

# CREATE

A PUBLICATION ON THE CARIBBEAN'S CREATIVE INDUSTRIES



CARIBBEAN  
**EXPORT**  
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY



"An artist can not fail;



it is success to be one"

- CHARLES HORTON COOLEY





# FOREWORD

**PAMELA COKE-HAMILTON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
CARIBBEAN EXPORT DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**



The international community continues to recognize and embrace the increasing and undeniable role of culture in development. Many of our Caribbean states however, continue to struggle with its significance whilst others move assertively to enable its contribution to economic growth.

With all the varying approaches what is unquestionable is our ability as a region to meaningfully contribute to the global creative landscape. The only musical instrument developed in the 20th century was imagined and created in the Caribbean twin islands of Trinidad and Tobago. The musical genre of Reggae and its iconic figure, Bob Marley who captivated the globe and continues to do so decades after his death is from the Caribbean island of Jamaica. The list can actually go on to even include more recent exploits such as the Barbadian international sensation, Rihanna who to date, continues to break records in the music industry.

There is enough documentation and research to indicate that inextricably linked to economic growth is a buoyant and vibrant cultural and creative economy. A lot of this is particularly evidenced in societies where the cultural mix is often diverse and allows for the cross fertilization of varying perspectives and for ideas to germinate into creative expressions which spawn new products, businesses and industries. Our benefit in the region is that nowhere in the world is that cultural mix more intensely represented and condensed than in the Caribbean. The creative talent and expression which exude as a result, is everywhere. Our job as a development agency is to give structure and open opportunities for creative talent to blossom and grow into strong exportable products for the rest of the world to embrace, purchase, and enjoy. It is for us to help build a quintessential, globally recognizable Caribbean brand.

By no means is this an easy task but it is very much a doable one. One with the potential to transform faltering economies within the region and inject new approaches into age old views about where the source of economic growth will come from in a 21st century marketplace. It's our designers, musicians, filmmakers and artistes who will lead the change in a creative economy.

This publication is but a small representation of what is possible with the right support. It showcases only a microcosm of those brave and persevering creative entrepreneurs who dared to challenge the status quo and demonstrate the huge possibilities resident in the creative industries. Caribbean Export Development Agency stands beside these entrepreneurs helping to lead the charge in giving credence to the transformative effect of the creative industries and its ability to be a meaningful contributor to GDP.



*Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Executive Director  
Caribbean Export Development Agency*

*"It's our designers, musicians, filmmakers and artistes who will lead the change in a creative economy."*





Photo by Brian Lesly



## OUR VISION

To optimise the Caribbean Region's export potential through facilitating innovation and the creation of world class brands capable of successfully competing globally.

## OUR MISSION

To increase the competitiveness of the Caribbean countries by providing export development and investment promotion services through effective programme execution and strategic partnerships.

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# DESIGNING THE PRODUCT OF THE FUTURE

The Caribbean has always been known for its creativity and creative expression, and in this region, the creative industries have always played a role in driving economic activity. From the colourful carnivals to rhythmic music, to thriving theatre scenes and the products and fashion that we make, however the economic impact of our creative production is not always recognised.

The reality however, is several areas of design have the potential to contribute significantly to the Caribbean economy. Focusing specifically on the area of Product Design, this segment of the creative industry can vastly improve the profitability of the manufacturing sector from small-scale artisanal production to large industrial factories. Design can also assist with the enhancement of the tourism experience in the Caribbean, and since tourism contributes significantly to the GDPs of the region, this contribution is one that cannot be ignored.

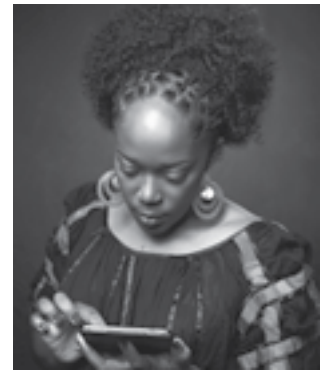
Yet many of the producers and consumers in the Caribbean do not recognize the production of artisans and small manufacturers in the region as a segment of the manufacturing sector. Their products are often classified as 'handicrafts' and considered 'inferior' to products manufactured on a larger scale or manufactured abroad.

Product designers and makers of well-designed products can support the tourism industry in many ways, such as helping hoteliers and restaurateurs to upgrade their facilities, by making well-designed souvenirs and mementos available for sale to retailers and visitors, through branding and packaging that may make a product more appealing to a more sophisticated audience and through other areas of design such as interior design, which can enrich an experience. There are also less obvious ways in which the design industry can contribute to the regional landscape. We tend to think about design as it relates to the design of 'objects' or 'artifacts' and product design and even graphic design are examples of this, but designers also design 'non-tangible' things such as systems and experiences, and therefore design and designers can also contribute to the regional landscape and economy by applying design problem-solving methodologies to grander social problems.

