

# Arnold Toulon

## An Artist with a Difference

by Anderson Reynolds



In a recent interview with *The Star* newspaper, Derek Walcott asserted that there is an exceptionally large concentration of talent (painting, sculpture, theatre) in these small Caribbean islands. To this I may add that in the Caribbean, matches, in terms of international standing, for writers of the likes of Derek Walcott, V.S. Naipaul, Wilson Harris, George Lamming, and Edward Brathwaite, are to be found not among the writers (of the generation that came after them), but among the painters.

In the previous issue of *The Jako*, we introduced Cedric George, a St. Lucian painter who apparently has come up with a new philosophy of art. The artist is making plenty of waves in St. Lucia and the Caribbean with his new approach to painting. The only question that remains unanswered is how will the international critics view his work.

In this issue of *The Jako* we introduce yet another artist, Arnold Toulon, who is attracting just as much attention

and whose works are equally compelling. However, the story of Arnold Toulon began not in St. Lucia, but in Dominica, a land that boasts of zouk, creole music festivals, mountain chicken, a river for each day of the year, and the last remaining Carib community in the Caribbean islands; a land where Roseau, the capital, offers one of the few reliefs from lush, forbidden mountains sprouting spectacular waterfalls and warm-water lakes; and a land that has remained one of the few Caribbean nature holdouts, where hotels and tourism have hardly made a dent and to which "unspoilt" is more than a cliché.

Arnold was born and raised in Roseau, a city that missed out on the multiple fires that have been a nemesis to Castries and therefore has remained a capital of quaint, multi-storey, wooden buildings, making modernization sound like a dirty word.

He was born at a time when Japanese recondition vehicles and minibuses were thirty-years away; when the few colorful,

hooded buses that passed as public transportation turned any trip out of the capital into an event; when the absence of television left one with no choice but to fall back on one's own creativity and mischief for entertainment; and when hanging out on the block, or looking onto the streets from one's doorsteps, was the closest thing one had to a television set, or to watching a sitcom, or to getting on a talk show.

In 1993, Arnold Toulon traded Dominica for another tropical paradise—St. Lucia—and another Caribbean capital—Castries. We met with the artist on the heels of his most recent art exhibition held at the Inner Gallery in Rodney Bay, St. Lucia. From all appearances the exhibition had been a huge success. The opening night was overcrowded, and in the days to follow a continuous stream of people made their way to the gallery with the hope of picking up a painting and brushing shoulders with the artist. In fact, Arnold was in such high demand that we had to wait two weeks after the exhibition to get an audience with him. Watching the artist dividing himself among his many admirers, each wanting to spend as much time with him as possible, each seeking explanations for the madness behind his paintings, brought up images of a reggae superstar. But the crowded attention he was receiving wasn't the only thing that conjured images of a reggae star. His neat, waist-long dread locks, slim frame, and ripened-mango complexion that recalls a mix of Carib, African and European ancestry, likened him to Bob Marley.

Intrigued by the amount of attention Arnold was receiving in a country though blessed with artistic talent wasn't particularly known for its patronage of the arts, we asked a few of his admirers, "What about Arnold's paintings that appeals to you?" The answers were always the



same: "The colors." We asked the question, but it wasn't that we didn't know the answer, for no one could look at an Arnold Toulon painting and remain untouched by the colors. A feast of colors. Tropical colors. Caribbean colors. Primordial colors. Rich, bold bands or patches of red, green, yellow, blue, orange.

Still, looks could be deceiving. If an onlooker thinks that color is all what Arnold's paintings are about, she simply

needs to peer a bit more closely to arrive at the contrary conclusion that the brilliant, impossible-to-ignore colors are a facade, a trick, not unlike trees sprouting brightly colored and sweet scented flowers to attract nectar-seeking insects, or the fairer sex's adornment of themselves to trap unsuspecting members of the opposite sex.

