lilas Desquiron delved into the African roots of Haitian Vodou, and Leslie Desmangles investigated the relationship between Vodou and Catholicism.<sup>8</sup> Deita studied the mythological characteristic of the Lwas (spirits).<sup>9</sup> Additionally, Claudine Michel addressed educational practices established in Haitian Vodou.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, Elizabeth McAlister delved deeply into the Haitian Vodou tradition and published her research on Rara.<sup>11</sup> Regi-

58.



nald Crosley analyzed Haitian Vodou principles and energetic forces using a dramatically new, scientific method, and the work of Marie-José Saint-Lot greatly enhanced understanding of the practical and sacred aspects of Haitian Vodou sèvis (ceremonies).<sup>12</sup> Rachel Beauvoir and Didier Dominique's research on Manbos and Hougans in rural areas elucidates the origins of Haitians' view of their origin

from Within.<sup>13</sup> In combination, these authors shed a great deal of new light on the crucial relationships between Vodou and Haitian society. The work of Hougan Patrick Bellegarde-Smith has aligned the African tradition of the new world with that in South America, such as Candomblé.<sup>14</sup> Ati Max Beauvoir published the Haitian Vodou prayers and hundreds of Vodou songs.<sup>15</sup> Margaret Mitchell Armand elucidated the history of mental and structural violence on the Haitian people and their struggle for empowerment and for the recognition of their identity and the traditional culture of Haitian Vodou.<sup>16</sup> This research is a literary journey that reveals

many characteristics of Haitian Vodou traditional practices that had been previously outlawed and until now belittled by Western societies.

Some images in this exhibition relate to the falsification of ideas about Haiti that emerged during the Occupation, which led to the slaughter of many Haitian Vodouists. According to Hans Schmidt, "The immediate occasion for the United States intervention was the overthrow of Haitian President Vilbrun Guillaume Sam (1858-1915), who was in power from March 4 to July 27, 1915. Declarations issued by the State Department that intervention was undertaken for humanitarian reasons to prevent bloodshed were spurious and misleading."<sup>17</sup> Indeed, photographs taken during this period demonstrate that the reasons given by the United States were also "spurious and misleading." The Occupation was, in part, a conflict between the United States and France over who owned the proceeds of Haiti's indemnity debt or loan. The only United States objectives in occupying Haiti were to confiscate the gold bars housed in Haiti's National Treasury and to get to Haiti's mineral resources.

Many photographs taken of the François Duvalier or "Papa Doc" (1907-1971), President of Haiti from (1957-71), convey various meanings assigned to them by Haitians and foreigners alike. Because Duvalier often dressed in a black suit and top hat, the Haitian masses associated him with Bawon Samdi, a Haitian

59.



Vodou Lwa (spirit or god), and referred to as the guardian of the cemetery (fig. 60). The Haitian masses named him Papa Doc because of his national and personal campaigns to cure the illness, pian (maws), which primarily plagued Haitians living in rural areas. Prior to his presidency, Duvalier tried to eradicate this illness and became well acquainted with the Haitian people living in the countryside and their Haitian Vodou traditional way of life, which the Haitian elite rejected openly. Duvalier witnessed and participated in many sèvis, which initiated his insatiable thirst for identity, resulting in the publication of his research, *Oeuvres Essentielles*.<sup>18</sup> In 1941, he was instrumental in a movement that spearheaded the foundation of the Bureau National D'Ethnologie, a National Institute for Culture and Arts.

While the Haitian masses embraced Duvalier, the elite feared him with many believing that he possessed unusual spiritual powers, thus validating for them the atrocities carried out during the Duvalier administration. Photography recorded his long-lived regime to which many of the images in this exhibition attest.

1. Jessica Senehi, "Storytelling and Peacebuilding," in *Handbook in Conflict Analysis and Resolution*, ed. Dennis Sandole, Sean Byrne, Ingrid Sandole-Staroste, and Jessica Senehi (London: Routledge, 2008), 203.
2. See Odette Mennesson-Rigaud, «Étude sur les Cultes Marasa en Haiti», *Zaire* (6, 1952), 597-621; Philippe Sterlin, *Vodou Series I, Serie II* (Port-au-Prince, Haiti: Editions Philippe Sterlin, 1952); Alfred Métraux, *Le Vodou Haitien* (Paris, France: Editions Gallimard, 1958; and Milo Rigaud, *Secrets of Voodoo* (New York: Arco, 1953).
3. See Maya Deren, *The Divine Horsemen - The Living Gods of Haiti* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1953).

4. Karen McCarthy Brown, "The Vèvè of Haitian Vodou: A Structural Analysis of Visual Imagery" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1975).
5. Lorimer Denis, "Une Cérémonie du Culte Pethro," *Les Griots* (2, no. 2, 1938), 156-159; François Duvalier, *Oeuvres Essentielles, Vols. I and II* (Port-au-Prince, Haiti: Bibliothèque National D'Haiti, 1957); Louis Maximilien, *Le Vodou Haïtien Rite Rada Canzo* (Haiti: Imprimerie Deschamps, 1945); Milo Marcelin, *Mythologie Vodou: Rite Arada I and Rite Arada II* (Pétion-Ville, Haïti: Éditions Canapé Vert, 1950); Harold Courlander, *The Drum and the Hoe - The Life and Lore of the Haitian People* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960).
6. See Jean Fouchar, *Les Marrons de la Liberté* (Paris: Éditions de L'École, 1972); Michel Laguerre, *Voodoo Heritage* (London: Sage Library of Social Research, 1980).
7. Serge Larose, *The Meaning of Africa in Haitian Vodou* (London: Academic Press, 1977), 85-116; Gerdès Fleurant, *The Ethnomusicology of Yanvalou: A Study of the Rada Rite of Hiti* (Ph.D. Diss., Tufts University 1987).
8. Lilas Desquiron, *Les Racines du Vodou*. Port-au-Prince (Haïti: Imprimerie Henry Deschamps, 1960); Leslie Desmangles, *The Faces of the Gods: Vodou and Roman Catholicism in Haiti*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).
9. *Deita, La Légende des Loa du Vodou Haïtien* (Port-au-Prince, Haïti: Bibliothèque National D'Haïti, 1993).
10. Claudine Michel, *Aspects Éducatifs et Moraux du Vaudou Haïtien* (Port-au-Prince, Haïti: Imprimerie Le Natal, 1995).
11. Elizabeth McAlister, *Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haïti and the Diaspora* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).
12. See Reginald Crosley, the *Vodou Quantum Leap* (St Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publishers, 2000); Marie José Saint-Lot, *Vodou a Sacred Theater, the African Heritage in Haiti* (Fort-Lauderdale, FL: Educavision Press, 2003).
13. See Rachel Beauvoir-Dominique and Didier Dominique, *SAVALOU É* (Canada: Editions du CIDHICA/Bibliothèque National du Canada, 2003).
14. See Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, *Fragment of Bones - Neo African Religions in a New World* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005).
15. See Ati Max Beauvoir, *Priyè Ginen* (Fort-Lauderdale, FL: Caribbean Studies Press, 2006) and *Le Grand Recueil Sacré or Répertoire des Chansons du Vodou Haïtien* (Port-au-Prince: Editions Presse National D'Haiti, 2008).
16. Margaret Mitchell Armand, *Healing in the Homeland - Haitian Vodou Tradition* (Laham, DC: Lexington Books, 2013).
17. Hans Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 65.
18. François Duvalier, *Oeuvres Essentielles, Vols. I and II* (Port-au-Prince, Haïti : Bibliothèque Nationale d'Haïti, 1957).

59. Anonymous François Duvalier Inauguration, 1957. Gelatin silver print. 10 x 8 in. Courtesy of CIDHICA COLLECTION, Montreal Canada.

## HOW TWO NEWSPAPERS IN DADE AND BROWARD COUNTIES COVER HAITI

Maggie Steber

Historically Haitians have been depicted in literature as exotic (and in the international press), as represented in the books *The Magic Island* (1929) by United States author William Seabrook and *Voodoo [sic] Fire in Haiti* (1932) by Austrian Richard Loederer. Both presented a picture of Haiti in which exoticism reigned and maddened men and women danced their dark Saturnalia to the wild drums at the altar of sacrifice.

More recently, plagued by political corruption, violence, four massive hurricanes, and an earthquake of destructive measure, Haiti is considered a nearly failed nation in a constant state of emergency. Parachuting in when disaster strikes, the world press perpetuates this image, figuratively and literally. By reporting on the same issues repeatedly, foreign media cement the image of Haiti as hopeless. While dramatic events should be covered, they do not represent the whole story of Haiti, as Haitians have lamented for decades.

