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Preserving Cultural Heritage:

**An Investigation of Visual Arts Conservation in Contemporary Trinidad**

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## Abstract

Cultural Heritage constructs existing societies and consists of both the tangible and intangible. The physical heritage of art is a key feature as it depicts societies victories as well as struggles throughout time. Art like everything else must age but this does not mean it is obliged to show the wrinkles of time. It is a reflection of society and cultures and becomes a record to pass on knowledge through generations in various forms, including painting, sculpture and architecture. With this information in mind art must be preserved to prevent a loss of its universal language.

This study investigates attitudes to visual arts conservation in contemporary Trinidad. It aims to evaluate if art is appreciated in Trinidad or if closer attention needs to be taken as well as emphasises the importance of art preservation. The study argues that there are ambivalent responses to the conservation of visual arts in Trinidad. This is evaluated by qualitative data gathered in secondary and primary sources. The project includes public artworks from prominent artists such as Carlisle Chang and Jackie Hinkson and the treatment their works have endured. Additionally, it brings to light the value of historical architecture and exhibits the importance of art collectors. This research has brought to light the vandalism of Trinidadian citizens and the little appreciation that art is afforded. However, it has also shown the great lengths art collectors and corporations have gone to in order to conserve cultural heritage.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Conservation, Trinidad, Visual Arts, Preservation, Vandalism

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## Glossary of Terms

### Art Curator

Someone who overlooks collections in museums and galleries. They are in charge of how works are displayed, and which artworks work together to create a cohesive body of work. Art Curators must have knowledge of art in order to create an experience.

### Artefact

A handmade item, usually one with cultural or historical significance.

### Beaux- Arts

Style of architecture that emphasised symmetry and decorative detailings. These buildings were associated with formality and wealth due to the grand nature of them and could be seen in museums and government office architecture.

### Culture

A set of values, norms or beliefs that make up a society. It is shared knowledge and experiences that connect a large group of people.

### Fine Art

Also referred to as high art is art made for aesthetic purposes rather than functionality.

Fine art encompasses artistic expressions such as drawing, painting, sculpture, performance, conceptual arts and photography to name a few.

## Gothic

Style of architecture originating in France that is characterised by pointed arches and flying buttresses that were accompanied by stained glass. This style can be observed in churches as well as palaces.

## Medium

The materials or substances used to create an art piece. This also includes the support at times, for example when asked about mediums an artist may describe an artwork as, “acrylic on canvas.” Each material mentioned becomes the medium.

## Mural

A large painting or work that has been rendered on a wall or anything related to a wall.

## Renaissance

This was the rebirth of European art where the focus of Christianity shifts to an awareness of man as well as nature. Renaissance architecture followed the Gothic era and while it followed the symmetry and geometry of Gothic it also brought forward domes and columns to “create structures that would appeal to both emotion and reason” (Department of European Paintings).

## Saturated

Saturation is the intensity of a colour. This can mean it has high intensity so the saturation of the colour is “bright” or low intensity, so the saturation of the colour is “dull”

## Introduction

“There are three forms of art: painting is art to look at, sculpture is art you can walk around, and architecture is art you can walk through” (Boudargham). This thesis aims to investigate these three (3) aspects of art and the attention to its conservation in Trinidad. Within Trinidad there is an abundant creation of art, however the preservation of said works is many times overlooked and taken for granted. As stated by the National Policy on Culture and the Arts, “the rich legacy of our cultural heritage, including the preservation of our landscapes and lived environs, is still to be fully appreciated and owned by Trinbagonians as part of our strengthened identity and pride.” This study is concerned with the conservation and preservation of art as these terminologies exist together. Trinidad’s cultural heritage must witness a combination of these tools to ensure that art flourishes to be experienced by generations to come. Public art faces vandals and environmental circumstances that are ignored, architecture crumbles with time but is afforded new life through restoration, and painting and sculptural works that are collected are treasured. This study argues that there are ambivalent responses to the visual arts conservation in Trinidad.

## Objectives

- 1) To determine the extent to which public artworks are preserved in Trinidad.
- 2) To explore preservation efforts in terms of local architecture.
- 3) To assess the conservation of the art collection held in the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.

## Research Question

What are attitudes to visual arts conservation in Trinidad?

## Parameters

There is a focus on Trinidad art due to this being a short study and there being restrictions on time to conduct research. The study will focus on public art, architecture and an art collection of Trinidad.

## Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by the concept of art conservation which comprises four connected practices: examination, documentation, treatment and preventative conservation.

## Chapter Outline

Following a literature review, chapter 1, *Artwork's Battle with Man*, focuses on the ill treatment public art has endured in Trinidad's society highlighting works from past to present. Chapter 2 entitled *Time Against Architecture* gives insight to famous Trinidadian architecture that have been restored or are undergoing restoration in hopes of conserving their rich history. Finally, Chapter 3 *The Undoubtable Role of Art Collectors*, unfolds the respect art collectors pay to art and sets an example for others to follow.

## Methodology

Qualitative data was gathered and employed for this study. Secondary resources were used to gather as well as validate information presented in the study. These sources included

newspaper articles, books, websites and online pdfs. An interview was conducted with the curator of the Central Bank Museum, Mrs. Nimah Muwakil-Zakuri to gain in depth information regarding the collection.