The real action in Arnold's painting is what lurks behind the colors. Underneath the colors are world within worlds, and multiple planes of reality. The first time you look, you may see only schools of fish and canoes. A second or closer look may reveal a cottage with a flower garden and children playing. A third look may uncover women bathing and washing in a river. With patience, a fourth look, and to one's surprise there is a six piece musical band equipped with among other things a saxophone, violin and a banjo. No matter how many times and how long one looks there is always something else underneath the impossible-to-miss colors waiting to be discovered. Such is the world of Arnold Toulon. An earthy, primordial world. A world freshly created, waiting to be named. A world that conjures the pristineness of Dominica, his country of birth and upbringing. But that's not all. For if his colors are irresistible, then his women cannot fail to intrigue. In fact, it is almost impossible to find an Arnold Toulon painting that is not populated with women. Not just one woman but multiples of women. Faces within faces, bodies within bodies, complete spectrums of poses, worlds within worlds, all in the same painting.

With anticipation, and glad that we had finally managed to catch up with Arnold, we sat with him in the courtyard of the Triangle Pub at Rodney Bay, right next to the Inner Gallery where his works were on display. As we began conversing, it occurred to me that the artist shared yet another trait with the great Bob Marley. He was a philosopher, and he harbored no qualms about sharing his take on life. It was clear that no one could tell Arnold's story better than himself, so for most of the interview we were content to sit back and, as if watching a movie, or reading a novel, allowed ourselves to get pulled into the world of Arnold Toulon, his growing up, his early days in the art world, his coming to grips with his Caribbean heritage, the implications of

that heritage to his art, and his breakaway from tradition to find his own and unique voice.

## Arnold Toulon: The Early Years



**I**grew up in Roseau, Dominica. It was a very simple and rough little town in those days. Cute in its own way, but fairly undeveloped. Our home was situated on Hillsborough Street, nicknamed Freedom Street, because this was where a lot of the freedom rights people used to congregate. Popular little street. There was always a lot of street activities where people hang out in a shop opposite and discussed politics. All of us used to come ... that's in the sixties going into the seventies. There was a lot of street life. You sat on your steps a lot in those days. You heard a lot of what was going on, the local culture, and everything. Very interesting time in my life. They didn't have as many cars, way back then. We had less distractions. We played few indoor games in those days, and we used to go up to the rivers, go up to the mountains, go on the beaches, tracking each other through the streets of Roseau, and playing those type of games, and so on.

From an early time I was always attracted to the arts. My dad used to do art, but I never really saw him paint. He had practically stopped (painting) before I was growing up. But I saw what he had done, and I had a brother who used to draw a lot. I started doing graphics with him; doing signs—street signs, signs for companies—and also there were some paintings we started doing.

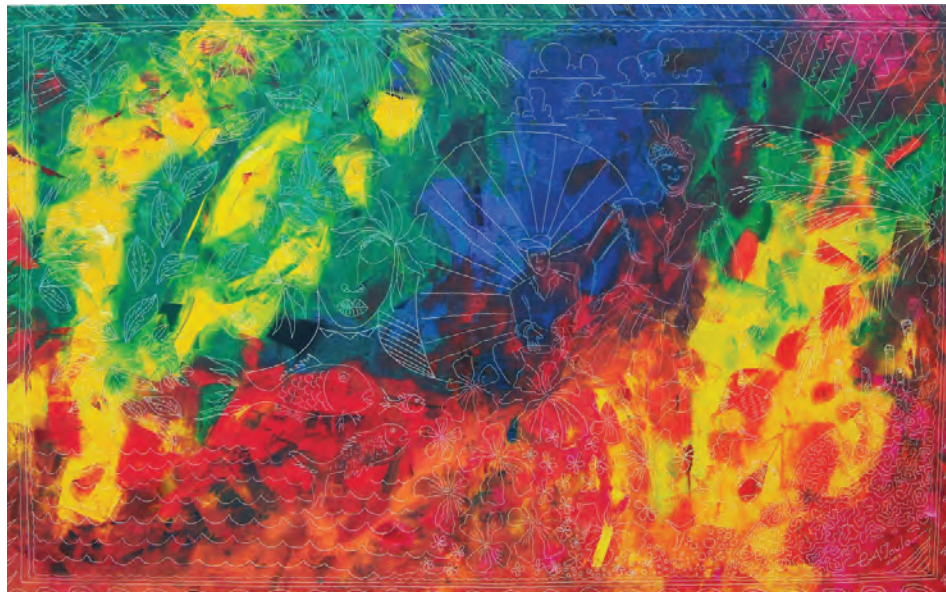
In those days anything I could find, every substance of art—pictures from books, from the library, from friends, from my home—became a means of learning more about painting. I practically pretended that I was studying and

made myself study art. Read and learned a lot about it— technique, artists from different times, different centuries, and so on.