To be fair, the public has to understand how today's newspapers work. Since the arrival of the Internet, advertising revenues have dropped, shrinking budgets for everything from staff to benefits, while paper costs continue to increase and the Internet attracts younger readership as their main source of news. Layoffs in the media are everyday news these days. On top of that, Haiti is

not an easy place to work for the media. It is riddled with rumors and diverse points of view and keeping up with the politics is a full-time job. Covering Haiti is a constant Shakespearean epic that bewilders and confuses journalists, who want quick and easy yes-or-no answers to preconceived notions already reported.

Florida has the largest number of people of Haitian heritage in the United States, according to a 2010 Census Bureau report, and their numbers have continued to grow since then. In South Florida, because of the large Haitian population, *The Miami Herald* in Dade County and the *Sun-Sentinel* in Broward County cover Haiti as a regular beat. Five of their photographers who have covered Haiti were interviewed for the views recorded here about the commitment of their newspapers to cover Haiti.

Born in Haiti in 1963, *Miami Herald* photographer Carl Juste (b. 1963) moved with his family to Miami from New York in 1973 in a caravan of cars he called a Haitian wagon train. His father coined the phrase "Little Haiti" and was called Père Juste, as he represented a primary force for the education of undocumented Haitian children. Juste has covered everything from natural disasters to bullet-to-ballot politics in Haiti for twenty-five years, traveling to the island at least 100 times in stretches of three days to four months (figs. 62-63).

60. Maggie Steber (b. 1950s; American) *Worshipping Erzuli and St. Jacques, Vodou Temple, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 1987*. Color Inkjet print from digital file. 24 x 20 in. Courtesy of Maggie Steber.

60.



As a Haitian American, Juste's view of Haiti is an intimate one.

*I don't see Haiti as spot news. My dad left me with a sense of justice and I am not neutral. I believe with our photographs we give Haitians a megaphone to amplify their voice. We are not victims but VICTORS.*

*I see Haiti in the context of the poem EVICTUS (William Ernest Henley). No matter the things you suffer, placing your feet on Haitian soil grounds you.*

*But Haiti is also a mistress that tempts your total perception of senses. You are bombarded by stimuli that must be processed and engaged with.*

When asked if the media covers Haiti well, his response is a resounding no!

*They tell Haitians' stories as the man from the saddle. For example, the United Nations comes to establish peace. An external body, which comes to save us also comes to destroy—it's a contradiction. The winner gets to record the history, the loser only gets to read it. Journalists think they speak for a people they know nothing about. Coverage is dictated in news meetings with people watching events through different filters. What bleeds, leads. Gestures of humanity found in daily life are diminished. The media and the world see Haiti when it's dirty, when mud is rushing into the homes and bodies lie everywhere. We don't cover Cuba that way! The Miami Herald publishes front page stories on Cuba daily via the political rumor mill. Journalists covering Haiti want easy stories and*

*stick to the narrative of the poor. This sucks our self-esteem. Our export was freedom, the greatest gift Haiti gave to the world, and she has paid the tax on that gift since then. It is a poverty tax. No one tells that story.*

His coworker at the *Miami Herald*, videographer Jose Iglesias, has covered Haiti since the 2010 earthquake and was the cameraman for *Nou Bouke*, the *Miami Herald's* award-winning documentary film that has aired on PBS and in Dade and Broward county, *Nou Bouke*.

*The exec editor, Anders Gyllenhaal, committed to Haiti by producing Nou Bouke after the earthquake. It took us over a year.*

*There was lots of newsroom chatter that Haiti is covered too much, especially during staff layoffs. Nou Bouke didn't really represent all of Haiti or any of the things that have survived or moved forward since the quake. People here [in South Florida] don't listen anyway, neither the government nor the public.*

*With Nou Bouke, we tried to bring something new to the conversation, but we failed. We tried to see where the country was going, as if to say we brought a new perspective, but we fell short. Nou Bouke showed a moment in history, but in one hour there's only so much you can do. I became discouraged by what goes on there. And here. I thought it was a piece that would make people look one more time and put things into perspective.*

Iglesias is also critical of the *Miami Herald's* coverage of Haiti since the film's release.

*The Herald has no broad brushstroke of coverage on Haiti. Instead we only see a long struggle concentrating on corruption, poverty, hopelessness, and this overtone that no matter what is done, things won't change.*

*From that we draw conclusions and influence what readers know. Haitians know their country to be more than what headlines report. The Miami Herald's coverage is myopic. We rarely see items that report positively. We do some good stories, but many are written from the assumption that the public knows a lot about Haiti. But we don't give them context to understand. We need to teach Haitian journalists how to tell their country's story. It shouldn't always be a foreign voice telling it.*

*Miami Herald* photographer Patrick Farrell (b. 1959) has covered Haiti for twenty-five years, going to the island about 30 times (figs. 64-65). His intimate and heartbreaking coverage of the four hurricanes in a row that struck Haiti in 2008 received a Pulitzer Prize.

*The hurricanes had just struck. We drove to St. Marc and found incredible destruction and death. It was overwhelming and everywhere. I had never witnessed death as I did there. I walked up to a crowd and saw 12 dead babies on the ground. When parents began to discover their babies, a man grabbed*

*my arm and asked me to take a photo as he held up the lifeless body of his daughter. Those images are seared into my brain. These are not my images, they belong to the people I photograph and I want viewers to have empathy.*

*Community leaders in Little Haiti, sensitive to the portrayal of Haitians, were pleased with the hurricane coverage and felt it showed the universal humanity in Haiti. They notice what the paper does and generally think it's good, but many Haitians don't read the Herald because it's in English and they don't read English or they don't think there are stories there about them. The intentions to do a good job are there but reporters' stories go through filters of editors with other agendas, including the feeling that there is too much Haiti coverage by the Herald. Haiti overkill is a newsroom topic that we go back and forth about. As budgets shrink, the focus will be even tighter.*

Farrell's experiences with other foreign photographers working in Haiti have been very negative, especially with photographers who go to build portfolios when tragedy strikes.

*These are usually people who come with preconceived notions and re-shoot images they have seen in a book or magazine or newspaper. They make images for themselves. Haitians have to deal with that, photographers sticking cameras in their faces just to build a portfolio! Haitians are tired of being photographed and filmed because they will be going*

62.



64.



61.



63.



*through these tragedies for another 30 years or more. They have heard the false promises of photographers that photos will help change their lives. Our photographs don't change anything.*

*Sun Sentinel* photographer Michael Laughlin (b. 1972) may have the most poignant story (figs. 68-69). As a staff photographer for the *Sun Sentinel* since 1998, he has been on assignment in Haiti six times. But he has traveled on his own 40 times. In 2004 Laughlin was hit with AK47 gunfire during a demonstration that turned violent.

*I was covering the 2004 exit of President Aristide. I stepped out from behind a building and was hit by three bullets fired from an AK-47. A Haitian man grabbed my arm and pulled me to safety. We hid in his house for nearly an hour as the bandits shot at the house. We escaped with the help of the Red Cross.*

Three months after recovering from his wounds, Laughlin returned to Haiti to thank the people who saved his life and to work on a first-person story of the visit.

*The reporter and I arrived in Gonaïves and met Nathalie, a 15 year-old girl who was shot in the face by drunken police officers. The 12-gauge pellets ripped through her eyes and left her blind. She was so beautiful, so innocent. The experience was tragic. The reporter, Alva, shed tears as Nathalie sang a cap-*

*ella for us.*

Laughlin brought Natalie to South Florida five months later, along with François Joseph, the man who also was shot and had pulled him to safety to have his bullet removed. Nathalie underwent two surgeries that stabilized her eyes, but she remained blind.

*Six months after her surgery, I invited Nathalie to live at my house. Today, Nathalie is 26, and a citizen of the United States. My wife and I legally adopted her a few years back. François and his son Marc also live with us.*

In the 11 years since he was shot, Laughlin has returned many times to help friends. He opened an orphanage in Gonaïves and hired Nathalie's brother to direct the day-to-day operations.