## Literature Review

Cultural Heritage in its broadest sense is any part of cultures that have been inherited from past generations. In researching the topic, there was a running theme in defining cultural heritage and how to preserve it. Elena Franchi first identifies heritage as property that is passed down through generations or something that is inherited. However, cultural heritage is not only about material objects, it includes any shared experience that represents identity. “Cultural heritage is not only limited to material objects that we can see and touch. It also consists of immaterial elements: traditions, oral history, performing arts, [and] social practices” (Franchi). Likewise, the CDIS Methodology Manual accepts cultural heritage to be both tangible and intangible and posits that cultural heritage is “both a product and a process, which provides societies with a wealth of resources that are inherited from the past, created in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations.”

This study focuses on the tangible aspects of Trinidad’s cultural heritage with the understanding that intangible culture is often expressed and documented in material form. For example, Trinidad has a rich folklore tradition that is passed on through generations by storytelling as well as music such as calypso, soca and other forms that becomes integral in the cultural heritage of Trinidad. Fortunately, the oral tradition has been documented by many in order to preserve the folklore tales. Authors such as Gerard Besson who wrote *Folklore and Legends of Trinidad and Tobago* and Mahmoud Pharouk Alladin who released *Folk Stories and Legends of Trinidad* and *Folk Chants* as well as a number of research papers that investigated Trinidad’s oral tradition, folklore and other arts, have written books based on folklore characters to pass on the heritage to future generations. Not only has Alladin written about these characters, he has also visually documented them through art, rendering the soucouyant, la diablesse and

douen. The intangible culture of the oral tradition of folklore have been documented and preserved through readily accessible books, articles, websites and videos. While the intangible cultural heritage of Trinidad is highlighted and protected, the tangible heritage is met with conflicting perspectives. This study focuses on Trinidad's physical heritage and seeks ways that it can be conserved as well as highlight the importance of safeguarding the material arts. Hence, this study focuses on how the tangible culture of Trinidad is occasionally treated with the same regard, but closer attention is required.

Furthermore, art conservation in research is often grouped together with restoration, however restoration exists as one form of conservation. Under investigation it was revealed that universities offer art conservation as a major, however, when scrutinised these courses focused heavily on restoration as the main part of conservation while eliminating other methods such as preventative conservation and documentation. Focusing on art history and chemistry to achieve restoration, many videos and documents highlighted its tedious process. A YouTube search of art conservation puts forward a multitude of videos that exposes this process from channels such as Baumgartner Restoration, Dallas Museum of Art and Masters of Craft. While restoration is the recognized and utilized process, it is time consuming and costly as it combines art and science to reverse any sign of time. Based on Cartwright, "art restoration is any attempt to preserve and repair architecture, paintings, drawings, sculptures, or other objects of fine and decorative art whose condition has been negatively altered." From this article, four stages of restoration were highlighted for paintings. First, surface dirt removal where dirt and dust are gently removed. Then, varnish removal as varnish tends to yellow over time, altering original colours of artworks. Using varnish remover, this discolouration is erased. Moreover, structural treatments are addressed to repair holes or tears on the piece, in some instances threads can be individually

rewoven but if holes are punctured and a large piece is lost, fabric inlays are required. Finally, retouching takes place. When removing varnish some elements may be lost, the paint can fade over time or even chip off and to repair this, paint or pigments are reapplied to the piece using small brush strokes and precision (Cartwright). This process is a standard that is utilised by restorers on paintings.

Trinidad's architecture is safeguarded and restored by The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago whose mission is to preserve, maintain, repair and create photographic records of heritage sites ("What We Do"). Clement believes that restoration and rehabilitation is, "the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural and cultural values." While restoration is explored in this study, other means of conservation are employed.