Then I attended high school, St. Mary's Academy, it was a Christian brotherhood school. But like everywhere else, after you leave primary school, emphasis on art and singing, which I loved, were kind of secondary. During that time I got involved in theater with Alwyn Bully, the playwright, and with my brother, Paul Toulon. We used to have a small drama group called National Youth Theater, doing plays and skits. Also, I took part in a lot of the local theater companies, playing drums, shak-shak, even the calabash filled with beads; playing with groups, doing drama across the island. Drama, encompassing everything—acting, singing, dancing, even drawing, and so on. We were doing this without any big funding. We basically slept at people's homes all over the countryside when we went on weekends to perform at community centers, some of them were really rustic, some of them were not too bad.

In those days my painting style was based on surrealism, and it dealt a lot with anamorphic and dream-like images. I was working with oils at the time too; but then I started working with charcoal, pencil, experimenting a lot with other mediums. I was still in High School then, so I wasn't too sure exactly where my life and art were going, but I dreamt a lot.

Eventually there were two scholarships offered around 1981 to two artists to study. There was this businessman called John Keller who figured that there was no emphasis on the part of the government in developing any of the artists, yet there were a lot of young people like myself who were able to do very good work, being self taught and all that. Even today you can remember that there are quite a few musicians coming out of Dominica. So there is always that talent. That's one of the things we try to make people become aware of. It's not something to sideline. It is actually a reality that there are kids with that talent, and if you don't develop it, what are they going to do? So I got the scholarship to go to study in Jamaica. I studied in Jamaica from 1982-1986. But even before that I had taken a course with Louis Desire, a Haitian sculptor who had come to live in Dominica. He was teaching wood carv-



ing and I took a course with him. Of course, it was very Haitian in style. Also we had our own type of art classes among my brothers, my friends. Our own dance, drama and art classes. We just kept the culture going, we didn't depend on government for it to happen. We were like soldiers on the front line.

### **Arnold Toulon: Coming to Grips with his Caribbean Heritage**



**M**ore than most places, the Caribbean embodies a cross current of races and cultures. The French creole language and culture of Dominica and St. Lucia, Arnold's countries of birth and adoption, present excellent examples of this mix of culture. And Arnold's mixed Carib, African and

European ancestry provides a good example of the intermingling of races that have occurred in these islands. Arnold explained that all of these cultural and racial influences have come together in making us who we are. He said that he started traveling among the islands from an early age and this has made him think of himself more as a Caribbean person than as being of a particular nationality, like say being Dominican or St. Lucian.

The artist said that growing up he was very much conscious of the phenomenon of European classical traditions lying side by side the more spontaneous and earthy Caribbean culture. His sister who took piano lessons would come home playing classical pieces like Mozart and Beethoven, yet on the streets there were guys playing popular music by ear, and everywhere in Dominica there was this rich and vibrant, though not necessarily schooled Caribbean culture that included rituals like carnival, the belle-aire, quadrille, and shak-shak dances; and conte, a style of story telling popular throughout the Caribbean islands. There were also the different harvest celebrations like, for example, crop over in Barbados.

One suspects that all of these cultural and racial crosscurrents, and Arnold's multiplicity outlook and approach to life, have found their way into his art. Indeed, it may not be farfetched to suggest that Arnold's paintings have been his way of coming to grips with his Caribbean heritage, his way of defining who he is, of finding order in all this mishmash of culture and races that is the Caribbean. The

## Royal Denial

I am neither 'Christian'  
nor Rastafarian,  
I am the queen,  
Look at my crown,  
I've had it from birth.

I will shield my crown  
From chemical warfare,  
I will bear the burden  
of my ancestry  
With dignity;

I will not travel along  
the straight, paved road,  
I want to feel the rocks,  
I need to see the trees  
as they sway to and fro  
in the gentle breeze,  
I want to be free to enjoy  
the goodness of the salty sea.

I shall not be enslaved  
By stupidity,  
By notions of inferiority;

My crown is a beauty,  
Its twists and turns  
Can impregnate  
a fertile imagination,  
It's reality is truth.

My crown will reign,  
I will not deny  
my royal ancestry.

—Sharon Trezelle

artist sheds light on how he purposefully set out to portray the Caribbean in his art.

