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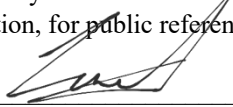
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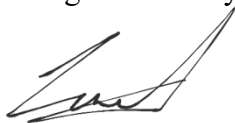
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ABSTRACT

Art has always been a powerful means of expression and communication, serving as a reflection of society and its values. In the case of Port of Spain, Trinidad, public art has played a significant role in shaping the city's cultural identity since the 19th century. From sculptures and monuments commemorating colonial figures to more contemporary and inclusive forms like street art and murals the evolution of public art in this Trinidad's metropolis showcases its rich history and diverse community. In this thesis, we will delve into the social and historical context of public art in Port of Spain, exploring how it reflects the people, events, and values that have contributed to its evolution over time.

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INTRODUCTION

Public art serves as a visual record of historical events, societal changes, and cultural evolution. Analyzing the social and historical context of public art in Port-of-Spain allows for a deeper understanding of the narratives embedded in the city's artistic expressions.

Through an exploration of the social and historical forces at play, this paper investigates how public art in Port of Spain has functioned as a visual dialogue, echoing the city's collective memory and contributing to its socio-cultural narrative.

The paper also aims towards exploring and analyzing the social and historical factors that inform the creation and reception of public art within Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. By using case studies and examining notable installations, this research will bring a broader understanding of the role arts in public spaces play in the culture of Port-of-Spain as well as invaluable insights for future designs and interventions based on art. On-site observation and literature research were the primary research methods used in order to identify the expectations and reasons behind the creation of public art and public space initiatives, this study mostly employed qualitative techniques including field surveys of public art, interviews, and examinations of documents and archives on art.

CHAPTER ONE

The city of Port-of-Spain, situated in the Caribbean Island of Trinidad and Tobago, is well-known for its lively culture and extensive history. This is clearly demonstrated through its public art scene, which serves as a reflection of the city's diverse and dynamic heritage. Public art has been an integral part of Port-of-Spain since the early 20/19th century, with monuments and places like the "Red House" and "Queen's Park Savannah" paying homage to significant events and figures in the nation's past.

After being colonised by the Spanish in the late 15th century, Port-of-Spain was subsequently taken over by the British in the 18th century. Due to its colonial past, the city has a diverse population and set of customs that reflect elements of Spanish, British, African, Indian, Chinese, and indigenous cultures.

Over its history, Port-of-Spain has seen substantial migratory flows. Afro- and Indo-Trinidadian groups were founded as a result of the colonial era's importation of labour for plantations from Africa and India. More recently, people have moved to the city in pursuit of work due to economic prospects, leaving rural communities and nearby islands behind.

DEFINITION OF PUBLIC ART

“Public art is a manifestation of how we see the world—the artist's reflection of our social, cultural, and physical environment” - Penny Bach

Bach (2001) defines public art as any kind of artistic expression that is placed in a publicly accessible area for the general public to use.

Chang (2008) defines public art as any artistic expression made by an artist for the general public. Examples include street furniture, sculptures, murals, mobile art installations, and cultural activities held in publicly accessible locations.

But just because an artistic manifestation is outdoors doesn't mean it has to fit a classification, according to Sharp et al. (2005) and Hein (1996). It necessitates assimilating the local spirit and seeing the locality reflected in the public art. This is corroborated by Doezeema (1977), who proposed that considering the chemistry between the material and the audience is necessary to comprehend the purposes of public art. Furthermore, as Philips (1992) claimed, art only completely becomes public when it adopts the concept of public as its starting point.

Everyone has unforgettable experiences thanks to public art, which instils meaning, a stronger sense of identity, and an awareness of the places we live, work, and visit. It can support community growth, humanise the built environment, and create a point of intersection between the past, present, and future. It enables onlookers to interact with them directly. Public art is unique, magnificent, and unlike anything else.

PUBLIC ART IN PORT-OF-SPAIN

Public art holds great significance in any city, and this is no different for the lively city of Port-of-Spain. It serves as a means to enhance the beauty of public spaces while also reflecting the culture and history of its residents. According to Floyd (2016), the research findings demonstrate the interconnectedness between the artwork itself, the location where it is situated, and the individuals who reside in that particular place. This statement emphasizes that public art not only impacts the physical environment but also profoundly influences the people who inhabit it. The presence of public art fosters a sense of identity and belonging among community members, creating a shared connection and pride for their city.

In the case of Port-of-Spain, public art plays a significant role in shaping this sense of community. The wide range of public art pieces scattered throughout the city showcases its rich historical and cultural heritage. From murals depicting local traditions to sculptures honouring influential figures, each artwork adds depth and character to this bustling metropolis. Furthermore, public art acts as a catalyst for social change and awareness within society. It has the power to draw attention to important issues and initiate conversations about current events. It is evident that public art plays a vital role in shaping not only the physical spaces but also the societal values and beliefs within Port-of-Spain. As Floyd (2016) suggests, there exists an inseparable bond between artworks, their location, and the people who inhabit those areas. In Port-of-Spain, you can find a diverse array of public art that encompass various forms and themes, including:

- 1) Memorial Artwork
- 2) Festival Artwork

- 3) Expressive Artwork
- 4) Community Artwork

Memorial Artwork

Memorial artworks are created to honour a notable historical person or occasion that has broad public interest. It may include historical markers, monuments, memorials, and sculptures that are abstract or figurative. Historic public art promotes a sense of community and fosters a link to the past; most historical artworks are associated with well-known individuals or historical occurrences.