### Conceptual Framework

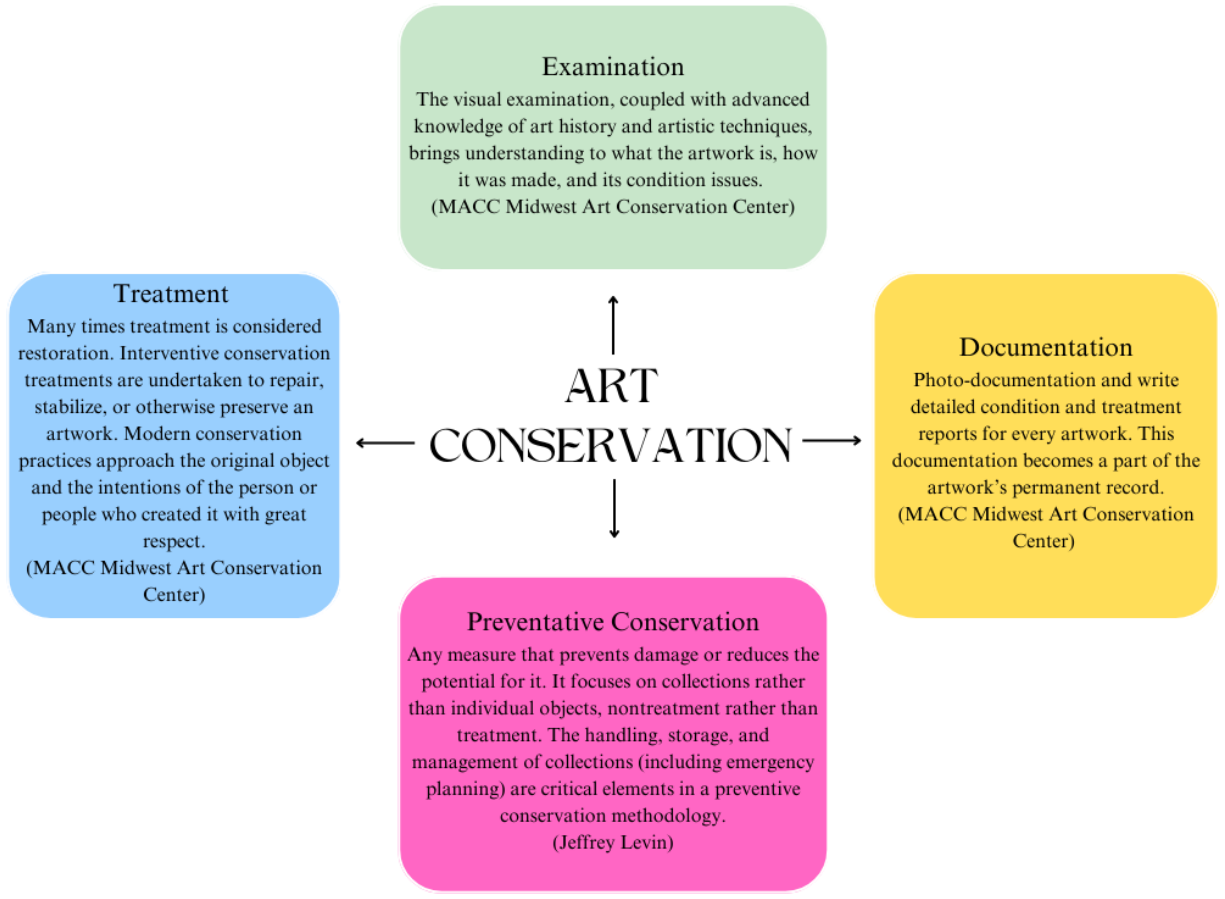


Figure 1

Diagram Showing the Conceptual Framework

Source: Shania Warris

## Chapter One: Artwork's Battle with Man

Public Art is vital to a community not just for aesthetic purposes but for historical and cultural value. “Not only does public art enrich our physical environments... it also boosts local economies by attracting more visitors to a specific neighbourhood, and helps to raise public awareness about important community issues and topics” (East End Arts). Trinidad's talented artists are afforded opportunities to display work publicly for citizens to enjoy outside museums and exhibitions. However, these artworks are not always met with the respect they deserve. Sculptures, murals and paintings, are either ignored and forgotten or vandalized by the ones meant to appreciate what has been gifted.

Trinidad has witnessed the destruction of many artworks in early years and not much has changed since. Attitudes to art are controversial but many times, little care and attention is given to public art. The 1962 piece *The Inherent Nobility of Man* by Carlisle Chang was accidentally demolished in 1977 during renovations. Its short life made a major impact on many and its destruction was met by an uproar of the public. The 50 feet long artwork housed in Trinidad's airport arrival lounge was considered by MacLean to be, “possibly the most important work of art in the Caribbean.” This piece quickly became a beacon for Trinidad and Tobago culture and a sight to experience by citizens and incoming tourists. The piece encapsulated the Trinbagonian experience and culture:

The mural depicted everything from the successive waves of immigration into the country, to the pressures and restrictions of society on the efforts of the individual for self-realization. The only way that Man can rise above these challenges, the art suggested, is to reinvent himself through a return to the womb to recreate in turn his environment in a resurrection” (Mendes-Franco).

With the turmoil caused by the loss of this piece, artist Glenn Roopchand took charge in “restoring” Chang’s mural. In a loose definition from the Cambridge Dictionary, to restore is defined as, “to return something or someone to an earlier condition or position, or to bring something back into existence.” In this context Roopchand’s work can be considered a form of restoration especially with the knowledge that he was once Chang’s protege. At fourteen (14) years old Roopchand became Chang’s apprentice and is said to have assisted with the original mural of *The Inherent Nobility of Man* (Todd). Becoming privy to this information, one can assume that Roopchand had access to sketches, early renderings and tiny details that are overlooked by viewers. With this information he was able to recreate Chang’s work. However, is it considered restoration? While the work reflects Chang’s original piece and brings it back into existence after many years, it has no remnants of the original mural or Chang’s brushstrokes, only evidence of Roopchand is seen in this piece. An art restorer’s aim is to repair original works while trying not to alter what was intended. If repainting is necessary, small brushstrokes are utilised to mask among the primary artist’s works. Hence, Roopchand’s work cannot be considered restoration but rather a documentation of Chang’s work. Similar to prints of artwork or photography, the recreation of *The Inherent Nobility of Man*, acts as record for the original work. This new rendering now acts as a reminder of what was lost and how art has been treated in the past. Although the significance and cultural history of the original mural is meant to be captured, the new work lives as a reminder of Trinidad’s attitude towards art.

Murals have not been strangers to destruction and artist Donald Jackie Hinkson would experience this in coming years following the destruction of Chang’s piece. Hinkson is widely known for his watercolour pieces but also for the multitude of sketches and large pieces done in oil and acrylics that depict a contemporary Trinidadian society. To celebrate its fifty years in

2019, The Alma Jordan Library of The UWI temporarily displayed one of Hinkson's works. The mural entitled *Masquerade* spanned 110 feet and decorated the entire length of the wall: (see figure 2).