*I always thought that I would learn all the rudiments, all the classical style, all the formal style, all the techniques, all the craftsmanship I could absorb and learn. Yet, I have always believed in developing a local style, and in traveling I realized that it wasn't just a local style, it was a Caribbean style. You know you get books to study and all of the books depicting people from other countries, people that don't really look like you and their life is so different from yours. Canadian books, English books, showing guys running in snow, and telling you what a train is. We knew more about their country than they knew about ours. I always realized the difference. I always*



*had the conscious urge to see how do I depict my vision from my point of view as someone from this archipelago.*

*I didn't want my art to look transmigrated. From the beginning you copy the impressionist style and this other style, and that other style and you work within that genre, but I always felt that I wanted to paint something more indicative of where I was from. And I have been able to do that. People tell me that. They just see my art and they know it is from a Caribbean country. A warm, rainy and sunny country.*



## Arnold Toulon: Order behind the Madness

**I**s it the colors that make people see your paintings as Caribbean? *I think the color is the thing that did it. Because I stop worrying about the imagery. A lot of people are too concerned about depicting imagery literally, as they see it. The Pitons in front of them, or flowers in front of them. But I look at what are the colors, how can I use color*



*to depict the mood of that thing, of that face, of that time, of that object. And how to simplify it so that even when you look at it your mind is telling you, "yes, I know what that is but it doesn't say what it is directly." It is not literal, it is sometimes suggestive.*

I realize your paintings are multilayered. At first what you see is the bright colors, but then underneath the color there is a whole other life, women in rivers washing, there seems to be schools of fish in almost all your paintings. They are usually populated with women, each painting has multiple depictions of the female form. There is never one single depiction. Sometimes there are faces within faces. Your paintings are multilayered. Underneath the color a lot is happening.

*In my paintings you get elements of sky, elements of life under the sea; part of the earth but it's another realm that is inhabited by other fellow life forms, which live in that environment. When you see all those aspects, it is like a whole universe I am presenting. I am giving nearly everything there is in creation in one painting. It has water, it has earth, it has life, both above the earth and below the earth. Putting the basic elements that make up the completeness of the universe.*

It's like with each painting you are recreating the universe. So the saying that artists do play God has some truth to it?

*Well, the thing is we cannot play God. To tell you the honest truth, it is easy to play God. I mean you playing. If you give a kid a little doll they will pretend it*



is a real little baby. They are playing. That's what you are allowed to do.

In my mind God obtained his or her legitimacy through the act of creation. That's why I think that creativity is the highest form of activity there is. What are your thoughts on the nature of creativity?

The thing about creativity is that by its own utterance it means that it is both constant and changing. And that's what culture means, actually. Something that's constant but changing. Culture can never be stagnant. For instance, even when we say we have to pick up the shak-shak dance, or the quadrille or belle-air dance, or whatever, basically what we are really doing is actually preserving a tradition. It becomes like an archive. What you find is that the young people who are dancing those old traditions today are modifying it in their own way. They have to. Actually this is essential to what it is. It is never meant to be stagnant. But it is passed on with a certain pattern, yet it is constantly reinventing itself. But yet for it to remain what it is there are certain things that it has to be for it to be called that. It's like the dual nature of things. One is constant and the other one is ever changing.

So do you see that as being manifest-

ed in your art? For example, how has your art changed overtime?

It just changes. It just goes. If you have a technique and you can apply the technique ten times in the same way, then it is just a method. But in art you cannot deal with methodology alone. Well, you could be making a statement about methodology, if you want to look at it that way. But at that point you could become stagnant. So any time you work, and if you work constantly, your hand and your mind and your eyes keep seeing new ways to do things. Life is constantly a struggle, and the only way to be victorious is by constantly struggling with life. But not struggling as in fighting against it, but in conquering the sun. One of the things art does for society is to keep some aspects of the society alive that is usually neglected.

In the struggle for survival people forget that man shall not live by bread alone?

Of course.

Could you share with us the basic philosophy behind art?