Figure 1: Memorial Park Cenotaph

The National War Memorial, situated at Memorial Park Port -of- Spain, pays tribute to Trinidad and Tobagonian troops who served in both World Wars I and II and lost their lives in combat. It's a solemn and significant site for remembrance and reflection. Another significant war memorial is the Cenotaph, which is located in front of the Red House in Port-of-Spain, the location of Trinidad and Tobago's parliament. It honours the Trinidadian and Tobagonian troops who fought and lost their lives in both world wars.

Festival Artwork

Hall and Robertson (2001) state that public art usually contributes to an area's feeling of place in two ways. First, a place's distinct character and understanding of tradition are brought to light by public art. Second, it uses unique physical identities to create artwork that communicates a sense of place. Artwork from festivals offers a way to interact with big and varied audiences. It creatively communicates the community members' memories, customs, traditions, values, and goal.



Figure 2: A charcoal drawing by Donald Hinkson that shows the Canboulay riots in 1881.



Figure 3: Jackie Hinkson mural Band of the Year.



Figure 4: Jackie Hinkson street exhibition.

Local artist Jackie Hinkson curated a wall-drive by street exhibition of Carnival inspired murals and sculptures on Fisher Avenue St Ann's on February 5th to 14th, 2021. It featured five feet by eight feet panels comprising four murals of varying lengths along the walls of his neighbour's and his home. On display were works titled Masquerade, From Canboulay to Beyonce, 2020 and Band of the Year.

Also on display were cedar sculptures of traditional Carnival characters: Midnight Robber, a combination of a bat and imp and fancy sailor.

At this time the world was experiencing a shift due to Covid-19 and everyone was in lockdown. In an interview with the Newsday, Hinkson stated, the idea of the street exhibition originated at the beginning of the pandemic when he felt pressured to address numerous social and political issues that were taking place as well as this year's postponed Carnival events. He believed that if he represented these issues using Carnival characters in a symbolic or metaphorical manner, it would create an engaging visual story.

He expressed that his work "for the main part" is meant to convey ideas about social life and general observations, rather than to be an exact portrayal of Carnival.

Expressive/Aesthetic Artwork

Public art embodies the fundamental idea of art, which is to enhance areas, in terms of its aesthetic worth.

According to Hall (2003), art has historically been exhibited in public spaces as a means of enhancing aesthetics and serving as a container for memories. Furthermore, according to Baker (1998), art is seen to revitalise cities by improving public areas.

The main goal of expressive artworks is to provide a sense of artistic vibrancy, playfulness, excitement, and joy into the everyday lives of the public. They accomplish this by integrating things into public areas.



Figure 5: “The Caribbean Sea Which Unites Us” by UWI, Visual Arts Unit in collaboration with the Embassy of Colombia in Trinidad and Tobago July 20, 2022.

The mural above located at the National Library and Information System Authority (NALIS) in Port of Spain showcases the splendour of Colombia and Trinidad & Tobago.

In honour of Colombia's 212th year of independence, the Colombian government gave the painting to Trinidad and Tobago and the city of Port of Spain through Martha Cecilia Pinilla Perdomo, the country's ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago.

The artwork, "The Caribbean Sea That Unites Us," was created by Colombian muralist Paula Osoria Pineda with help from Shireen Ragoobir and Shania Warris, two local artists from the University of the West Indies.

The mural features images of flora and fauna as well as cultural scenes and photographs of hummingbirds from Trinidad and Tobago and Colombia.

Trinidad's Maracas Beach is depicted, while also recognising that "Maracas" is a Spanish word for an instrument filled with percussive elements that produce sound when shaken. Sites of community and exchange are portrayed through scenes from carnivals and merchants under umbrellas at markets.

Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs Dr. Amery Browne said the gift is yet another tribute to the strong ties between both nations and we will see illustrated on the walls is a representation of Colombia and Trinidad and Tobago sharing an enduring bond through our shared Caribbean heritage.

Dr. Marsha Pearce, lecturer and coordinator of the visual arts unit at the UWI St Augustine campus said. "Libraries are critical resources for accessing knowledge about ourselves and the world. Art also functions as an important vehicle for knowledge—for understanding who we are and imagining who we want to be. Art fosters dialogue."

In her statement she sees art as an essential tool for knowledge acquisition, self-reflection, and dialogue. It plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of ourselves and the world, fostering critical thinking, and enriching our cultural and intellectual lives.

Community Artwork

By fostering awareness and inquiry into the community, public art can strengthen a sense of community. According to Swales (1992), four essential community values—shared history, identity, needs, and aspirations—are necessary for public art initiatives to succeed in the public sphere. Public art, according to Hall and Robertson (2001), also fosters a feeling of community

by promoting shared values, cultural norms, and identity. Therefore, showcasing the sense of community through public art is a significant revival of the public domain.

By encouraging collaborations between visual arts experts and community members to produce works of creative excellence, community artworks engage the varied communities.



Figure 6: A mural done by students from various schools in Port of Spain shows a monastery garden in honour of St. Francis of Assisi at St. Francis R.C. Church, Belmont.

This initiative was a communication module that included students from various schools in Port of Spain. The 160-foot mural depicting a monastery garden was created in commemoration of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of all living things and the environment.

The project's goal is to raise awareness in the community and around the country about the vital need to address the protection and conservation of our natural and constructed heritage. It does this by highlighting the need for cooperation, collaboration, and consensus among individuals.

There is more to public art than just memorials, monuments, and paintings. It is observable proof of our common humanity. The kind of public art that a place has can reveal a lot about it; it's like a cultural barometer, or sometimes the lack of public art might reveal something.