Figure 2

Image of Jackie Hinkson's *Masquerade* outside the Alma Jordan Library

Source: Flickr, UWI, IMG\_1402, Feb 2019

This magnificent work was meant to encapsulate carnival's history and its transformation over time. Depicting traditional mas characters as well as foreign characters such as Mickey Mouse, Hinkson documents and critiques the commercialization of carnival (Newsday).

Unfortunately, due to a lack of appreciation, the piece was vandalized. What is more disheartening is the response from artist Jackie Hinkson who voices, "this incident does not shock me. It disappoints me but it does not shock me. Incidents such as this will not deter me from showing the work" (Bobby). As an artist, having to come to terms with knowing that once your work is placed in a public setting it can and most likely will be vandalized is hard to deal with, but for many it is expected. Artists who actively try to enrich the community with art are met with violent acts such as this but continue to give. Due to this, conservation must be emphasised to protect these works. Preventative conservation becomes integral in this environment. Rather than waiting for damage to be caused, efforts to prevent it must be put in place.

Moreover, The National Library and Information System Authority better known as NALIS Library was recently gifted a mural *The Caribbean Sea Which Unites Us* by the Colombian embassy to celebrate Colombia's 212th anniversary of independence (Doodnath). Artist Paula Osorio better known as "Tintadelrio" worked on the large piece that spans the front entrance of the library and depicts both Trinidad's and Columbia's culture. I was afforded the privilege of working alongside Paula. I witnessed the struggle to find solutions for conserving this artwork. During discussions of how to prevent vandalism to the mural, a protective top coating was considered. The coating was obtained and tested over swatches of paint from the mural alongside paint without the coating. After giving it time to dry the swatches with and without the coating were observed. The results revealed that the protective layer altered the original colours and made them less saturated and darker in colour. While this layer could protect against vandals as it made the piece easy to clean marks left, the artist, Paula, wanted the colours to be shown in its truest form. This caused much debate and other methods of protection had to be explored. Talks of a glass layer were discussed but this would also distort the mural due to reflections off the glass and it would also be a costly project. Finally, the idea to barricade the mural as well as have security personnel posted was established. Following the completion of the mural as well as the opening launch, belt barricades enclosed the entirety of the mural and guards were set up, even on Sundays (see figure 3). While one can say that this prevents citizens from fully appreciating the work and beauty that went into creating such a large piece, it is a consequence and learned response from previous artworks.



Figure 3

Image of Belt Barricade and Security around NALIS Mural

Source: Shania Warris, March 2023

Murals have not been the only public art that has been subjected to vandalism. Trinidadian artist, Patrick Chu Foon developed his creativity, drawing inspiration from his rich background. Being of both Chinese and African descent, living in Trinidad, Chu Foon had much to showcase. His work drew from Chinese art his father bought from his homeland and consisted of nature scenery (101 Art Gallery). His work later evolved into abstract painting with vibrant colours but he is greatly recognized for his sculptural works. Decorating various parts of Port of Spain his works have seen many faces but have received little appreciation outside the art world.

Chu Foon's sculpture, *Spirit of Hope*, has adorned Port of Spain since 1971. Standing strong for decades the piece became tarnished with rust and exhaust fumes. In an attempt to "restore" the work, a civilian or corporation took the artistic liberty to "beautify" (Laughlin) the sculpture in "hospital green paint" (Laughlin). The vandalism of this piece reflects the ungratefulness and ignorance that art must endure in Trinidadian society. Rather than proper restoration, an incomplete, poor paint job was attempted.

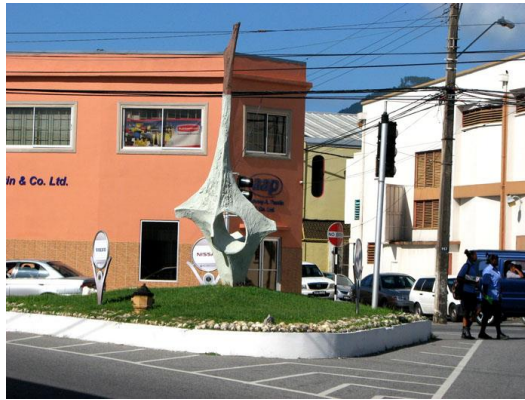


Figure 4

Image of *Spirit of Hope* after being vandalised.

Source: Nicholas Laughlin, 2009

What makes this so disheartening is the idea that there might have been good intention behind this paint job to cover up the imperfections caused by time. Laughlin voices, "it tells me how little respect we have for the work of our artists and thinkers, and how eagerly the powers-that-be package works in more palatable forms. It tells me we're far too fond of quick, superficial solutions to our problems." The lackadaisical treatment of public art by civilians as well as government bodies is also reflected in Chu Foon's work, *Man and Industrialization* sculpture. The work climbs to the sky begging to be seen but is entangled and trapped behind overgrown weeds and foliage.