Well, art is a means of communication, and I use my art to communicate with people. Everybody who views my work, is like I am telling them a story. My painting allows me to spread a message

of what I feel inside. The message sometimes is stark and harsh, other times it is a bit humorous, and sometimes it's really serious. I deal with human issues. Sometimes in your own relationships you develop problems and you try to figure out how do I deal with it and make it make sense. I paint a lot of pieces that deal with people dealing with people. Our environment is important to our survival, so a lot of times in my work there is a lot of pristine, virginal forest kind of feeling coming out of the color, or really colorful vistas of places. I try to convey the good I see, because there is a lot of negativity, there is so much negativity surrounding us. So I ask, how do you fight the dark? You can only fight it with light.

Does that also speak to your choice of colors; very bright colors?

When people paint a landscape, that's the same thing they trying to do. They're see the mountain looking green, the flowers looking red, and they're painting the flower red and the mountain green. But (instead of drawing the shapes) I take the colors I see and I put them out. I put the color into a different context, but it should trigger your mind to the objects you associate with these colors. So I use colors as a metaphor, as a starting point. That way I am getting people to react to my work, but I am also getting them involved with it, to be interactive, to work it out, to ask you to think.

What about the arts that has made you take it up as a lifelong undertaking?

I made it a lifelong undertaking because I was aware that I was not the only one, and I had two good things going for me. I had parents who used to sing and paint and whatever, and who loved the arts, and who never said don't do that, and they encouraged me in doing what I was doing. They didn't have the money to help me do it any better, but they gave everything they could. I also came from a family where there was a lot of art going around me, so I realized if I have that good fortune to be in a situation like that, then I had to do it, so that the kids who probably didn't have such an easy start, could at least see how it could be done. That's another thing that helped me stay at it.

Let me ask the question in a different way. What about painting that has made you so drawn to it?

Well it is not about being drawn to it.



The thing is that the talent is there. Something inside you is speaking and you go and you do and realize you can. And then you realize you can do it better and better. But you still have to develop craft, no matter how much it is in you. And when I say craft, there is a difference between the arts and the craft. The craft means the ability to put it down. Even if you feel creative and you can draw, if you don't know how to use oil paint then it could be a disaster. You could do fifty oil paintings and they spoil after six months, or they're cracking up. Being drawn to it is about the fact that you know you have that talent in you. And I think the greatest thing about it, to answer your question, is that it constantly challenges me to do better.

And I guess one thing about art is that there is no end to improvement?

Every level of perfection belies another one.

So it's a constant challenge and the challenge itself is partly the motivation for doing it?

Look at Castries for instance. Nobody thought they would have all these cars in Castries streets when they planned the city earlier on. So at the time it was perfect. It had a square here and a square there, one of the nicest towns in the Caribbean. But now there is no where to put cars. So what is perfect at one time is just one level of perfection. You have to discard it as soon as you get it and move on.

Who were your main influences as

far as art is concerned?

I admired the cave paintings of bison and of guys trying to stab them with spears, recreating or celebrating the hunt. These were some of the earliest works that I admired. And the masters like Picasso, Rembrandt. The masters were always the people I marveled at, because they were masters and were really good for their time.

Were there local painters in Dominica that inspired you?

Well, my brother, Paul Toulon, was the main one. Today he is more of a draftsman, an excellent draftsman. His paintings were intricate, surrealistic pieces. A really very fine artist.

Where do your ideas come from?

Daily Life. The gift of breath that God has given us.



## Arnold Toulon: The Break with Tradition

All artists, be they writers, poets, musicians, sculptors, painters, and no matter their talent, begin their artistic quest by imitating those who came before them and whose art they admire. But gradually, as artists mature they begin to develop their own distinctive style, to carve their own artistic niche, which is immediately recognizable by the observant eye, in the process fostering new traditions that future generations of artists may imitate. This is nowhere more evident than in the martial arts, where the title of Master is bestowed

on an artist only after he or she has come up with a new and distinctive style of fighting. Arnold Toulon's break with tradition occurred in 1992, at the age of thirty-one. Here is how he explained it.

Well, in the show (the recent exhibition) you see the black and white piece I called 'Learning' it coincided with the time when I felt that I had reached the height of what the renaissance was doing. In my own way I did. I understood how they were rendering their forms and shapes. I had studied to a level where I figured I had gotten the point. You could say I mastered it or I didn't. That doesn't matter. I got the point. And finally I realized that now the only thing next was to say what I wanted to say.