CHAPTER TWO

The overarching subject of this thesis statement is the role of public art in Port of Spain as a reflection of the city's dynamic social history and its contribution to the formation of communal identity. More specifically highlighting how public art serves as a medium through which the evolving narratives of the city's people, the impact of historical events, and the influence of art intersect to shape the socio-cultural landscape of Port of Spain. The thesis aims to investigate how public art functions as a visual dialogue, echoing the collective memory of the city and contributing to its broader socio-cultural narrative. In order to examine these meanings, I will be tracing the roots of public art in Port of Spain which includes studying the historical, cultural, and social elements that have shaped the growth and development of art in the city.

Case Study 1: Statue of Christopher Columbus

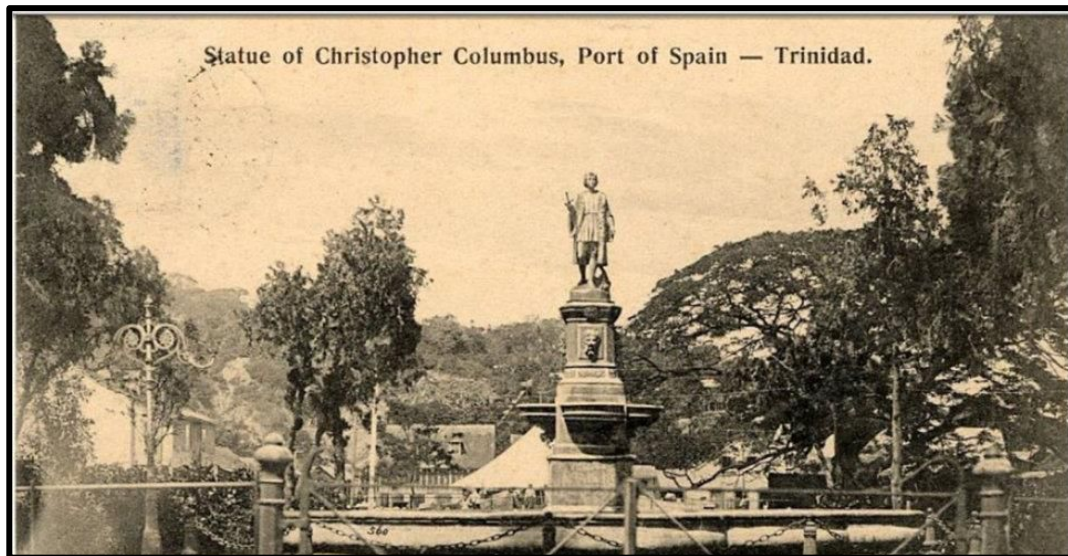


Figure 7: Statue of Christopher Columbus in Columbus Square, near Independence Square and Duncan Street at the Port of Spain in Trinidad, Spain (1908).

It is most likely that the early 1880's saw the commissioning of the late 19th-century bronze statue of Christopher Columbus. It was a part of a tradition in many colonial capitals to honour European explorers and colonists with monuments that served as emblems of civilization and conquest.

Christopher Columbus first encountered Trinidad on July 31, 1498, during his third voyage to the Americas. During his exploration of Trinidad, Columbus encountered indigenous peoples belonging to the Arawak and Carib tribes. He observed their settlements and documented their customs and way of life.

His encounters with the native population marked the beginning of European contact and colonization in Trinidad.

The statue was presented to the city of Port of Spain by Mr. Hypolite Borde, a prominent figure and wealthy cacao proprietor. Borde's donation facilitated the construction and installation of the statue in Columbus Square. The unveiling of the Columbus statue took place in 1881 by Governor Sir William A G Young at Columbus Square, which is located east of the Roman Catholic Cathedral.

The Columbus statue holds cultural significance within the context of Trinidad and Tobago's history. It symbolizes the colonial legacy of European exploration and conquest in the Americas, as well as the complex and often contested narratives surrounding Christopher Columbus and his role in history.

A description of the space a few years later (1887) runs thus:

"Columbus Square, to the east of the Roman Catholic Cathedral, is surrounded by an iron palisading. It was laid out and planted with ornamental shrubs by the Corporation, to whom it belongs. The handsome fountain, which was presented by the late Mr Hypolite Borde, a wealthy cacao proprietor, is surmounted by a bronze statue of one whose memory should be perpetuated in this colony—Christopher Columbus. This statue was unveiled and the Square opened with some ceremony by the late Governor Young in 1881. This end of the town used formerly to be much neglected, but the recent embellishments have greatly improved its appearance, and once a month, on the third Thursday, the Police Band plays at the usual hour, from 5 to 6 PM."

This passage tells me that art, in the form of the bronze statue of Christopher Columbus and the ornamental shrubs, contributes to the beautification of Columbus Square. The presence of these aesthetic elements enhanced the visual appeal of the space, making it more attractive and inviting to visitors.

Public art can play a role in shaping the identity of a community. In this case, the statue of Columbus and the improvements made to the square reflect the values and aspirations of the community. The fact that the Police Band performed in the square once a month implies that it functions as a neighbourhood social hub, a nice atmosphere that encourages recreation, social contact and community interaction .

"This end of the town used formerly to be much neglected, but the recent embellishments have greatly improved its appearance." This suggests that art and beautification efforts can contribute to urban renewal and revitalization initiatives and attract investment in the area.

Case Study 2: The Cenotaph at Memorial Park



Figure 8: The Memorial Park Port-of-Spain Trinidad

A real gem is the Memorial Park in Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago. This verdant haven amidst the metropolis blends history, culture, art, and nature. It's impressive monuments and rich biodiversity serve as a tribute to the nation's past and present.