*Nathalie's family is now my family. When I travel, I sleep at the orphanages. I eat off the street. I walk to the market. I shower from a bucket. I realize that I am only pretending to be like the Haitian people who I know and love, but I do think, because of my Haitian family, I have a better understanding of Haitians than most foreign journalists and photographers.*

*I love Haiti. It is where I feel absolutely alive. Life is hard there, but people make the best of what they have. Haitians seem to value the more important things in life. Family is everything. Nothing is*

**61. Carl Juste (b. 1963; Haitian-American)** *Flag Fans*, January 1, 2004. Giclée print. 20 x 24 in. Courtesy of Carl Juste/Miami Herald Staff.

**62. Carl Juste (b. 1963; Haitian-American)** *Sunday Best, Pt-de Paix*, 1999. Gelatin silver print. 16 x 20 in. Courtesy of Carl Juste/Miami Herald Staff.

**63. Patrick Farrell (b. 1959; American)** *After the Hurricanes, Gonaïves*, 2008. Digital image. Courtesy of Patrick Farrell/Miami Herald Staff.

**64. Patrick Farrell (b. 1959; American)** *A Father Says Goodbye, after Hurricanes Flooded Haiti*, 2008. Digital image. Courtesy of Patrick Farrell/Miami Herald Staff.

wasted. Education is important.

*Working in Haiti was life-changing for me, not only because I was shot there but also because it revealed to me the important realities that are rarely covered by the international media.*

Photographer Mike Stocker (b. 1964) has worked at the *Sun Sentinel* for 16 years, producing long-term projects on issues affecting Haiti. He has traveled there dozens of times for stories that dealt with politics and elections, immigration issues, the environment, and AIDS (figs, 68-69).

*Unfortunately, our newspaper, like many newspapers and media outlets, no longer travels for foreign stories due to budget constraints. When we were traveling to cover Haiti, I think we did so in a very accurate and in-depth manner.*

*In 2001 we published a project that dealt with the AIDS epidemic in the Caribbean in a 24-page special section that focused on Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, and predominantly Haiti.*

*In 2003 we did an in-depth project entitled, "The Eroding Nation," a 32-page special section with extensive online presentation dealing with environmental issues, specifically deforestation.*

*Our newspaper dedicated prominent exposure on the front pages with coverage in February and March 2004 during the political unrest and ouster of Presi-*

*dent Jean-Bertrand Aristide.*

*The last project that I worked on in Haiti, in 2006, was a follow-up to my first project. Set in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and South Florida, we looked at children orphaned by or directly affected by the AIDS epidemic. Entitled "AIDS Orphans," it was a 28-page special section with extensive online presentations. As a result of this story, a local synagogue and church were inspired and joined forces to create and operate an orphanage in Haiti for children with AIDS that is still operational and helping children today. I like to believe that our stories did what they were supposed to do.*

But Stocker reports that the special sections resulted in mixed reactions from the Broward County community.

*In the case of the orphans, our readers saw a need, and directly fulfilled part of that need. Our projects culminated with public forums at the paper, where people directly expressed their feelings. A number of people from the Haitian community were not happy with our environmental project, and wanted to see the beautiful parts of Haiti. When the 2010 earthquake struck, our newspaper had just about stopped covering foreign news. We did send a reporter and photographer to Haiti for five days. Though I do think Haitians get a fair shake in the media in general, I have also been frustrated by the lack of coverage of Haiti.*

**65. Michael Laughlin (b. 1966; American)** *Nathalie Jean Portrait, Gonaives, Haiti, 2004.* (Nathalie was blinded when police shot her in the face. Artist's family adopted her). Digital C Print. 16 x 20 in. Courtesy of Michael Laughlin/Sun-Sentinel Staff.

**66. Michael Laughlin (b. 1966; American)** *Woman in Doorway, 1991.* Gelatin silver print. 8 x 10 in. Courtesy of Michael Laughlin/Sun-Sentinel Staff.

**67. Mike Stocker (b. 1964; American)** *Eroding Nation, Girl by Water, Port-au-Prince, 2003.* Digital image. Courtesy of Mike Stocker/Sun-Sentinel Staff.

**68. Mike Stocker (b. 1964; American)** *Eroding Nation, Haiti's Deforestation, Kenscoff, 2003.* Digital image. Courtesy of Mike Stocker/Sun-Sentinel Staff.

66.



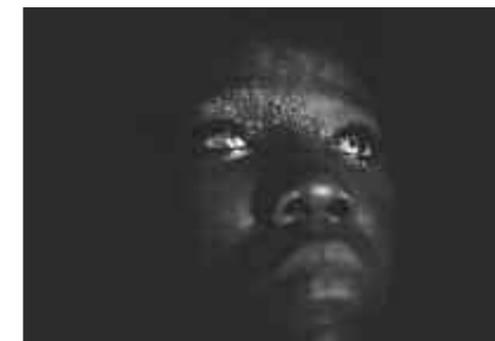
67.



68.



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## HAITI THROUGH A CONTEMPORARY LENS

Alfredo Rivera

Comparing the camera to a gun, Susan Sontag writes in *On Photography*: “The camera makes reality atomic, manageable, and opaque. It is a view of the world which denies interconnectedness, [and] continuity.... [Photographs] are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculations, and fantasy.”<sup>1</sup>

Photography, as an artistic and documentary medium, presents a fragmented allusion to reality, one that, as Sontag later elaborates, influences the way images inform our world. Their various formats and means of dispersion allow the atomic and opaque to explode beyond the photograph’s flat surface. Artists, as image-makers, present new viewpoints, often drawing from the past as much as the present, challenging the photograph’s operative function. Whether creating individual art photographs or using photographic or filmic images within larger installations, artists choose photography both for its opacity and its relatability to the viewer: in the artist’s hands the camera becomes a creative weapon, one that dually reifies and challenges image-based assumptions regarding our greater world.

The power of the photographic medium to rouse the psyche became apparent following the Haitian earthquake of January 2010, as media images of Haitian suffering and tragedy were consumed worldwide. Beyond stimulating a philanthropic call for international aid, such catastrophic images also became a means of journalistic en-

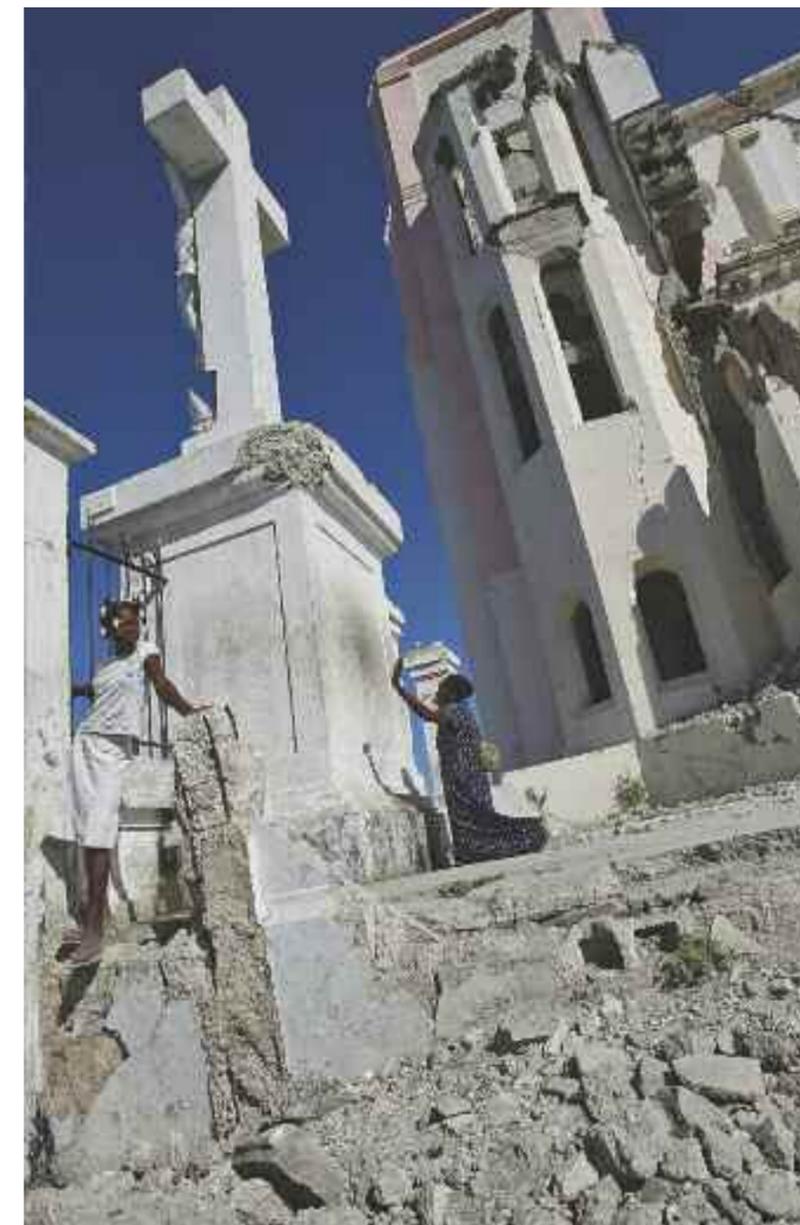
tertainment and enthrallment (something Sontag herself writes about in *Regarding the Pain of Others*) while propagating stereotypes of an abject Haiti – a matter much debated among Haitians and scholars writing about the topic.<sup>2</sup> While the media’s coverage of the 2010 earthquake brought attention to Haiti’s crisis, it also became fodder for artists and photographers, who paused to consider their relationship with Haiti and to examine the dominant portrayals of the island in news media. Many artists avoided the specter of atrocity and looked at Haiti within a global framework.