But I found that the paint brush kept bringing me back to the traditional style of painting. So I wanted another way of applying paint to the canvass, another way of drawing. So I started scratching out with an ice pick on acrylic painting. But it was tearing up the canvas. So I changed from acrylic to oil, which is a longer-drying paint. But to apply it I started using phone cards. It gave me less control (than the paint brush). To handle it, to master it, was like using a backhoe. You cannot use a backhoe to make a small trench drain. You take a little shovel and you do that. But if you want to make a huge drain, four feet across you use a backhoe. And that was what I was doing. Using one of the most difficult methods to achieve something with some kind of finesse to it. But I began to master it, and then I used the ice pick to scratch underneath the paint to create a narrative base on the background color.

The use of phone cards to apply paint was Toulon's own invention. The use of the ice pick to etch images on oil isn't his invention, however the systematic, pervasive, and consistent way in which he uses the ice pick to create whole compositions on canvass represents yet another break with tradition. It appears that no other painter has used etching on oil as a complete technique, as a painting style, at least not to the extent that Arnold has.

## Arnold Toulon: The Business of Art

In the Caribbean where artists are seen as people who are undisciplined and lazy, and who have plenty of



free-time but with nothing constructive to do; where to the politicians art and culture are things simply to give lip service, to employ during political campaigns, and to glorify national celebrations and entertain visiting dignitaries, but otherwise to be ignored, because material support of the arts is not known for helping to win elections; where to the population a good music CD is a pirated one; where paintings are not to be bought, but to be glanced at when hanging in public places; and where the only books worth reading are those borrowed and not those purchased; going into art full-time, or depending on art for one's sole source of income is precarious indeed.

Yet Arnold Toulon has been little else than an artist and he has been full-time at it from since early adulthood. And defying all the odds, he has not only been successful as a full-time artist but in some ways he has helped pioneer the business of art in St. Lucia. Beginning with his first exhibition, *Visions of Reality*, in 1977, Arnold Toulon's paintings have been displayed in over forty solo and group exhibitions, across sixteen or more territories, including Dominica, St. Lucia, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Trinidad, Jamaica, Aruba, Curacao, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Austria, Switzerland, Boston and Paris.

We gleaned some further insights into Arnold's life as a full-time artist, and his thoughts on the business of art.

When did you decide to become a full time artist?

*Around thirteen, fourteen years old. I just figured that's what I wanted to do. But I didn't know if it would happen. I went to high school. I finished high school in about 1979. And I was doing a little theatre at the time. But in 1979 or 1980 Hurricane Allen smashed the island. All the theatre houses went through rehabilitation. Theater was disbanded for awhile. So I started painting a*

*lot more. Then I went on scholarship, that kind of skyrocketed it up. From there I took part in every little show in Dominica: independence shows, Expo 1977. I remember it. 1977 Expo was probably my first formal showing with a group. When I left high school the only other thing I did was to work as a taxi driver sometimes for a hotel, taking the tourists on specialized tours. And working at bars sometimes on a weekend to make a little money. Also, I taught for about three months in a secondary school. But basically I went full time into my art.*

How do you go about preparing for an exhibition?

*When I am doing a series of work, I try to prepare my material or have my material prepared. So that I am not painting two days or five days and then stopping and preparing canvasses. I try to have material ready. Now there are some pieces that are done separately, like if I do one idea, that's one piece. I usually have to get my ideas solid before I start painting. And I work on fifteen, twenty, thirty paintings in my head at one time, when I'm doing a series of work, I cannot write them down. I have to have them in my head. Because when I am working, I cannot be glancing at the paper. I just work. If I don't know it up there it doesn't make sense. I study something until I understand it in my head well enough so when I go to work I just put it down.*

How easy it is for a painter to make a decent living in St. Lucia?

*Very difficult. The thing is that, if you look at a country like Jamaica, there is a lot of corporate sponsorship of art. In St. Lucia that's still in a young stage. It's not in a negative stage, but it's in a young stage. I have had to be holding shows every year since 1994. By holding a show there is a chance of people really coming and see you. So holding a show is one of the greatest things. Then people see the different aspects of what the artist does. It is encouraging to young artists. And also it is attention grabbing. Trying to get the public to realize that we are doing it and we are being consistent. That's the way to get a whole body of artists on board. When I say body of artists this includes all the artists who been working here for years. To get into that pattern of really sticking to having*

*shows, apart from selling privately. Even if it is once a year. It makes the public become involved.*

So art galleries play a vital role in the development of the art as a business?