The Cenotaph at Memorial Park is among the somberest memorials of the part Trinidad and Tobago played in the atrocities of two World Wars. Many of Trinidad and Tobago's young men joined various corps to fight for their monarch, they were from a variety of backgrounds, from the sons of wealthy plantation owners to impoverished black men just seeking a chance.

In light of the horrific deaths that were reported more than 200 men from Trinidad and Tobago died. A public conference was called at the Princes Building on August 4, 1916, under the direction of Dr. Enrique Prada, the mayor of Port-of-Spain, to consider the creation of a permanent memorial for the deceased.

The Cenotaph bears the inscriptions "L.F. ROSLYN Sc. LONDON" and "L.F. ROSLYN R.B.S. LONDON" on its eastern and northern faces, respectively. British sculptor Louis Fritz Roselieb (1878–1934) was well-known for his sculptures and war memorials from World War I, and was hired by Sir John Chancellor, the Governor General of Trinidad and Tobago, to create the war memorial.

On May 1, 1924, Sir Samuel Wilson laid the cenotaph's foundation stone. Coins, newspaper clippings, and a time capsule recording the project's history were also inserted into the foundation.

The monument was unveiled on June 28, 1924 and described in the Port-of-Spain Gazette as follows:

“The memorial is of portland stone and bronze, with a set of four granite steps around the base constructed on a solid circular concrete foundation about 18 feet across.

Standing squarely on the granite steps is the massive base of the column, let into which are the bronze panels engraved with the names of the fallen, some 168 in number. Rising immediately above this are three emblematic groups of statuary—one in front and one on either side. The front represents Courage—the figure of a soldier armed with a rifle, standing guard over and defending a dying comrade who lies on the ground at his feet.

The side groups are the prows of ships emblematic of the part taken in the war by the Royal Navy and the Mercantile Marine, and on each is seated a female figure—the one on the South in a pensive attitude reading the scroll of Fame, the other on the North, bearing a laurel wreath, emblematic of the tender care of the sick and fallen.”

The primary significance of the Cenotaph is to serve as a memorial to honour the soldiers from Trinidad and Tobago who sacrificed their lives in World War I and World War II. The cenotaph also serves as an educational tool for the community, especially younger generations, to learn about the country's history and its involvement in global conflicts.

Case Study 3: Statue of Arthur Andrew Cipriani

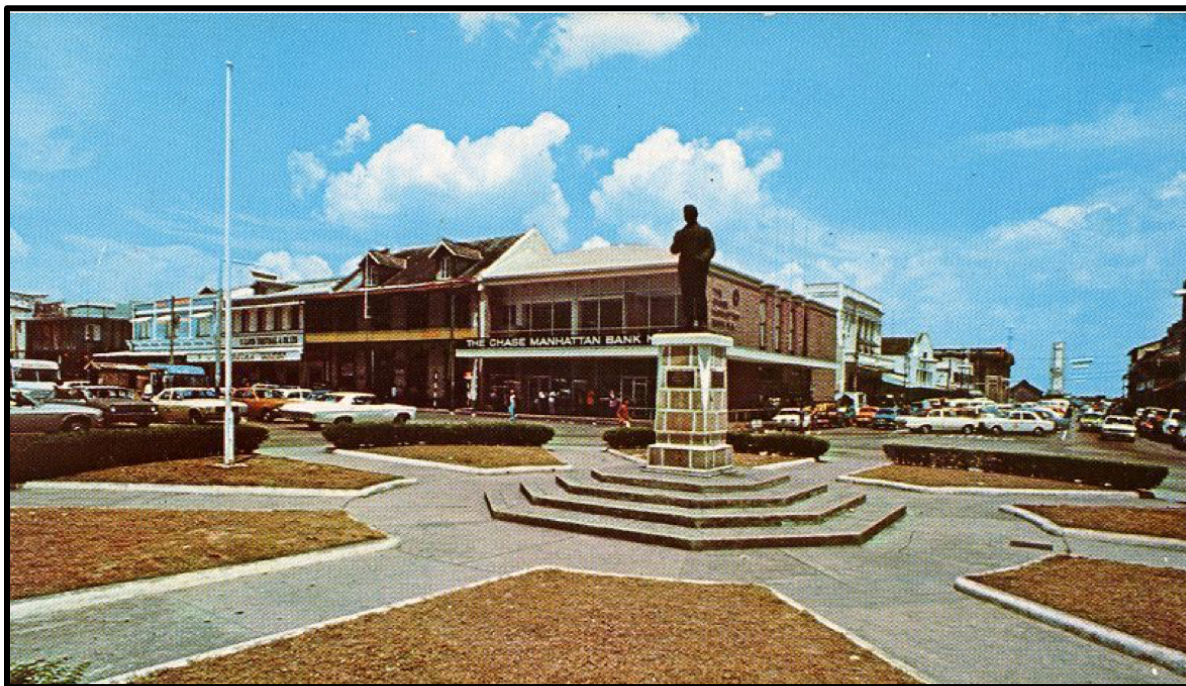


Figure 9: Independence Square Port-of-Spain Trinidad

Known by most as "Captain Cipriani," Arthur Andrew Cipriani was a well-known political figure in Trinidad and Tobago in the early 20th century who supported social justice and workers' rights. He was a key figure in the labour movement and a strong supporter of the working class who pushed for changes to social welfare programmes, better working conditions, and fair pay.

Cipriani's leadership and activities were crucial in opposing colonial rule and promoting greater independence and self-governance for Trinidad and Tobago. He became a symbol of resistance and defiance against British colonial control by organising rallies and demonstrations against colonial policies and abuses.