Featuring the work of contemporary artists and photographers, the exhibition *From Within and Without: The History of Haitian Photography* aims to broaden the collective image of Haiti today through each artist’s personal engagement with the island nation. Ranging in format from documentary photography to installations and new media, these art works enrich our image and understanding of Haiti. They show the ability of photography to incite, to empower, and to confuse our engagement with reality.

Three weeks prior to the 2010 earthquake, the inaugural Ghetto Biennale in Port-au-Prince sought to question Haiti’s role in the contemporary art world. Conceived following the denial of visas for artists of Haiti’s Grand Rue Sculptors collective to attend their own exhibition in London, Atis Rezistans sent out a call for proposals with the bold question: “What happens when first world

69. Carl Juste (b. 1963; Haitian-American) *Ruined Prayer*, January 12, 2012. Giclée print. 24 x 20 in. Courtesy of Carl Juste/Miami Herald Staff.

69.



art rubs up against third world art? Does it bleed?”<sup>3</sup> Immediately at issue in this alternative biennale were questions of representation, as an international cadre of artists and the Haitian artist communities both pointed out ongoing discrepancies between a fluidly mobile global network of artists and the Biennale’s hosts.

A group of young artists based in Grand Rue – Ti Moun Rezistans – became cognizant of journalists documenting the Biennale and the profusion of technology inhabiting their vicinity.<sup>4</sup> They conceived a form of guerilla media, lending equipment to record their own realities and invert the implied dynamics between (foreign) journalists and their subjects. They seized the opportunity to use the camera as a bullhorn to share their own perspectives. Having used a local art world stage for expressive endeavors, *Tele Geto* remains a project in development. As these young Haitians gain access to more resources and develop greater skills, they help mitigate Haiti’s photographic smorgasbord and a dominant media narrative of Haitian alterity, following in the footsteps of past Haitian photographers highlighted throughout this exhibition.

While the Ghetto Biennale proposed to interrogate the obscure relationship of Haiti and “first world” art, it should be acknowledged that many Haitian artists have been engaging with the art world at large. In 2011 Haiti participated for the first time in the Venice Biennale, exhibiting in a dual-site pavilion set up by separate organizers. The larger of the two exhibitions, *Haïti: Royaume de ce Monde*, drew from Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier’s novel about Haiti’s revolution, *The Kingdom of this World*.<sup>5</sup> Featuring works by Haitian artists such as Hervé Télémaque (b. 1937), Mario Benjamin (b. 1964), Edouard Duval-Carrié (b. 1954), Roberto Stephenson (b. 1964), Frankétienne (b. 1936), and Maksaens Denis (b. 1968), among others, the exhibition featured the diverse practices of contemporary artists of Haitian descent. This stood

in contrast to the much smaller *Death and Fertility* exhibition, featuring the work of three Atis Rezistans sculptors of the Grand Rue in two converted shipping containers located outdoors.

*Haïti: Royaume de ce Monde* showed the gamut of Haitian art within a more contemporary art world discourse, with nearly half the artists based outside of the island and the vast majority having received international training. It brought together artists who are prominent on Haiti’s national stage with members of the Haitian diaspora, perhaps questioning the “first world/third world” dichotomy proposed in the announcement of the Ghetto Biennale.

Whether it is responding to international tragedy or being featured in a major art world event, photography operates at a communicative level, creating exchanges between the photographer, her or his subjects, and a given photographic work’s viewer(s).<sup>6</sup> In our contemporary world, new technologies of communication accelerate the propagation of these images, particularly in the digital realm. Photographic technology’s availability to large segments of the world’s population, as seen in the inspiring case of *Tele Geto*, has confronted us with masses of images in our daily life. In his discussion of the “implosion of meaning in the media,” philosopher Jean Baudrillard argues against the assumption that greater quantities of information create more meaning; rather, the plethora of information dissolves the social function of communication.<sup>7</sup>

This speaks to Sontag’s suggestion that “when generalized, [the image] de-realizes the human world of conflicts and desires, under cover of illustrating it.”<sup>8</sup> In a world in which we are inundated with images, this exhibition seeks to look critically and engagingly at the work of individual photographers and artists in order to explore how works of art and photography allow us to remake and understand our world. Beyond consideration of the ethics of seeing and image making, the artists featured produce work of aes-

thetic and conceptual merit. *New York Times* photographer Daniel Morel (b. 1951), for example, focuses on his professional dedication to capturing reality so as to not “deform history,” limiting his artistic license in his professional endeavor.<sup>9</sup> Rather than abandoning aesthetic goals, he presents a negotiation, as his photographs not only render their subjects’ reality, but also masterfully bring an ethical consideration to their humanity (fig. 88).

*Miami Herald* photographer Carl Juste (b. 1963) more explicitly explores the realm of artistic photography alongside his professional pursuit, producing magnificent and stunning photographs that capture Haiti at a more grandiose scale (figs. 62-63, 70). The same dedication to the craft of photography and respect for the local communities occurs in the work of Maggie Steber, a highly regarded photographer who formerly served as the *The Miami Herald’s* Director of Photography (figs. 27, 49, 61, 90). The works of these three photojournalists suggest that a meaningful engagement with Haiti and Haitians – the subjects of their photographs – informs the aesthetic value of their work, thereby increasing its potential to engage viewers.

Photographer Paolo Woods (b.1970) also explored the terrain of Haiti following the 2010 earthquake, producing unexpected and even uncanny images of Haitian life following the tragedy. In photographs, such as *Gregory Brandt*, the contradictions of Haitian life following the earthquake mimic the preexisting social order, challenging claims that the earthquake affected all Haitians equally (figs. 71). The photograph depicts the businessman lounging on his lawn and reading a newspaper while being approached by a uniformed domestic servant holding a tray. Featured in a *New York Times* spread, Woods’s photographs shifted the focus away from images of painful tragedy and depicted Haiti as a vibrant place whose divisions contributed to its unequal developments. Photo-

graphs of families in makeshift housing stand vibrantly alongside images of absurd wealth in an almost nostalgic yet playful manner.

Many photographers featured in this exhibition have committed to work that is both documentary and artistic in orientation. French-Haitian photographer Chantal Regnault (b. 1954) noted for her documentation of New York City’s voguing and ballroom scene in the early 1990s, is a photographer whose work blends the journalistic and artistic. One of her latest endeavors is the 2012 documentary *Deported*, an exposé on Haitians unjustly removed from the United States after having lived the majority of their lives stateside. Her black-and-white photographs in this exhibition highlight the social gatherings of Haitian Vodou participants, as she presents engaging compositions that seem to invite the viewer into the scene (fig. 89). Photographer Gary Monroe (b. 1954), a South Florida native, returned to Miami Beach following the completion of his M.F.A. in Colorado, to capture a changing city. His photographs of the Haitian diaspora in Miami, including powerful images of detainees in the Krome Detention Center during 1980 and 1981, preceded future travels to island nation during the 1980s and afterward. His black-and-white photographs display sharp contrasts while capturing obstacles faced by Haitians in Florida and at home.

Other photographers, such as David Damoisson (b. 1963) and Cristina García Roderó (b. 1949), also present images of Haitian Vodou with an attuned artistic eye. Vodou continues to inspire the work of artists and photographers working with Haitian themes, as seen in anthropological endeavors of the 20th century and in the representation of Haitian art in thematic exhibitions across the globe today (fig. 51).

In the work of famed photographer Eugene W. Smith (1918-1978), the anthropological gaze approaches the obscene in the context of Haiti. Taken during a visit between 1958 and 1959, the

73.