Figure 5

Image of The Pat Chu Foon sculpture *Man & Industrialisation*

Source: Newsday, Ayanna Kinsale, Nov 2021

The figure above (figure 5) is taken from a Newsday article that exposes the mistreatment of Chu Foon's sculpture. Ignored and forgotten by society, the piece has been abandoned and left to be taken over by nature. Quoting Mark Pereira, "this is just another example of the country being devoid of pride"(Berkeley). The article written in 2021 has brought little to no attention to the work. When visited during the course of this research, the piece was still adorned with weeds; however, the overgrown foliage was dried and dying revealing a small portion of what was hidden before (see figure 6)



Figure 6

Image of Pat Chu Foon's sculpture Man & Industrialisation

Source: Shania Warris, March 2023

It seems that nature was more sympathetic for this sculpture than the ones meant to admire it. Thus, it confirms the sad reality of Trinidad's neglect of artworks, if works are not subjected to vandalism, they are disregarded. To counter this, systems must be put into place to minimise these circumstances. Clean up groups should be encouraged to remove weeds, litter and other obstructions from public artworks. If rust and damages are visible professional restorers should be contained to rectify this problem. Finally, like NALIS, forms of security can be implemented. These public artworks should not require security personnel, however some form of barricade can be placed to deter vandals as well as natural elements from harming the art. With the introduction of safety precautions, artworks are held to a higher value. If there is a need to protect the work, it showcases the importance. Not only does this push preventative conservation, it also begins to educate the public on the significance of art.

Public artworks have been subjected to vandalism or left to be consumed by nature. The public seems to have little appreciation for the efforts of Trinidad's artist. However, it can be assumed that citizens have not been educated on the importance of preserving these works. NALIS has taken charge of protecting the gifted mural and hopefully this becomes the new reality for public art. If citizens witness this level of care taken by "higher ups" it encourages them to respect art in the same manner.

## Chapter 2: Time Against Architecture

Decay is a natural process of decomposition that is no stranger to art. Over periods of time, environmental changes, poor storage, natural disaster, and a number of varying factors accelerate the ageing of artwork. Time seems to act as an assisting artist to original works, adding new layers onto paintings by ageing its varnish. It becomes a sculptor as it chips away and removes fragments of architecture, sculptures, and paint. This has influenced the development of art restoration and documentation, after the withering of original artwork, as a method to preserve the integrity of cultural heritage.

With an impending downfall of the petrochemical industry due to the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the rise of green energy, Trinidad must seek new ways of income. Following the shutting down of four plants in four months, the government has lost “an estimated US\$1.3 million a day in revenue” (OilNOW). Fortunately, Trinidad is decorated with architecture that holds the island's rich history and can be used as tourist attractions, as well as places to hold historical or artistic events. According to The Honourable Clifton De Coteau, MP architectural heritage is, “an ingredient of tourism, is vitally important to the economy of our nation” (The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 6). Architecture of the past have served as artwork to celebrate major events, such as Queen Elizabeth's Jubilation where The Red House and National Museum were constructed. While built for celebration they now play functional roles in Trinidad's society but have undergone major changes. The Red House tells the conflicting stories of the past and encapsulates various influences of Trinidad's culture. The National Museum holds important artefacts and is also host to artworks that reflect Trinidad's culture. These prominent buildings have been restored and updated to carry on their legacy but for a number of

heritage sites this is not the case. In order to preserve buildings that can easily be lost from modernization and urbanisation, documentation must be considered.

To begin, the national treasure known today as The Red House has undergone much transformation from its original laying foundation in 1844 and is still witnessing restoration. While the building dates back from 1844- 1848 it became the infamous Red House in 1897 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. However, the magnificent building was forced to go through various evolutions due to destruction and vandalization. The Beaux- Art inspired building documented its first ruin in 1903 as a consequence of the Water Riots after it was set on fire. All that was left was a skeleton of the building which would be utilized in its first restoration in 1907. The inside was completely redone and galleries as well as chambers were added. While the building was left to stand in its glory, it was only a matter of time before it was confronted with tragedy. An attempted coup to overthrow the government took place in 1990 leaving the building defaced. Bullet holes decorated the once delicate designs of intricate moulding, and havoc enveloped the building with scattered documents, weaponry, and other miscellaneous items. Taking this all into consideration, the restoration project was created. Throughout the process of completing this project, it witnessed many delays due to multiple handovers along with unforeseen circumstances. In 2013, the task faced its greatest delay after buried artefacts alongside bones were discovered. Upon further investigation, it was found that these remains belonged to the First People of Trinidad pre colonization. Due to this the project pivoted from a historical restoration to an archaeological excavation. Once the removal was complete and proper religious rituals performed the findings were sent off for further examination and the restoration project resumed. According to Kim Boodram, "The Red House

has been under restoration for about 20 years, with a budget of over \$441 -million,” however, it is still under repair (see figure 7).



Figure 7

Image of Scaffolding on The Red House

Source: Shania Warris, March 2023

Due to multiple incidents over the years The Red House has taken inspiration from many eras of architecture such as, Beaux- Arts, Renaissance and Gothic. This blend of architecture reflects the influence various countries and generations had on the building. Standing tall, this monument of Port of Spain represents the diverse culture of Trinidad and has been restored and maintained multiple times to proudly display Trinidad’s history. The walls of The Red House acts as a safe for major moments of history and lessons that must be protected for future generations.