The statue of Captain Cipriani which is situated on Independence Square, Port-of-Spain serves as a lasting tribute to his legacy and contributions to Trinidadian society. It symbolizes his enduring impact on the country's political and social development and reinforces his status as a cultural icon and national hero. It also represents the values of democracy, social justice, and empowerment that he stood for during his lifetime. It serves as a source of inspiration and pride for Trinidadian and Tobagonian citizens, especially those who continue to advocate for equality and human rights in contemporary society.

Case Study 4- The Emancipation Support Committee of Trinidad and Tobago

“It is important that people’s physical space be reflective of themselves and their history through symbols and other kinds of imagery that allowed people to connect with themselves.”

Many of the monuments in Port of Spain Trinidad at the time were remnants of our colonial past, and they did not reflect the realities faced by African Americans living in the city at the time.

The Emancipation Support Committee (ESC) in Trinidad plays a pivotal role in various aspects of society, particularly concerning the commemoration, education, and advocacy surrounding the emancipation of enslaved Africans.

“We must start transforming our capital to reflect the history of the people who lived here and the people we believe ought to be honoured.”

- Zakiya Uzoma-Wadada

Arise

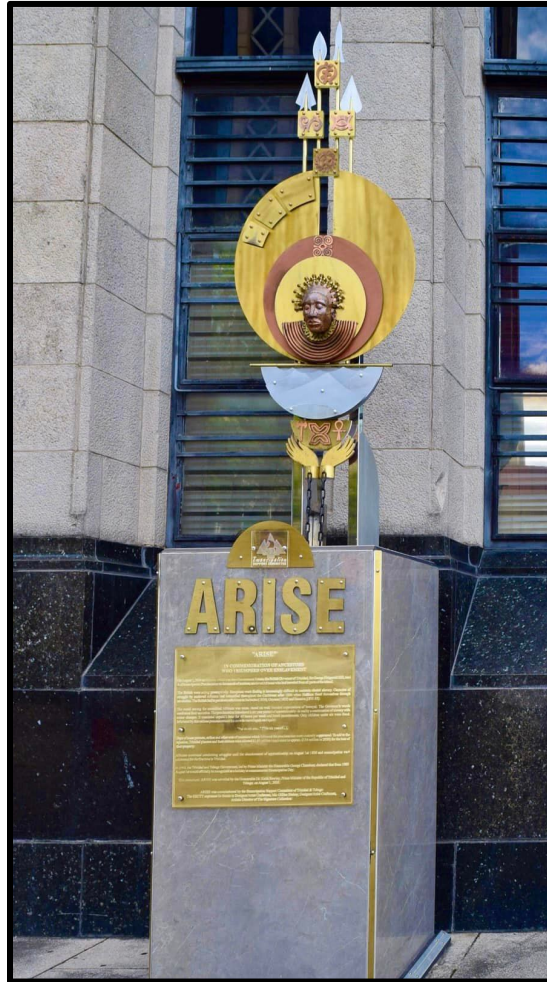


Figure 10: Arise, the Emancipation Monument in Port of Spain designed and created by Gillian Bishop.

The Arise Monument honours the liberation of Africans who had been held as slaves in Trinidad & Tobago and other Caribbean countries. It is to be a potent representation of liberation, tenacity, and victory over centuries of enslavement and persecution. The memorial honours those who gave their lives defending their freedom and dignity.

The monument acts as a focal point for celebrations of freedom and cultural heritage, such as Emancipation Day commemorations. The monument unites people in remembrance of their ancestors' sacrifices and in affirmation of their shared commitment to justice and equality for all.

Designer and creator, Gillian Bishop who was commissioned to build the monument by the Emancipation Support Committee of TT (ESCTT) stated that she did not want the monument to portray an enslaved person. Constructed from brass, copper and aluminium, Arise, the Emancipation monument symbolises the remembrance, triumph, and hope of the slaves.

The artist's statement below explains the piece's numerous aspects and symbolism.

“It explores the term Arise, set in motion by the broken chains and hands that lift the African knowledge systems and spiritual traditions that lead to Freedom and Emancipation, to remembrance of the dark waves of the Middle Passage, the survival of the traffic in human beings, resistance and revolution against enslavement of African peoples. The sculpted head, a symbol of African, African descended, and Afro-Creole peoples occupies the focal centre of the sculpture. It is the symbol of the centrality of African humanity in the discussion of freedom and society. It faces forward, focussed and rises on the centre pole, the line of ascent that connects the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1834 to the aspirations represented in the symbolic spear points of Freedom, Dignity, Courage, Resilience. The vertical system by which the heraldry is devised shows the significance of African survival as cultural resource, and the pride of new creations. It positions the steelpan, the national instrument of TT, as having direct lineage to the West African symbols of Transformation, Energy, Universality and the Supremacy of the Divine.”

The artist's statement encapsulates themes of resilience, remembrance, empowerment, and cultural pride, inviting viewers to reflect on the enduring legacy of African-descended peoples and their contributions to the quest for freedom and dignity.

The monument was unveiled by Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley on Emancipation Day, August 1st 2020, after a ceremony in front of the Treasury Building on Independence Square.

The site of the Treasury Building is a noteworthy location in the historical account of slavery's end. Awaiting the official proclamation, enslaved Africans heard rumours of their imminent emancipation on August 1, 1834, in front of Governor's House, which is now the Treasury Building. Instead, what they heard provoked feelings of anger and disappointment as freedom would not come for another six years.