72.



71.



70.



works formed a photographic essay focusing on the island's psychiatric ward at the start of the François Duvalier regime (1957-71). While some of Smith's photographs capture everyday life in Haiti and even the new leader seated at his desk, the photographs of mentally ill patients are most penetrating. *A Mad Woman in a Haitian Clinic* of 1958 features a seemingly androgynous head emerging eagerly from a dark background, emphasized by intense *chiaroscuro* lighting. The figure purses her lips, staring above as if indifferent to the photograph being taken. These incredibly beautiful photographs express an internalized chaos in a transitioning Haiti, perhaps indicative of a rising sentiment toward the new dictatorial regime, yet they also remain mired in zombie-like stereotypes of Haiti's exceptional otherness.

On the other hand, portraits by Haitian-born photographer Antoine Ferrier (b. 1941) exhibit the dignity and swagger of his varied subjects (fig. 2). Working in the realm of studio and commercial photography in the Bahamas, Ferrier made portraits that reveal the popular styles of the 1970s era, with each subject's fashion and hairstyle contributing to a fierce likeness. While some of Ferrier's subjects exhibit an exuberant youthfulness, his untitled early-1970s portrait of two Haitian freemasons shows the men standing with a stern sense of confidence, almost defiantly so. Such a "swag" attitude is also made visible in the costumery of subjects in photographs by Phyllis Galembo, an artist who has dedicated much of her work to an exploration of masquerade and ritual, from West Africa to the Americas.

The 2006 photograph *Rara, Haiti* features a regal subject with

his back facing the viewer diagonally and his head in complete profile as he stares toward the horizon. His costume and stature allow him to emerge from the serene blue and green landscape. Brilliant colors stream down in ribbon form from his shiny robe as he dons a spectacular and vibrant headpiece recalling ribbon bows on gift boxes. The fierceness of Galembo's portraits stand in contrast to the sweetness of the black-and-white portraits by anesthesiologist and photographer Andrea Baldeck (b. 1950; fig. 79). Focused on humanizing her subjects and highlighting familial bonds, Baldeck creates soft portraits immediately understood by the non-Haitian viewer as familiar rather than foreign.

While the human subject is central to many of the photographs in this exhibition, some contemporary photographers are fascinated by Haiti's urban and physical milieu. Stéphane Kenn de Balinthazy's (b. 1963) *Bleeding Rust* series (figs. 73, 86), for example, zooms in on colorful blotches of rusted paint from exterior surfaces throughout Haiti, constructing visually powerful abstract compositions from neglected aspects of our physical world. Pablo Butcher (b. 1955) helps document mural paintings throughout Port-au-Prince, preserving images of ephemeral works often painted over or destroyed by other means (fig. 80). His photographs are a reminder of the power of art in an urban setting, where a mural can serve both as an act of protest and as political critique. Butcher's mural documentations contribute to his broader archival collection of antiquarian photography in Haiti.

The urban landscapes of Roberto Stephenson, by contrast, show the ways in which digital photography can alter our view of

**70. Paolo Woods (b. 1970; Dutch-Canadian)** Gregory Brandt, sitting in the garden of his home in Petionville, is a businessman whose German-born grandfather emigrated to Jamaica at the beginning of the last century. He presides over the Franco-Haitienne Chamber of Commerce. (from the project *STATE*), 2011. Inkjet print. 20 x 16 in. Courtesy of Paolo Woods.

**71. Phyllis Galembo (b. 1952; American)** *Two Alligators, Jacmel, Haiti*, 1997. Fujiflex. 38.25 x 38.25 in. Phyllis Galembo, Courtesy of Steven Kasher Gallery, New York.

**72. Stephane Kenn de Balinthazy (b. 1963; Haitian-American)** *Untitled (Rust #1)*, 2010. Inkjet print. 23.25 x 28.25 in. Courtesy of Private collection.

**73. Leah Gordon (b. 1959; British)** *Marmelouque (from the Caste Portraits) Port-au-Prince, Haiti*, 2012. Gelatin silver print on fiber paper. 24 x 20 in. Courtesy of the artist.

the world. Through layering exposures, altering color fields, and skewing proportion within urban scenes, Stephenson recreates the street life of Port-au-Prince in a ghostly, eerie manner. Many of the works capture the chaotic dynamism of the dense urban capital of Haiti, while simultaneously evoking emptiness through the transparency of exposures. These techniques translate to his installation in the exhibition, which utilizes projections of photographs in an idyllic tropical setting, recalling the ambience of his more urban landscapes (fig.91).

Equally striking are the photographs by English artist Leah Gordon (b. 1959), whose provocative works look at the spectrum of Haitian life. Leah is noted for her images of carnivals and religious traditions in Haiti, such as the stunningly glossy black-and-white photographs from her *Kanaval* series. As co-director of the Ghetto Biennale, Gordon has a long-standing relationship with the island nation, as she coordinates with artists globally and throughout the island with regard to the role of art in Haiti. Her work in Haiti has notably influenced her work elsewhere as well. For example, her *Airport Prayer Spaces* series, a group of photographs capturing the ascetic space of airport prayer rooms across the globe, recall the more tight-and-messy interiors from her *Vodou Altars* series—both showing eerie spaces largely absent of human subjects. Gordon's photographs featured in this exhibition, the enthralling and theatrical *Caste* series, reimagines colonial-era taxonomies of race through contemporary figures (fig. 74). Depicting caste types dressed in Renaissance garb and situated within a staged setting, these photographs cleverly remake an 18th century classification of race, akin to the *Castas* paintings from Mexico popular in Europe during the 19th century.

Gordon has also worked on film projects, most notably *Atis-Resistans: The Sculptors of Grand Rue*. Another filmmaker, Mario

Delatour (b. 1955), utilizes photographic archives in his cinematic telling of Haiti's cultural histories, whether exploring the Arab-Haitian community or revisiting the destroyed National Palace (fig. 81). As is the case for Gordon and Delatour, artists often work as cultural brokers, using photography as their primary medium or as part of a greater project, and sometimes both.

Installation, mixed media, and performance arts that utilize photography create immersive environments in which the photographic element gains its meaning. Artist Maksaens Denis (b. 1955) creates such environments, often drawing from his background in audiovisual production and incorporating a televisual element into his work. Thinking about the way the televisual coexists with Haiti's material realities, Denis uses actual television sets and other screens in a manner similar to the work of renowned Korean American artist Nam June Paik (1932-2006). Denis's 2005 mixed-media sculpture *Kwa Bawon* for the 2005 Venice Biennale, for example, stands as a crucifix of mediatic images, while his more recent futuristic robots, with their ability to rap and preach about injustice and humankind's suffering, work to cannibalize the robots of Paik.<sup>10</sup>

In Denis's 2010 *Looking Back, Facing Forward* installation for the Dak'Art Biennale of Contemporary African Art, a film projection covers the entirety of the space's back wall, including four television screens, each projecting different video images. Media overload is replicated in the gallery's other installations, including a snakelike slither of upward-facing television screens projecting various feedbacks. Although there is an overbearing presence of visual media, the images are coordinated in a manner that allows the work a cohesive ambience, while sharing related cultural references. This is seen again in Denis's vibrant, cacophonous St. Sebastian portraits featured in the exhibition, which embody the

energy of his installations in a two-dimensional format.

Berlin-based Haitian artist Jean-Ulrick Désert (b. 1968) utilizes both performance and installation to explore intersections of race, sexuality, and global politics (fig. 83).

For his series *Negerhosen 2000*, Désert traveled in lederhosen throughout Germany, where the apparent contrast between traditional German garb and the artist's black skin reflected on issues of racism and identity in contemporary Europe. Using a myriad of objects and visual ephemera from his very public performance – ranging from paper beer coasters and postcards to large billboards in subway stations – *Negerhosen 2000* employs a comedic, tongue-in-cheek tone in its critique of a pervasive German nationalism. This light, irreverent tone is echoed in Désert's other works, whether they use photography to explore queer sexuality vis-à-vis Robert Mapplethorpe (1946-1989), or images of nationalism and gendered garb to rethink post-9/11 global relations.