*Yes, that's why you really need art galleries. They display art how art should be displayed—proper lighting, proper display. That then creates a level of appreciation for the work. Because the work is presented in the right manner. That's very important. When we start to trivialize the gallery concept and start to have solo acts all around then the whole concept of the international artist suffers. We can't get there. To get international status like our cricketers, we have to act like we are international already. We cannot be international by being amateurs. We have to think and act like professionals.*

How has the Jazz Festival and such activities helped in facilitating the artist?

*Any festival or activity that brings people into the island will create opportunities for artists. That's why I have always tried to hold a show during jazz. People come here and they leave with a lasting impression of the art. You see, the thing about it is you cannot go half, half about it. At each show you always aim for the highest level you can reach, and each time you go you do it a bit better.*

What is the best way institutions like the CDF can go around helping artists?



# Jako Books

The best way they can help the plastic artists in St. Lucia is by giving good concessions (customs) on art material and supplies. Because you find many student artists can hardly afford to buy anything to paint on. Its hard for their parents to give them enough sometimes to do art projects at school.

Would you encourage a young person to become a full-time artist?

Of course. But then again he has to be serious about it. To go into painting full-time you're going to eventually need sponsorship. Because to start you're never going to make it on your own. The artist would also have to make some sacrifices to arrive at a level where they can be taken seriously. The other part is having more art education in schools. Once you have a country that has taken on tourism, then tourism will be one of the major outlets for the arts. The other thing the young person can do is to participate in every opportunity where his paintings can be shown, to get his work known. He could start from the little village shows and then onto the national art festivals. He should take part, and keep taking part, and he should never give up.


What interesting stories surrounding your art that you could share with us?

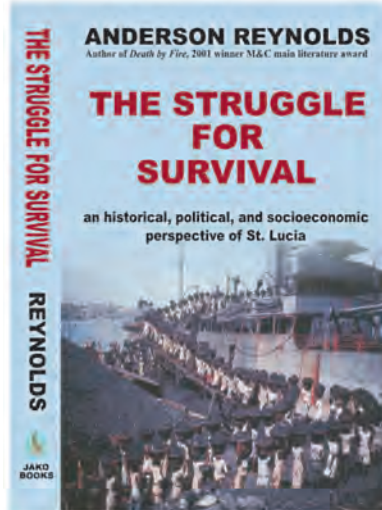
Well, imagine I'm sitting in a geography class in high school, early high school, in second form. I am about thirteen years old, and I 'm listening to the teacher talking about this and that country, European countries, America, whatever. And years later, I'm seated in a little café in Paris, sipping espresso, while I have an exhibition going on right there in that same city. Realizing that it's actually happening.

So it seems that you are pleased with how far your art has taken you?

Of course. In some places where I have shown my art, I am being treated as celebrity. And seeing your work reaching out to all those people from all those countries, and they understanding where you're coming from, helping to open their minds to our culture and our life down here. You actually become an ambassador. People wanting to visit your country because of having come in contact with you or your art. A lot of cultural exchanges become a reality as a result.

Where do you see your art going?

Internationally, more and more and more. To the limits. 



**“The Struggle for Survival is an important road map of St. Lucia in the pre and post independence period.”**

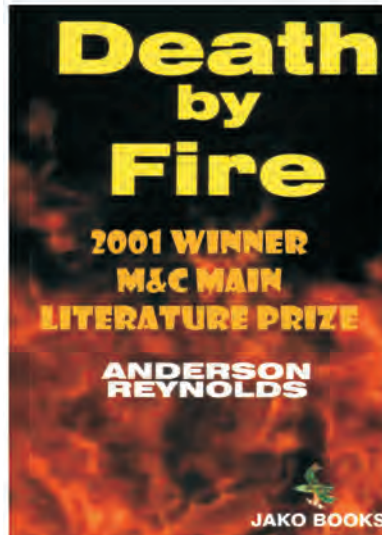
—Sir John Compton

**“... Excellent work ... a 206 paged gem ... a powerful commentary ... A deep sincere analytical look into the state of things in the island today. Truly a compendium of St. Lucian life from early times to the modern era ... I thoroughly enjoyed myself reading the book.”**

—Modeste Downes, author of *Phases*

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