The declaration of freedom was a victory not just for the African people but also for the society of Trinidad and Tobago and the entire human race. As a result, a monument emphasising emancipation rather than servitude was placed at the location.

Yoruba Village Monument



Figure 11: The Yoruba monument in Port-of-Spain by artists Sherlann Peters and Maria Diaz

The Emancipation Support Committee (ESCTT) unveiled its Yoruba Village Monument, in tribute to the Yoruba Village Community and its rich heritage on June 18th 2022.

Similar to other African ethnic groups brought to Trinidad and Tobago under slavery, the Yoruba people experienced extreme suffering. Their religious traditions and beliefs were among the many aspects of their culture that survived the harsh conditions of slavery.

One of the last significant African settlements in Trinidad during the 1800's was the Yorubas in East Dry River, however other groups such as the Kongo and Rada people also made their home

in East Port of Spain. With their arrival, they brought their beliefs, language, and traditions, thus reinforcing the strong influence of West African culture and heritage in our society.

The Yoruba Village in Trinidad is primarily located in the areas of Laventille and Belmont in the capital city of Port of Spain.

The Yoruba Square memorialises the Yoruba of Trinidad. The square is situated at the southwest "entry" point of Yoruba Village, which is a collection of urban and suburban areas that includes John John, East Dry River, Gonzales, Laventille, Success Village, Belmont (formerly Freetown), and Morvant.

Artists Sherlann Peters and Maria Diaz were commissioned by the Emancipation Support Committee (ESC) to build the monument, which is made of sculpting putty and decorated with bronze oxidising paints and a patina, is a representation of a male and female Yoruba, as shown by the scarification on their faces.

The monument honours the connection between the diaspora and the country. It speaks of the community's fortitude and survival, its accomplishments and spirituality, and their idea of genuine emancipation.

The female figure constructed by Maria Diaz is holding a calabash bowl filled with black-eyed peas and a plant that is sprouting, which represents new life and the survival of African culture and tradition. She had cowrie shells, an anchor pendant hanging around her neck, and a gele (head wrap) on. Furthermore, as the national instrument originated in what was once known as Yoruba Village, her earrings resemble steelpan sticks, and her collar has a steelpan pattern.

The male figure built by Sherlann Peters is wearing a sankofa pendant and is clothed in traditional African attire, including an aso oke agbada and an abeti aja. While "sankofa" is

translated as "go back to the past and bring forward that which is useful" on the cola.siu.edu website, it is translated as "it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind" on berea.edu.

He is also holding a talking drum and stick which were banned during slavery, but from that ban came the evolution of the steelpan. With the music and rhythm, he's coming up the rear and guarding everyone. He embodies the celebration and the atmosphere of the area, which is fitting given the impact of African music on soca and calypso.

Scholars have also cited the Yoruba's influence on our language, as well as on our Carnival and calypso art forms.

Beyond dances, drumming and drum-making, calabash carving, metalworking, masks and masquerades, call-and-response songs, a wide variety of cuisines, susu (esusu), Saraka, herbal knowledge and herbal science, Ifa, folklore, and other cultural legacies, the Yoruba have been instrumental in preserving African culture in Trinidad.

National Security Minister and MP for Laventille west Fitzgerald Hinds at the unveiling stated that African consciousness is critical to Trinidad and Tobago's culture. Acknowledging this history is crucial for understanding the roots of the nation's cultural diversity and social dynamics, it also acknowledges their ancestral heritage and validates their cultural contributions to the nation's identity. In the social context, it represents a reclaiming of cultural identity and heritage, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and preserving African cultural traditions within Trinidadian society.

Some of the nation's most notable individuals, many of whom are also national heroes abroad, came from Yoruba Village such as Le Roi Clarke, David Rudder, Calypso Rose, George Bailey,

and Luthalo Masimba (Brother resistance). The Yoruba influence can be observed in their artistic expressions, cultural activism, and spiritual connections.

Findings:

The case studies done the Statue of Christopher Columbus, The Cenotaph at Memorial Park, Statue of Arthur Andrew Cipriani, Arise Monument and The Yoruba Village Monument in Port of Spain offer insights into the social and historical context of public art in the city. These artworks collectively illustrate the complex social and historical landscape of Port of Spain, highlighting themes of cultural diversity, resistance, political struggle, remembrance, and reconciliation. They offer insights into the city's rich tapestry of identities and narratives, shaping public discourse and memory within the urban environment.

CHAPTER THREE

Art, when put in a public space, becomes part of the built environment. It is important to have routine upkeep, such as cleaning outside artwork and replacing sealants or protective coatings due to water damage or gradual forms of deterioration caused by light, humidity and pollutants. As well as ensuring the safety of the spaces used for the installation and display of the artwork from vandalism and graffiti. In this chapter we will be exploring the challenges faced in creating and maintaining public art in Port-of -Spain, including controversies and debates surrounding public art as well as possibilities for public art in Port of Spain.

CHALLENGES FACED IN CREATING AND MAINTAINING

PUBLIC ART IN PORT-OF-SPAIN

1) Funding and Resources

Public art needs to be created by and for the people. The government may not allocate as much money for the arts and culture as it would like due to competing priorities and as a result, artists might not have enough financial backing to continue with their creative endeavours.

Artists may find that obtaining money from government agencies or cultural institutions entails intricate and bureaucratic procedures that need a significant investment of time and resources.

Additionally, there might not be as much appreciation or knowledge of the arts in Trinidad and Tobago, especially among decision-makers and possible sponsors. It could be difficult for artists to get support for their work if there isn't a strong sense of cultural appreciation.