Likewise, The National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago has deteriorated over time. The historical building similar to The Red House was “originally established in 1892 as the Royal Victoria Institute to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria” (Ramdas). However, as time passed this prestigious building has begun to

slowly fall apart, from the outside, viewers witness cracks in the wall, pieces crumbling and ready to collapse and overhead window coverings struggling to hold on. With great demand for the building as a home for artefacts and artworks that reflect Trinidad's heritage the need for rehabilitation is emphasised. Its restoration is estimated to cost around 27 million initially, but this can easily increase as time goes on as seen in the restoration process of The Red House.



Figure 8

Image of Damage seen at The National Museum

Source: Shania Warris, March 2023

The national museum plays an important role in Trinidad's culture as it becomes a safety deposit box for artefacts of the first people as well as artworks from multiple generations. In order to safeguard these items, the building's foundation must be reinforced. In doing so the art of architecture protects other artworks. Furthermore, the museum, for years, has spotlighted the works of upcoming artists from the University of the West Indies who have pursued an art or design degree. These students are given an opportunity to showcase artworks produced from their final year to the public. This is crucial as the National Museum is held in high regard and demands an audience because of its prestige. The building is in dire need of restoration as the outer appearance must reflect the importance of the content held inside.

Restoration has always been an integral part of art conservation and can be considered the most sought after. However, the process of restoration is not an easily accessible or cost-efficient method. This is where other means of preservation come into play. The past is dictated by existing objects, things that have survived time and can give future generations an idea of the past. Art history is no different. Art historians are able to define art eras, styles, and notable artists by works that have endured time. However, what about artworks that have been lost or destroyed with no documentation of them? Could it have impacted the art history that is known? These questions emphasize the importance of art conservation and the importance of documentation. While restoration is one option, there are instances of vandalism, extreme weathering and damage that cannot be reversed by restoration. Documentation acts as a backup and aids in immortalizing artworks. By taking pictures and placing them into books and with recent technologies such as hard drives or websites, the works are given longevity on various platforms. The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago has taken responsibility for safeguarding and documenting Trinidad's architectural heritage. In their book *The Built Heritage of Trinidad and Tobago* 50 heritage sites are documented with photographs accompanied by brief descriptions of the site as well as its history. The book features the architecture of Trinidad's aboriginal people and stresses that little is recorded and left of them but highlights the importance of remembering how their homes were constructed:

In Trinidad, we call it the Ajoupa and it was constructed of wood and roofed with palm leaves. Saplings and any wood recoverable by simple means and later by the use of an axe were used together with tapia, a mixture of clay, water and grass, if walls were needed. All of these local materials, so local that they are available within a short distance from the site (The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 11).

As the book progresses, readers are exposed to residential homes, religious monuments, The Magnificent Seven and even a Tomb. When comparing the humble architecture of an Ajoupa using materials that were provided by local nature to buildings from the Magnificent Seven, readers witness a progression of Trinidad's architecture and how drastically it evolved. When considering Roomor, designed by a French architect, it is revealed that materials were sourced from many parts of the world. "The marble from Italy, the tiles from France and the cast iron elements from Scotland. The wood for the rafters came from an estate in Erin owned by the Ambard family" (The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, 73). This book is a gift to Trinidad that memorialises heritage sites that once physically lost, they are gone forever. It gives these buildings new life and engraves them into history for future generations to appreciate if they are no longer physically present.

Besides books such as the one previously discussed, artists of Trinidad have also been documenting its built heritage through drawing, paintings, and other mediums of art. It may be unknown to some but artists who render architecture in their artwork have been documenting these sites for centuries. Jackie Hinkson is a well-known Trinidadian artist who has graciously recorded the island's cultural history in his work. In the 1980s, The National Museum of Trinidad and Tobago commissioned Hinkson to create a body of work that reflected Trinidad's architecture at the time. This significant body of work comprising 70 pieces, documents vernacular architecture, destroyed buildings and provides a resource to examine the use of buildings in Trinidad and Tobago. The curators tried to present private dwellings (humble and grand), public buildings (regal and derelict), multi-purpose facilities, our agriculture heritage, and our everyday visual experiences such as the village shop (UWI Today, 2012).

From these 70 pieces, 14 were chosen to be shown at an exhibition *Disappearing Architecture*, at the Alma Jordan Library of The UWI. Through this we see how institutions play an integral role in the documentation aspect of preservation. These establishments have afforded architecture new life outside its standard realm of existing just as a building, it becomes more through photography, painting, and drawing, surviving through other art forms.

While restoration is an established form of conservation, it is costly and time consuming, however, it is often necessary. Thankfully, the method of documentation to preserve architectural cultural heritage can be implemented for sites that are not given the luxury of restoration. By utilising various methods of conservation that may be more accessible, a larger quantity of cultural heritage can be safeguarded.

### Chapter 3: The Undoubtable Role of Art Collectors

Museums and exhibitions may be thought of as the central location to finding all things art, however, it is art collectors and buyers who afford these establishments the ability to flourish because without them there would not be a continuous production of art and there would be a lack of artwork to display. As claimed by Etchster Eddie, art collectors are “people who buy original or rare pieces and have an interest in the story of those pieces. Art collectors often purchase in one or multiple themes which could include artists, art movements, [or] subject matter.”

