

DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

Welcome to the 8th edition of the Bermuda Biennial, an exhibition that remains as unique as it is anticipated on the Island's arts calendar.

The Biennial is not a selling show and is arguably stronger and more relevant because of it. When it was first staged in 1994, the Biennial was the first internationally juried exhibition in Bermuda, and was designed to encourage local artists to produce what they consider their best work, regardless of commercial appeal. Every two years, the Biennial presents a snapshot of our contemporary art scene and this year the picture is as diverse, thought provoking and innovative as ever.

As always, this Biennial is a subjective selection by experienced and knowledgeable international jurors who are not familiar with Bermuda's artists. We believe this brings a fresh critical eye to Bermudian art that selects work based on its artistic merit and quality. We believe that by having the courage to submit to this process, local artists benefit enormously from the exposure, constructive criticism, prestige, and understanding of how their work is considered in an international context.

This year's jurors - curator, instructor and artist Mark Risco of the Art Institute of Chicago and Franklin Sirmans, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Menil Collection in Houston, Texas - selected 86 works by 41 local artists, from an entry of more than 250 works from 68 artists. They made a point of focusing on artists who were not afraid to step out of their comfort zones. As they state in their foreword: "It has been our experience that it is such artists who 'go out on a limb' create art that comes from a place deeper within themselves. Far beyond competence and ego, it is a place that all viewers will relate to aesthetically and soulfully." I would like to thank them for the time and genuine care and concern with which they made their selections.

After each Biennial we analyse our efforts and take great care to listen to feedback from artists, professional colleagues and our audience. This year, in response to

feedback from the artists the format of this catalogue has changed. In a paradigm shift, the focus is on the work first, then the artists' biographical information at the back. For the first time, we are illustrating all of the work selected, not just one per artist so that the catalogue becomes a complete record of this Biennial which will be shared locally and internationally with museums and art world colleagues around the globe.

The other important addition this year is the production of a documentary film in which we interview the artists, many in their studios, giving added context and understanding of the artists and the work being produced. We have also invited Bermudian scholar, Dr. Christina Storey, who received her PhD in Modern History from Oxford University, and her BA in History and Literature from Harvard, to write an accompanying essay. In it she examines the history of the role of both collections and exhibitions to the development of the Museum as an institution, and looks specifically at the special place that a biennial has as a potent type of exhibition.

We are once again extremely grateful to the generous sponsorship of Bacardi Limited as our title sponsor. This is the sixth Biennial to bear their name and we cannot overstate the value of this consistent support as it allows us to focus on presenting the best possible exhibition for our artists and our audience.

We are also delighted to welcome "on board" Royal Caribbean International as our associate sponsors. Their support enables us to add value to the Biennial through programming and the aforementioned documentary.

Presenting the Biennial takes an enormous amount of work on the part of the dedicated staff and volunteers at the BNG but we are always rewarded by the privilege of being able to showcase a breadth of talent that is remarkable for a small place like Bermuda. The 2008 Biennial is no exception. In our view, it is among the strongest we have seen. We are sure you will agree.

LAURA T. GORHAM
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