In speaking to a few artists, I found that various organizations, government agencies, and philanthropic entities may have shifting priorities and funding cycles, making it challenging for artists to predict when and where funding opportunities will arise. Many artists also experience financial insecurity due to irregular income streams, inconsistent project opportunities, and low compensation for their work.

If an artist's project does not fit with the current trends in the arts business or the market need, they could have trouble getting funding. Funding agencies could give priority to initiatives that tackle urgent societal issues or have a strong commercial appeal, making less space available for unusual or specialised artistic pursuits. Establishing connections with possible sponsors, funders, or patrons is essential to obtaining funding. However, it could be challenging for artists to locate and take advantage of financing opportunities if they don't have access to networks within the arts community or relationships with possible benefactors.

2) Placement of Public Art

In order to draw attention to the presence of public art in public spaces, placement is crucial. There are two categories into which placement falls. The first placement category focuses more on physical location, whilst the second group is more concerned with placement in the public domain. By carefully considering both physical location and placement in the public domain,

public art installations can effectively engage with the general public over time. According to this strategy, effective public art installations ought to be more than just décor or decoration; rather, they ought to actively support the community's social cohesiveness, cultural identity, and civic life. They ought to elicit reflection, stimulate the creative process, and promote communication between various audiences. The ultimate objective is to develop a vibrant and enriching public space that encourages a feeling of connection, pride, and belonging among locals and visitors alike.

There are difficulties in placing public art in Port-of-Spain because of several issues, including homelessness, crime and vandalism.

In Port of Spain, where vandalism may occur due to various reasons such as social unrest, lack of civic pride, or even political motivations, placing public art in vulnerable locations becomes risky and presents significant challenges for the preservation and appreciation of public artworks.

The Art Society of Trinidad and Tobago along with corporate sponsors started the People's Canvas project. Former President George Maxwell Richards officially launched the project in September 2008. It served as a platform for the walls of the Queen's Park Oval which is located in Port of Spain to hold large-scale replicas of Trinidad and Tobago artists' creations. The artwork on the wall included pieces by well-known and up-and-coming artists whose goal was to beautify the nation's capital and introduce the public to works of art that they may not have previously seen.

In the month of December 2012 the art wall was vandalized, the vandalism of artwork on the outer wall of the Queen's Park Oval in Port-of-Spain, according to the board of the Art Society of Trinidad and Tobago, demonstrates the disregard for art in public areas. Twelve of the fourteen

artworks on the Oval's Tragarete Road wall were slashed, the lower halves of the prints were torn, some in more than one place.

Head of the Artists Coalition of Trinidad and Tobago, Rubadiri Victor stated in an interview with the express newspapers:

"We come from a culture where people don't feel a sense of ownership of things that are rightfully theirs, so at times they feel that things that are in the public space or civic space or in seemingly private spaces, are worthy targets of a rebellious act of vandalism, not recognising that the space that they are defacing is really their home."

In addition, he said, the initiative has brought up questions about what really qualifies as public art in Trinidad and Tobago. He points out that currently, most public art in the country consists of coloured, copied prints of original artwork rather than original commissioned pieces. He speculates that if there were more diverse and substantial examples of public art in both public and private spaces, there might be a greater appreciation among the population for the beautification of their surroundings. This could include various forms of art such as sculptures, graffiti, or any other form that contributes to the aesthetic enhancement of public spaces.

Essentially, he is advocating for the expansion and diversification of public art initiatives in Trinidad and Tobago to foster a deeper sense of ownership and appreciation for the community's environment.

Queen's Park Cricket Club (QPCC) CEO Richard Mowser in an interview with the Trinidad and Tobago Gaurdian (2012/12/27) stated they had to replace paintings in the past, but not to this degree. He indicated that the Queen's Park Cricket Club (QPCC) was investigating various options for future artwork protection. The paintings are made of cloth stretched over a frame, and

they are considering protecting them by mounting them over something stronger or by placing glass or something of that nature in front of them.

The harm done to the wall meant the project's complete collapse, in those days the Oval walls resembled a massive outdoor art gallery. As of 2024, the Oval wall has been plastered with ads and some walls left bare and empty.



Figure 12: The 2008 People's Canvas project on the walls of The Queen's Park Oval



Figure 13: Current state of The Queen's Parks Oval wall 2024.

High crime rates in certain areas of Port-of-Spain can deter the placement of public art, particularly in neighbourhoods where criminal activity is more prevalent.

Safety concerns for both the artworks and the public may influence decisions about where to install public art, with priority given to areas with lower crime rates or those under increased police surveillance.

Homelessness can also impact the placement of public art by affecting both the physical space available for installations and the perception of safety and cleanliness in the area.

Homeless individuals may take refuge in public areas or near monuments, which can pose challenges for the maintenance and upkeep and puts more strain on the surrounding area which may lessens the monument's significance and attractiveness.

It can make locals and tourists feel uneasy or insecure when homeless people are seen close to landmarks. This idea may discourage people from going to or staying in these public areas, which could have an adverse effect on how much enjoyment and respect the monuments receive.

Cleaning up litter, addressing sanitation concerns, and repairing damage caused by vandalism or unauthorized occupation may require additional resources and attention from local authorities.

In light of these challenges planning the placement of public art in Port-of-Spain requires careful consideration of the surrounding environment, community involvement, and security protocols in light of these challenges. Despite these obstacles, cooperation between law enforcement, community organisations, and artists can help reduce hazards and guarantee that public art enhances the city's cultural landscape.

