

CURATOR'S FOREWORD

This year's Bacardi Limited Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary Bermuda Art is a diverse and challenging exploration of many art forms on a level that places Bermuda's artists firmly within an international art forum.

This 8th Bacardi Limited Biennial attracted 68 artists who submitted more than 250 pieces of work. As an artist, to have one's work adjudicated takes courage and conviction; I would like to thank and applaud all the artists who submitted to the 2008 Biennial. It is they who continue to make this exhibition the success it is today.

Art is not only a form of expression but can also be a social commentary. Throughout human history, individuals have been producing and exhibiting art for their contemporaries: from the earliest surviving drawings housed in the Lascaux caves of France through to today's modern gallery settings. Our Biennial continues to perform the function of presenting new personal expression that has the power and ability to add meaning to our lives.

For this exhibition, artists resident in Bermuda along with Bermudian artists living abroad, were invited to submit work that had been created during the past two years. From these submissions the jury selected 86 works by 41 artists. This is the body of work that forms our exhibition. The special and transient nature of Bermudian identity itself informs this Biennial, which is an exploration of contemporary voices and visions that reveals an artistic response to a range of present day aesthetics.

The 2008 Biennial is not a survey of the totality of Bermuda's art today; rather, it hopes to generate a dialogue and to focus attention on the contemporary voice of the art scene in Bermuda. The selected artworks themselves mirror the times in which we live and through a consideration of the submissions for the Biennial it became very apparent that what constitutes "Bermudian" is in a constant state of flux.

As there were no restrictions placed on the artwork invited, the 2008 Biennial exhibition contains various artistic mediums. We see photography playing an important role, along with challenging site specific installation art. Narrative paintings, prints and sculptures are also evident, focusing on feminism, objecthood, and materiality. The abstract pieces, focus instead on contemporary and political dialogues. At the same time, we see conceptual pieces that override the aesthetic and material concerns and have a vernacular all of their own.

The two jurors for the 2008 Biennial are themselves part of a diverse art world. Both began as practicing artists and have continued their careers immersed in art institutions, curating and lecturing. Although predominantly working in American art institutions, both the jurors have been immersed in the global art community. Their approach to jurying the 2008 Biennial was to select works that they perceived to be outstanding, that conveyed coherent patterns and relationships, and that demonstrated a "consistence and quality".

I believe that this is an important exhibition not only because it gives us the opportunity to see the highly talented and diverse artists that we have within our community, but also because it provides a forum in which to document and to discuss contemporary ideas. The Bacardi Limited Biennial 2008 invites the viewer to ask questions and to search for answers. We hope that visitors to this year's Biennial leave the Bermuda National Gallery with a greater understanding of Bermuda's contemporary art and culture.

SOPHIE CRESSALL

ACTING CURATOR

BERMUDA NATIONAL GALLERY