Museums are set up in such a way that they must follow regulations and societal standards when purchasing and displaying artworks, conversely, collectors are allowed to invest in works they appreciate as it is privately owned but can be shown publicly if desired. The Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago has its own art collection as an investment into preserving and developing the islands’ heritage through art. The organisation has been collecting work for over 50 years and has accumulated a great deal of artworks over this time from influential artists of Trinidad; some of whom include Boscoe Holder, Peter Minshall, Sybil Atteck and many others. The collection was established in 1964 and comprised fifty-two (52) pieces at the time (Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago). Trinidad’s culture has been accumulated and protected for later generations. The majority of collected pieces are showcased in The Central Bank Museum and are sometimes borrowed by other institutes to produce a show for various audiences to witness. When conducting an interview with Mrs. Nimah Muwakil-Zakuri, The Central Bank’s art curator, methods of art conservation were exposed. While restoration has been a key component in maintaining architectural heritage with some documentation, and preventative conservation was highlighted as a strategy used in the care of public art, the

collection reveals how all four aspects of conservation can be utilized. The Central Bank collection has been significantly documented by the bank's *The Art Book* which showcases high quality images of the collection along with essays to accompany each piece. Originally the book was meant to be, "an educational resource for students and researchers at all levels," (Muwakil-Zakuri) but it has become a lasting documentation of the collection. Alternatively, the collection has been intentionally recorded on the Museum Collection Management Software, *PastPerfect*, this software has been designed by museum professionals to manage, catalogue and store artworks digitally in a cost-effective way. *PastPerfect* is described as a Collections Management Solution (CSM) that catalogues everything a collection might need, from photographs and history to loans and reports (Curran). By utilising this software, the collection is safeguarded and is immortalized on desktops or cloud-based programs. This becomes essential for pieces that become compromised or are unable to be restored as well as a backup for unexpected disaster. The bank's collection has heavily invested in preventative conservation. While they have a multitude of artworks on display some are kept in designated storage that have been designed with environmental harms in mind. Storage areas are, "equipped with temperature controls and dehumidifiers," (Muwakil-Zakuri), as drastic temperature shifts can alter works, stretched paintings can become warped, paint fades when exposed to extreme lighting or direct sunlight, and humidity encourages the growth of mold. Environmental conditions are not the only worry when it comes to preventative conservation, vandals and thieves play an increasingly harmful role when it comes to art. As discussed previously, a number of Trinidad's citizens refuse to respect art so much so that many profound pieces have been vandalised. To avoid mischievous behaviour the bank has implemented protocols for instances of attempted theft or defacement; security cameras, security locking mechanism and regular security patrols are some measures put

in place. While this equipment can be costly, the price paid from lost artwork and its history is more significant. Moreover, The Central Bank is known to loan select pieces for exhibitions if requested. Recently, Dr. Marsha Pearce curated a show entitled *A Whole History Still* at the Rotunda Gallery of over 20 pieces, displayed in commemoration of Trinidad and Tobago's diamond jubilee of independence. From these, 5 pieces were borrowed from The Central Bank Museum including pieces from Vera Baney, LeRoy Clarke, Christopher Cozier, Cynthia McLean and Audley Sue Wing. Muwakil-Zakuri explains how loans are carried out to ensure the care of artworks:

There is a process for approval of requests for loans, once approved an "Outgoing Loan Form" is drafted that both the borrowing institution and the Central Bank would sign.

This acts as a legally binding agreement should the work of art be damaged or otherwise compromised during the period of the loan. Artwork is handled by staff of the Central Bank Museum who package and transport the items to the borrowing institution. If the loan is overseas, then an appropriate company is hired to do the packaging and shipping.

Once this lengthy process is completed, institutions that request artworks must show proof of insurance coverage for the duration of which the piece will be loaned. Staff from The Central Bank Museum then do extensive checks on the location of the exhibition.

Preventative conservation aids in protecting the collection from unnecessary harm, however, there is always possibility for damage due to time. Artists were not always aware of reactions caused over time and how their works such as paintings hold up. For many painters who would have painted on untreated wood, over time chemical reactions occur that discolour the original piece. Artists must now consider the durability and quality of materials used to assist museums, collectors, and others in the preservation of their art. For older works that have faced a battle

with time, examination and treatment must come into play for preservation. Examination was highlighted by Mrs. Muwakil-Zakuri, explaining that artworks are inspected and evaluated every six months while periodic checks are put into place for specific pieces. These examinations can then be followed up with any treatment that might be necessary. When it comes to fine arts, cleaning is all that is required to return works to their original state. Once major cleaning is necessary, work is handed over to professional restorers. However, mounts and frames are cleaned by the bank's staff with clean damp clothes, and "works under glass are cleaned with a special mild (ammonia free and alcohol free) glass cleaner with a microfiber towel [specifically] for artwork" (Muwakil-Zakuri). If works are evaluated and restoration becomes vital, the art is repaired by a reputable restorer. Rather than monetary gain from investing in art, The Central Bank invests to gain and share cultural heritage for anyone willing to take time to appreciate the collection. Not only have they invested in artworks but also the upkeep and preservation of these works to maintain it for future generations to cherish. By supporting art with no gain in mind but as a means to showcase culture, it reveals the care and love organisations such as this pay to the twin island.

From the attentive level of care the Central Bank Museum provides its art, citizens, museums, and galleries can learn ways in which artwork can be preserved. Organisations such as Y Art Gallery have taken measures to document works displayed in their exhibitions. The gallery has created an accessible website that highlights past exhibitions with photographs of all artworks shown. Works from artists such as Christopher Cozier, Peter Minshall and Irénée Shaw can be accessed as well as previous artist talks from other artists. While the gallery does not have a private collection like the Central Bank, they have taken action to document art so the public can readily access this information. These steps can be implemented throughout Trinidad to

emphasise the importance of conserving cultural heritage to share with future generations. Not only this but it also educates the public on the significance of art.