Established artists working in mixed media, such as Denis, Désert, and Duval-Carrié, have made a mark in rethinking the breadth of Haitian art and helping to place Haiti at the forefront of the contemporary art world. Younger Haitian artists are sharing new perspectives regarding Haiti and their broader world as the photographic and cinematic become subsumed by the growth of social media. Miami-based artist Adler Guerrier (b. 1975) explores notions of space and identity in his mixed-media and installation works, often relating them to the racial politics embedded within South Florida (fig. 85). The exhibition *From Within and Without: The History of Haitian Photography* provides us the unique opportunity to look at the history of photography in Haiti and explore this history's impact on artistic practice today.

As Nicholas Mirzoeff writes in an essay regarding race and photography in the United States “The photograph, in ceasing to be indexical, might become the document of the complexity of lived,

embodied experience.”<sup>11</sup> Artists and photographers working on Haitian subject matter exhibit this complexity, as this exhibition shows a myriad of lived experiences and expressions within the context of Haiti. The proliferation of images in news media and elsewhere that work to stereotype Haiti and its diaspora is met with photographic and visual interventions that expand our understanding of Haiti and Haitian culture. The photographers and artists in this exhibition present works that beg the viewer to concentrate, think, and relate to experiences beyond their own. These works show the ability of artists to reflect upon varied or disparate realities in a relational matter, and to use images to both situate and interrogate these budding relations. That is, they ask us to rethink our relationship to place, both through our own photographic memory banks and through the expressions of artists elsewhere.

1. See Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 23.
2. See Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Reprint: New York: Picador, 2004). While the 2010 earthquake generated debates about how Haiti was represented in the media and brought them to the forefront, such issues had long been discussed within scholarship about Haiti, placing such media representation within broader histories of racism and international relations. See Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1994), and J. Michael Dash, *Haiti and the United States: National Stereotypes and the Literary Imagination* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).
3. See <http://www.yoonsoo.com/ghetto/2009/files/call.htm>.
4. See [http://www.atis-rezistans.com/tele\\_geto.php](http://www.atis-rezistans.com/tele_geto.php).
5. See Wendy Asquith, “Haiti's First National Pavilion at the Venice Biennale: Anachronism or Illuminating Opportunity,” *Open Arts Journal* 2 (Winter 2013-2014), 2-3.
6. Philosopher Roland Barthes reiterates this tripartite exchange in his discussion of a photograph's three practices, involving the operator (photographer), the spectator (the viewer), and the subject(s) (the spectrum). See also, Roland Barthes, *Camera lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 9.
7. See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 79-81.
8. See Sontag, *On Photography*, 118.
9. See [http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/27/showcase117/?\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&\\_r=0](http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/27/showcase117/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0).
10. See <http://blog.uprising-art.com/en/interview-exclusive-maksaens-denis-2/>.
11. See Nicholas Mirzoeff, “The Shadow and the Substance: Race, Photography, and the Index,” *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003), 126.

## "MY MISERY IS MINE!"\*

Edwidge Danticat

I grew up under the watchful gaze of my dead grandmother lying in her coffin. Her funeral had been meticulously documented and a series of 4 x 6 black-and-white photographs had been printed, then framed, to hang in the dining rooms of both my uncle's roomy house in Port-au-Prince and my parents' two-bedroom apartment in Brooklyn.

My grandmother's "shadow" had followed me from even before I was born, right into my transition into a new life in New York City at age 12. There was no taboo associated with funerary photography in my family. In many cases, there were only two sets of pictures of my oldest relatives: one of them posing in a photo studio on their wedding day and the other taken while they were on their way to be buried.

Before the widespread accessibility of cameras – in phones or otherwise – photographs like those of my grandmother, and even some of me, were long deliberated on and saved for. They were never meant to be candid or casual. And they were costly, sometimes requiring the equivalent of a day's salary per sitting. Perhaps this was because the photographer and the photographed (when alive) knew that they were creating heirlooms, calling cards to generations yet unborn (figs. 76-78).

Twenty years ago, after I had published my first novel, a news-

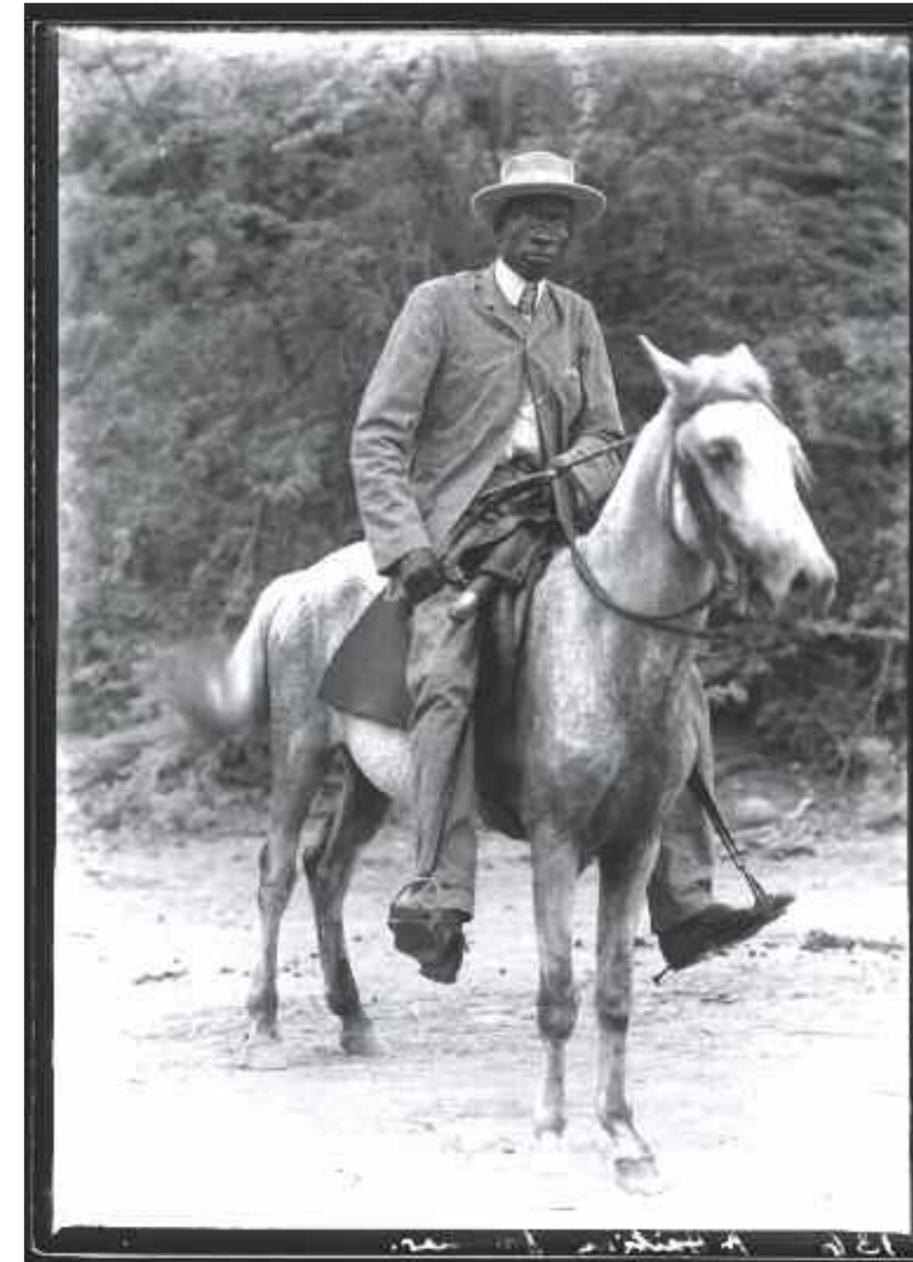
paper reporter asked me to send him some family photographs via messenger. I stupidly sent him an entire album filled with irreplaceable photographs, which after pulling a few for his article he promptly discarded. I felt as if part of my life had been erased, a good chunk of my memories obliterated. Had my family's heirloom photographs vanished in a fire or a flood, they might have been easier to mourn. But the fact that I had personally contributed to their disappearance made it harder to accept.

Later I would manage to find some duplicates in other family members' albums. However, there were many I never saw again, including several taken in different Port-au-Prince photo studios between my third and twelfth birthday, to send to my mother and father, who had moved to New York and left my brother and me in the care of my uncle and his wife. These photo sessions were the equivalent of birthday parties, which I never had, and the resulting pictures my only keepsakes. So how could I have been so careless?

These were the days before people had scanners at home. I was young and trusting and the reporter had insisted that he'd copy some of the pictures then immediately hand the album back to the messenger who would then bring it back to me. I was also eager for the world to see these images that had meant so much

74. Sir Harry H. Johnston (1858-1927; British) *Haitian Farmer*, 1908-9. Gelatin silver print. 10 x 8 in. Courtesy of CIDIHCA Collection, Montreal Canada.