Exploring Prospects and Possibilities for public art in Port-of-Spain

Pop-up Art:

Port-of-Spain boasts numerous historical sites and landmarks that serve as potential locations for public art installations. These may include Independence Square, the Queen's Park Savannah, The Botanical Garden, the Queen's Park Oval wall, The Magnificent Seven, a group of historic colonial-era mansions just to name a few.

Putting up temporary or pop-up art installations at these and other notable locations provide locals and visitors with lively, engaging experiences.

Pop-up art breathes life into abandoned or underutilised places, turning them into vibrant centres of interaction and activity. Urban neighbourhoods are revitalised and rundown areas are given new life by temporary art projects that take over vacant lots, businesses, or public plazas.

Urban areas are given a burst of energy and originality by temporary art works, which also provide locals and tourists fresh perspectives and a more varied cultural experience. These installations can honour regional customs, celebrations, and events while showcasing the richness of Trinidadian culture.

Collaboration with Local Institutions:

Collaboration with local cultural institutions, such as the National Carnival Commission, the Trinidad and Tobago National Trust, and the Ministry of Culture, can provide valuable support and guidance for the placement of public art in Port of Spain. These institutions can help

facilitate partnerships, provide funding opportunities, and ensure alignment with broader cultural policies and initiatives.

Trinidad and Tobago is home to several art organizations and institutions that play a role in promoting and facilitating public art initiatives. While some of these organizations may focus primarily on supporting contemporary artists or traditional art forms, they often engage in projects related to public art as well.

National Museum and Art Gallery of Trinidad and Tobago acts as a central location for the promotion and preservation of the cultural legacy of Trinidad and Tobago. NMAG is primarily concerned with showcasing modern and historical artefacts, but it also funds public art projects and visual arts education activities. A state organisation called Creative TT also works to support the expansion and advancement of Trinidad and Tobago's creative sectors, which include the visual arts, music, film, and fashion. While not solely concentrating on public art, CreativeTT offers assistance and materials to artists and cultural professionals who wish to engage in or create public art projects.

The Trinidad and Tobago Fine Art Society (TTFAS) another non-profit organisation works to enhance and foster appreciation for fine art in the country. TTFAS works with artists on public art projects and activities that are intended to improve public places through artistic interventions, but its primary concentration is on assisting local artists and arranging exhibitions.

The CCAF's mission The Foundation for Contemporary Caribbean Art is to promote contemporary Caribbean art and culture by means of workshops, exhibitions, and educational initiatives. Despite having its headquarters in Trinidad and Tobago, CCAF is a global organisation that frequently works with regional artists and groups to create public art projects

that address issues of social justice, identity, and legacy. More recently Dada and Projects a non-profit organisation was founded in 2011 with the mission of facilitating the development and installation of public art in Trinidad and Tobago through partnerships, collaborations, and support networks for art and artistic ecological projects that are environmentally sustainable, and in ways which enhance and protect the physical environment and support the surrounding communities.

In order to carry out public art projects, art organisations help artists, community organisations, and governmental organisations collaborate. These organisations facilitate the collaboration of diverse stakeholders to co-create artworks that embody local identities, values, and goals by acting as intermediates and offering logistical support.

Art organisations push for more financing and resources to help with initiatives including public art. These groups encourage legislators and charitable institutions to fund the development and upkeep of public art installations by bringing attention to the social, economic, and cultural advantages of public art.

Through public art initiatives, art organisations play a vital role in safeguarding Trinidad's cultural legacy. These organisations support the preservation and passing down of cultural information from one generation to the next by commissioning artworks that honour historical individuals, folklore, and local customs.

CONCLUSION

The exploration of the social and historical context of public art in the city of Port of Spain reveals a multifaceted tapestry of cultural expression, historical narrative, and community engagement. Examining a variety of monuments, sculptures, and installations makes it clear that public art is an effective means of addressing pressing social issues and historical legacies, as well as reflecting and moulding the identity of the city.

Public art in Port of Spain provides insights into the city's complex socio-cultural landscape by honouring themes such as cultural variety and resilience, as well as commemorating the struggles for freedom and emancipation. Monuments like the Arise statue, the Yoruba Village Monument, and the Cenotaph at Memorial Park highlight the significance of remembering, resisting, and finding peace in forming a community's memories and identity.

Public art also provides a forum for discussing modern concerns including social fairness, environmental sustainability, and cultural heritage preservation. Through the use of digital technology, community-led initiatives, and interdisciplinary teamwork, Port of Spain may broaden the definition of public art and promote increased diversity, creativity, and discourse in its urban setting.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. What do you think of the public art scene in Port of Spain?
2. In what ways can we improve our art spaces in Port of Spain?
3. Which type of public art do you find most appealing?
 - Sculptures
 - Murals
 - Street performances
 - Installations
4. Do you think public art enhances the overall aesthetic appeal of Port of Spain?
5. Which factors do you consider important when evaluating public art?
 - Creativity
 - Relevance to local culture
 - Engagement with the community
 - Quality of craftsmanship
6. In your opinion, what role does public art play in the cultural identity of Port of Spain?
7. Have you observed any challenges faced in the creation of public art in Port of Spain? If so, what are they?
8. What do you think are the main obstacles to securing funding for public art projects in Port of Spain?
9. Have you noticed any issues regarding the maintenance and preservation of public art installations in Port of Spain?
10. Which areas of Port of Spain do you think would benefit from more public art?

- Downtown
- Waterfront
- Residential neighbourhoods
- Parks and green spaces

11. Are there any particular areas or neighbourhoods in Port of Spain that you feel lack sufficient public art presence? If so, why do you think this is the case?