Art collectors are tasked with collecting and preserving cultural history through art. They become integral in safeguarding cultural heritage. Due to this, The Central Bank Museum has taken great initiative when it comes to the conservation of their collection. The collection demonstrates the ideal for the conservation of cultural heritage by utilising the four pillars: documentation, preventative conservation, examination, and treatment. This becomes a guideline for what can and should be done to protect Trinidad's art.

## Conclusion

Trinidad has witnessed the destruction and lack of care of many artworks. Over decades little has changed in the attitudes of citizens when it comes to the treatment of art. However, governments and corporations such as the National Trust and Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago have taken much initiative to conserve Trinidad's cultural heritage. Architectural heritage sites are examined and treated to uphold their history. When restoration is difficult or not possible, documentation is implemented. Moreover, the Central Bank has taken meticulous care of their collection to be able to share with generations to come. In this it can be seen how groups are coming together to preserve cultural heritage. However, this attitude must be adopted by citizens of Trinidad when it comes to public art and art as a whole. There must be protocols put in place to deter vandals but also to emphasize the importance of protecting and appreciating Trinidad's diverse art.

## Appendix A: Figure Showing the Breakdown of costs for the restoration of The Red House

Package	Element of Work	Contractor	Contract Sum
#1	Site Work and Demolition	Construction Services and Supplies Ltd	\$2,040,930.40
#2	Structure and Blockwork	Adams Project Management & Construction Ltd	\$32,300,921.23
#3	Seismic Retrofitting	Tohmatsu Technologies Limited	\$37,265,054.01
#4	Internal and External Render	ASAT Innovative Construction Co. Ltd.	\$38,498,100.00
#5	Roofing and Associated Carpentry Works	Construction Services and Supplies Ltd	\$20,114,497.39
#6	Bird Eradication and Termite Treatment	UNICOM Limited	\$998,965.80
#7	Doors and Windows	ASAT Innovative Construction Co. Ltd.	\$51,247,580.00
#8	Metal Works	Yube's Contracting Services Ltd	\$18,884,090.00
#9	Plumbing Installation	Anthony James Plumbing, Maintenance and Construction Services Ltd.	\$7,430,902.95
#10	Air Conditioning Installation	Abel Building Solutions	\$13,943,220.38
#10A	Air Conditioning Installation	All Temp Limited	\$13,091,545.56
#11	Sprinkler Installation	Frank Moutett Limited	\$4,193,490.40
#12	Lift Installation	RBP Lifts Limited	\$4,501,795.00
#13	Electrical Installation	Lezama Electrical Services Limited	\$60,042,811.03

Package	Element of Work	Contractor	Contract Sum
#14	Floor, Wall and Ceiling Finishes	UNICOM Limited	\$42,434,470.45
#14A	Floor, Wall and Ceiling Finishes	NH International (Caribbean) Ltd.	\$17,173,985.28
#15	External Works	NH International (Caribbean) Ltd./FIDES	\$27,782,802.96
#16	Enabling Works – Scaffolding	Scaffolding Experts Company Ltd	\$3,056,593.75
#17	Temporary Roof Removal	Amcowed Engineering Services Ltd	\$2,282,296.50
#18	TV Broadcasting Services	Media 21 Limited	\$6,950,000.00
#19	Radio Broadcasting Services	Stega Engineering Limited	\$995,500.00
#20	CCTV, Access Controls, Intrusion Alarms	Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago	\$8,194,997.68
#21	Furniture Fit-Out	Bewil & Company Limited	\$3,643,713.81
#22	Structured Cabling – Voice & Data	Karik Systems	\$2,264,492.74
<b>Sub Total</b>			<b>\$419,332,757.33</b>
<b>Contingency</b>			<b>\$21,667,242.67</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			<b>TTD\$ 441 Million</b>

NB.....Almost exclusively awarded to Local Contractors.

Figure 9

Diagram of Table Showing the Breakdown of costs for the restoration of The Red House

Source: News Room, Jan 2020

Appendix B: Images showing damages on The National Museum of Trinidad and Tobago



Figure 10

Additional Image of Damage seen at The National Museum

Source: Shania Warris, March 2023

Appendix C: Interview with Central Bank's Curator Mrs. Nimah Muwakil-Zakuri

- 1) With such a large collection, are there pieces that have been archived and if so how are they stored?
- 2) Beyond sharing your extensive art collection with the public, was there another purpose for creating "The Art Collection" book?
- 3) Besides existing books, are there other methods of documentation for the collection?
- 4) When requested for exhibitions, how are artworks handled and transported?
- 5) What measures are in place to safeguard loaned pieces?
- 6) Is the collection often examined to assess the condition of the artworks?
- 7) If damaged or aged, how are artworks repaired or restored? Is there an existing restoration team/ committee?
- 8) How does the Central Bank protect artwork against environmental dangers such as, temperature, humidity, pests and others?
- 9) Are there security measures in place to deter/ prevent vandal or thieves that may target the artworks?
- 10) Is the collection often cleaned, if so, how?

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