74.



to me. They had been created for private use, but they also seemed somewhat public. After all, they were taken with distant people in mind, even if those people happened to be my parents. With their super-clean black-and-white composition and baby-faced subjects—my younger brother and I—they seemed like documentary art. I might have also foolishly believed in their unshakeable permanence. Maybe I was too close to the childhood they'd so carefully documented, but I might have thought that they were too monumental to simply vanish.

These two memories always surface whenever I am faced with any sets of photographs, especially ones in which the people look like me. I always search for my dead relatives in archival photographs, as if I might actually find them there.

This is how, I think, many of us in the Haitian diaspora look at images of Haiti. When they are very old, the pristine images of a scarcely populated Port-au-Prince for example, we gaze wistfully and wonder where all that spaciousness and airiness went. We ask ourselves how our parents and grandparents could have taken those beautiful beaches and lace-front gingerbread houses for granted. These old photographs, be they personal or communal, send us dreaming of what was left behind.

Many of us, especially those who were born outside of Haiti, would not even know what our grandparents looked like if not for some old photographs. And even if our grandparents are still alive, our granns and granpapas, our grandmères and grandpères no longer look like the dashing young men and beautiful women who posed so gallantly with faces that look more like ours than theirs. These old photographs connect us to parts of people and places that have already ceased to exist.

This type of nostalgia also carries over to moving images, partic-

ularly the black-and-white reels that start with the 1915 United States Occupation of Haiti. In those films, sometimes the old buildings fascinate us more than the white soldiers marching by them.

Look at the National Palace, we gasp. Everything looks so neat.

Except in the photographs that are meant to frighten, such as the famous one of Occupation opponent and freedom fighter Charlemagne Peralte (1886-1919) tied to a door and left to rot in the sun. Terror gets the full frame to itself in that photograph. The horror of the message does not get to compete with the architecture.

Not so with the most recent blood- and dust-soaked images from the January 12, 2010 earthquake, where the crumbling architecture is the point of the image. And the bodies, because there are so many of them, become part of the architecture. The hyper-visibility throughout photography's history, of black bodies – exposed, naked, in pain – continues in Haiti just as it has in a slew of other places where we are constantly reminded that misery on display can serve a much larger purpose than just disaster voyeurism.

We can't afford to keep our misery to ourselves when we are in such desperate need of help. We must move the world to care, so that they can text their donations, rally their artists to sing of hope. We must bombard everyone with heart-tugging images so the story does not slip from the headlines. So it was with the war in Biafra, with famine in Ethiopia, with the bloated bodies of Hurricane Katrina, and with the earthquake in Haiti.

These types of photographs are always meant to provoke a response and that response often lies somewhere between repulsion and pity. Go too far and you might get the viewer to turn away. Tread too lightly and you might not reach enough of them. The trick is to show uncomfortable truths while still showing respect, while allowing the people we are looking at to be not just symbols,

but also human – as human as the person taking the photograph and as human as the person looking at it.

The photo studio is a safer space for all of that. A person has more agency there than in almost any other photographic setting, especially since he or she has paid dearly for the privilege of being photographed. In the controlled environment of the photo studio, the subject has some control.

More and more I see evidence that people in Haiti are demanding that same type of control on the streets. More and more I see them guarding their image against people with cameras, be they tourists or professionals.

In July 2013, Associated Press reporter Trenton Daniel followed two American celebrity chefs, John Besh and Aaron Sanchez, as they tried to tour, with some photographers, a farmer's market in Kenscoff, a mountain town above Port-au-Prince.<sup>1</sup> The town's mayor, Widjmy Cleska, refused the chefs and their photographers access to the market because "they might take photos that would be unflattering for the town." The people in the market went so far as closing the gates and shutting out the visitors.

Now even the poorest people around the world have some access to visual media, they are a lot more aware of what Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has called "the single story" being told about them. In Haiti that single story is that we are the poorest people in the Western Hemisphere and that our misery is pitiable even when we are trying to do something admirable, like run a farmer's market. So more and more people are talking back, protesting, refusing to participate. Still this is not a new phenomenon. One of Haiti's greatest poets, Félix Morisseau-Leroy (1912-1988), verbalized it in his iconic poem "Kodak," written in the 1970s.<sup>2</sup>

*Tourist, don't take my picture  
Don't take my picture, tourist  
I'm too ugly  
Too dirty  
Too meager and too thin*

Your camera will break, the narrator tells the tourist. Rather than taking a picture of his bare feet, and torn clothes, his overloaded donkey, and his house of clay, he advises the tourist to go and take pictures of the National Palace and other impressive sites.

*He concludes by letting the tourist know:  
You won't understand my pose  
You won't understand a thing  
My affairs aren't yours, tourist  
Gimme five cents and be on your way*

I was once traveling with a group of American college students in the southern city of Les Cayes when one of them took out her camera in the middle of an outdoor market and started snapping pictures of a woman who was napping on several bags of charcoal. Alert to the possibility of new customers, the vendor woke up and found the student taking her picture. I could tell from the look in her eyes that she was using every shred of restraint she possessed to keep from jumping over those charcoal bags and grabbing that camera out of that young woman's hands and smashing it on the ground.

"What makes you think you can just take my picture?" the vendor shouted as her friends nodded in agreement. "Even if I look poor to you, even if I look like I am living in misery, my misery is mine."

I have never forgotten those words.

When you are poor, this woman seemed to be saying, you are not even allowed to own your misery.

"The thing is, if you had asked I might have let you," the woman

75.



76.



77.



said after the student had apologized profusely.

All she'd wanted was a say, an opportunity to decide. She was asking that young woman to try harder – reinforcing the lesson we'd been trying to teach those students for several weeks – that people want some kind of say in the narratives being constructed about them. Which begs the question: should one resist documenting things at all? If that were the case then we would not have many of the images in this exhibition. Still, it is crucial that people who are being used as subjects get their say. After all, they are asking for the same level of respect that we all expect when we allow photographs to be taken of us. They are asking to know the context. What are you going to do with my face? Where will my image end up? Potentially everywhere these days. It is also reassuring, and I believe clear from the resulting image, when the photographer has at least wrestled with a few of these questions.

Those of us who are Haitians and live outside of Haiti are voracious consumers of images coming out of Haiti. Whether they make us cringe or rejoice, we long to see them. And we share them with friends and family on social media, via Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. There is always some fatigue, as that expressed by the Kenscoff's mayor, with the so-called negative images, the ones that “make the country look bad.” However, in our oversensitivity over a lack of so-called positive images, we cannot sink our heads in the sand and deny that the problems being documented actually exist and that our desire to erase or “unsee” images we are un-

comfortable with might render invisible people who already live on the margins of a marginal society. After all, the photographers are not inventing the bidonvilles, or the packed prison cells, or the street children. This is why Haitian photographers must be as unafraid to expose these problems as their foreign colleagues are.

There will always be crucial moments in Haitian life that demand to be documented, both from within and without. There is great value to an outsider's eye, his or her ability to see something for the first time. But there is the more underappreciated value of someone digging deeper and looking anew at something they have known all their lives. Both sides – along with the combined insider/outside of the Haitian diaspora – can help create a fuller and more nuanced picture of a multistoried place like Haiti.

*Pitou nou led, men nou la*, says the Haitian proverb. We might be ugly, but we are here. And better that we are here than not. Better that we are visible than invisible. But our visibility cannot come at all costs. We must have our say. Because our images are not only for us to behold, but they also exist for generations yet unborn.

*\*This essay is adapted from an essay called “Look at Me,” published in the December 2013 issue of Harper's magazine.*

1. See Daniel Trenton, “Cool Reception for US Celebrity Chefs in Haiti” (July 30, 2013). <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/cool-reception-us-celebrity-chefs-haiti>.
2. A translation of Felix Morriseau-Leroy's “Kodak” by Jack Hirschman was published in *Haitian and Oddities*, ed. Jeffrey Knapp (Austin: University of Texas, 1991).

**75. Edouard G. Mevs (Edouard G. Mevs Studio), Port-au-Prince Marie**, May 4, 1911. Gelatin silver print. 5.875 x 3.875 in. Courtesy of CIDIHCA Collection, Montreal Canada.  
**76. Anonymous** *Untitled (Mother and Daughter)*, n. d. Gelatin silver print. 6.5 x 4.25 in. Courtesy of CIDIHCA Collection, Montreal, Canada.  
**77. Anonymous** *Untitled (Family of Ten)*, n. d. Gelatin silver print. 8 x 10 in. Courtesy of CIDIHCA Collection, Montreal, Canada.

## CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHS



78. **Antoine Ferrier (b. 1941; Haitian)** *Leroy "Smokey 007," Cleveland McKenzie, 1970-1975.* Inkjet print. 24 x 20 in. Courtesy, Antoine Ferrier



79. Gary Monroe (b. 1951; American) *Untitled, Dessalines (Abandoned Palace with 365 Portals)*, 1986. Gelatin silver print on fiber paper. 20 x 24 in. Courtesy of Gary Monroe.



80. Maggie Steber (b. 1950s; American) *Dead Blue Man Pre-Election Violence, Port-au-Prince, November 1987*. Color ink print from digital file. 20 x 24 in. Courtesy of Maggie Steber.



81. **Mario L. Delatour (b. 1955; Haitian-American)** *Jean Dominique, Haitian Journalist and Owner of Radio Haiti-Inter*, 1988. Inkjet print. 20 x 24 in. Courtesy. Collection of the artist



82. **Pablo Butcher (b. 1955; British)** *Pa boule yo, Jige yo (Don't Burn Them, Judge Them)*, 1991. Cibachrome print. 30.25 x 38.25 in. Courtesy of Pablo Butcher.



**83. Andrea Baldeck (b. 1950; American)** *Figü ou se paspo ou (Your face is Your Passport)*, from the *Heart of Haiti Series*, 1996. Inkjet print from gelatin silver print. 20 x 24 in. Courtesy. Collection of the artist.



**84. Chantal Regnault (b. 1945; French)** *Morning Prayer, GONAIVES*, 1996. Inkjet print. 23.25 x 28.25 in. Courtesy, Collection of the artist.



85. **Stéphane Kenn de Balinzhazy (b. 1963; Haitian-American)** *(Untitled) Rust #7*, 2011. Inkjet print in Arches aquarelle rag. 27.25 x 23.25 in. Courtesy of Private collection.



86. **Adler Guerrier (b. 1975; Haitian)** *Untitled (Scene from a Verdant Place)*, 2003-2012. Archival pigment print. 20 x 24 in. Courtesy of the artist, David Castillo Gallery and Maria Newman Projects.



**87. Leah Gordon (b. 1959; English)** Left to right, *Noir, Sacatra, Griffé, Marabou, Mulâtre, Mamelouque, Quarteronné, Sang-Mêlé*, November 13, 2012. Inkjet print. 23.25 x 27.25 in. Courtesy of the artist.



**88. Paolo Woods (b. 1970; Dutch-Canadian)** *Papier-mâché masks representing the last nine Haitian presidents, in chronological order from right to left, at the Jacmel carnival. Current president Michel Martelly, to the far left, holds the hand of his prime minister, Laurent Lamothe. (from the project STATE)*, 2012. Inkjet print. 23.25 x 27.25 in. Courtesy of the artist.



89. Roberto Stephenson (b. 1964; Italian) *Lake Péligre, Center Department, 18.923368° -72.001211° →SE, July 2, 2012*. Color inkjet print. 21 x 29 in. Courtesy of the artist.



90. **Phyllis Galembo (b. 1952; American)** *Boys in Blue Jacmel, Haiti, 2014*. Fujiflex. 38.25 x 38.25 in. Courtesy of Phyllis Galembo and Steven Kasher Gallery, New York.



91. **Maksaens Denis (b. 1968; Haitian)** *St. Sebastian #2a, 2014*. Inkjet print on canvas. 59.75 x 39.75 in. Courtesy of the artist.

## CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS BIOGRAPHIES

### **Stéphane Kenn de Balinzhazy (b. 1963; Haitian-American)**

De Balinzhazy's photographs explore the complex textures of rural and urban landscapes. In images that read as abstractions, his Rust photograph series transforms the surprising, vibrant, yet mundane metal surfaces of Haitian buildings into works of art.

### **Pablo Butcher (b. 1955, French)**

Photographer and antiquarian, Butcher collected photograph albums that document numerous components of Haiti's complex history. His photographs of the now lost wall murals made in the 1980s, synthesized their depiction of Haitian politics and Voodoo traditions with moments of daily life.

### **Maksaens Denis (b. 1968; Haitian)**

Denis is best known for his multi-media installations and video work that derive from his sensitivity to Haitian culture and religion. Examples of his work were included in a group show in the inaugural Haitian Pavilion of the 2011 Venice Biennial.

### **Antoine Ferrier (b. 1941; Haitian)**

As a noted studio photographer who came to prominence in the 1970s, Ferrier depicts his subjects affirmatively and confidently. His early black-and-white portraits capture a sense of swag, an urban style prevalent in the Bahamas even today.

### **Phyllis Galembo (b. 1952, American)**

The works of photographer and art professor Galembo explore the various roles Haitian people play in Voodoo religious rituals as well as in their country's folktales and festivities.

### **Leah Gordon (b. 1959; English)**

Gordon is a film-maker, curator, and photographer known for her depictions of Haitian Mardi Gras festivities in Jacmel. She was creator and co-curator of the 2009 Ghetto Biennale, Port-au-Prince.

### **Adler Guerrier (b. 1975; Haitian)**

The work of photographer Guerrier explores notions of space and identity in mixed-media and installation works, often relating them to the racial politics of South Florida.

### **Carl Phillippe Juste (b. 1963; Haitian American)**

Photojournalist and award-winning photographer, Juste founded the Miami-based organization, IrisPhotoCollective, that addresses photography and the African diaspora. He has been with the *Miami Herald* since 1991 and is best known for his powerful images of Haiti and the South Florida Haitian community.



92. **Ulrick Desért (b. 1960; Haitian)** *Comment Nannite est devenu Tante Cilet (How Nannite became Aunt Cilet)*, 2015. Cardboard boxes, paint, and digital projections from analogue images. +11 x +11 ft. Courtesy, Collection of the artist

**Gary Monroe (b. 1951; American)**

Monroe's stunning black-and-white photographs capture aspects of the dramatic changes that have characterized South Beach since the 1980s, the Haitian migration to South Florida, Haitian politics, and the world at large.

**Daniel Morel (b. 1951; Haitian)**

Photojournalist Morel traveled to Haiti for the *New York Times* to photograph the nation's trials and tribulations. His highly organized photographs engage his subjects while capturing the reality of the country's complicated history.

**Chantal Regnault (b. 1945; French)**

Film maker, photographer, and photojournalist, Regnault travels to Haiti regularly either for *The New York Times*, *Aperture*, and the *Village Voice*, among others, where she depicts various components of Vodou rituals and objects. Her films include *Mirror of Maya* Deren (2002) and *Deported* (2010).

**Maggie Steber (b. 1950s; American)**

Award-winning photographer and photojournalist, Maggie Steber, who was Assistant Managing Editor for the *Miami Herald*, has traveled to Haiti since the 1980s to document its political upheaval and daily life. Her vibrant photographs address humanitarian, social, and cultural issues that resonate with local and global communities.

**Roberto Stephenson (b. 1964; Italian-Haitian)**

Stephenson's digital photographs transform Haitian landscapes and portraits of Haitians into phantasmagoric realities.

**Jean Ulrick-Desert (b. 1965; Haitian)**

The works of installation and performance artist Ulrick-Desert challenge conventional while engaging issues of identity and nationalism.

**Paolo Woods (b. 1970; Dutch-Canadian)**

Photojournalist Woods captures unconventional scenarios in images that are artistic and conceptually unique. Known for his series, *A Crude World*, Woods made photographs in Haiti in 2010 that document the excesses of the elite and the tragedy of the recent earthquake there.

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## From Within and Without: The History of Haitian Photography

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale has organized this exhibition with renowned Haitian-American artist, Edouard Duval-Carrié, as guest curator. It explores the history of photography in Haiti, and how the nation and its people have been represented by its own (Within) and other (Without) photographers and photojournalists from the 19<sup>th</sup> century advent of photography to the present. Its numerous works from photography albums, archives, studies, family snapshots, photojournalism, and by contemporary artists demonstrate how photography and art have documented Haitian life and culture and shaped perceptions of them, especially during times of natural disaster, and political and social unrest. The exhibition provides the first comprehensive history of photography of Haiti and offers new and revelatory perspectives on this nation and its people.



### Contemporary Haiti