Most international counterparts do not realize that there is a creative design industry in the Caribbean and that there are art and design schools and professionals from most areas of design practicing in the region. Where the presence of the creative industry is acknowledged,







**LESLEY-ANN NOEL**  
COORDINATOR AND LECTURER,  
VISUAL ARTS PROGRAMME,  
UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES  
CONTRIBUTOR  
INDUSTRY INSIGHT –  
CREATIVE DESIGN

Lesley-Ann Noel is a lecturer in Product Design and has done work in product design, export product development and entrepreneurship training as a consultant for organisations such as the UWI Steel Pan Research Laboratory, the Export Promotion Council of Kenya, The Caribbean Export Development Agency, the Caribbean Development Bank and the Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association Ltd.

Ms. Noel is the Coordinator of the Visual Arts Unit and joined the DCFA (then CAC) in 1999 as a part-time lecturer in Design. She became full-time faculty in 2008. She has exhibited work at design exhibitions and design trade shows in the United States, Trinidad & Tobago, Jamaica, Brazil, Germany and France. Her areas of interest include 'art and design in primary education', 'sustainable product development' and 'design and product strategy for small and micro-entrepreneurs'.



there may exist a romanticized notion of what we do in the Caribbean, anticipating work with lots of images of palm trees. The fact that governmental and regional agencies tend to favour international design consultants over building local talent does not improve our counterparts' perception of us. I believe it is important for us to build local demand, and to strengthen our expertise locally, perhaps before penetrating the international market or at least at the same time. It is greatly important for us to increase our consumption of locally/regionally-designed products and design services in order to make our industry better equipped to compete internationally. Some designers or product makers may be able to leap frog the local market and go straight to the international market, but I think most need to develop a local or regional demand for their goods and services.

It may be possible to find nuances of Caribbean culture in Caribbean design through themes, materials, colour schemes, the way we deal with clients etc. However, with a more sophisticated and therefore more demanding local audience, and with the impact of globalization, some of these nuances may be less evident in our products and services. This is not a negative thing it is merely the reality of the situation. There may be a negative nuance of our culture that impacts our design and creative industries, our own neo-

*Images from Design  
Caribbean 2011 held in the  
Dominican Republic*



colonialism, where we believe that 'foreign is always better'. I don't think that enough emphasis is placed on increasing and improving the output of regional manufacturers of products that are impacted by design and many of these industries are shrinking due to lack of competitiveness. Design is, of course, only one of the factors that affects competitiveness and designers can assist manufacturers in analysing their production to generally improve their products and systems. This can only be good for the region. I'd like to see more initiatives to bring design and designers closer to manufacturers with the aim of improving their products and productivity on several levels - not just aesthetics.

There is a stable and economically sound future ahead for design. Design is a dynamic industry and designers very often 're-skill' themselves and move from one area to the next.

Personally I love product design and textile design and would love to see more growth in these areas, particularly in printed and woven textiles, and home accessories such as lighting, but there is also a lot of scope for other areas of design such as illustration, motion, app, web and game design. Increasing interest in these areas from students in the design programme at the University of the West Indies bodes well for development in these areas. There is also a place for some of our designers to migrate from 'artifact-based



design' to design areas on a 'higher level' such as design management, design thinking and user experience design, and to use their design backgrounds to help to create policies and solve management and development problems in the region. \*





*Yet many of the producers and consumers  
in the Caribbean do not recognize  
the production of artisans and small  
manufacturers in the region as a segment of  
the manufacturing sector.*







# THE SCIENCE & STYLE OF AMBER

The second largest island in the Greater Antilles is home to one of the highest mountain ranges in the West Indies. Beneath these fertile peaks and often arid valleys of the Dominican Republic rests the rarest form of amber found in the world.





**JORGE CARIDAD**  
AMBAR NACIONAL  
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC





*The amber is mined through the dangerous practice of 'bell pitting'. Labourers employ primitive hand tools such as machetes, shovels and picks to carve small 'foxholes' that they crawl through on hands and knees into 100% humidity and darkness in search of the aged bounty.*

The consistent, high translucency and frequent occurrence of fossil inclusions in the amber of the Dominican Republic, make the fossilized *Hymenaea* tree resin from this location, of the highest quality and of greatest interest to scientific minds, collectors and museums.

The amber is mined through the dangerous practice of 'bell pitting'. Labourers employ primitive hand tools such as machetes, shovels and picks to carve small 'foxholes' that they crawl through on hands and knees into 100% humidity and darkness in search of the aged bounty. Yet despite the hazards associated with attaining the amber, the commodity was not considered 'precious' for many years and the brave Dominicans who source the amber as a means of providing for their families earned a variable and marginal income. Increased awareness and likewise demand for the rare Dominican amber would stabilize the market value, permitting miners the potential wage of 3,000 to 20,000 pesos (US\$85 to \$500) per week, exceeding the nation's minimum wage of 2,600 pesos per month in the public sector.

Directly contributing to this increased awareness was the establishment of the Amber World Museum in 1996. Founder and president Jorge Caridad notes the museum "provided an avenue for giving back to society the important and scientific meaning of these Dominican treasures." The museum is part of Caridad's multifaceted family business module,







encompassing a factory that refines the raw amber and an amber jewellery retail outlet. According to Caridad, the museum has also been instrumental in showcasing the Amber Nacional jewellery brand to a wider global market and while each business functions separately in its own right, each strategically supports the other to continue to build the amber industry.

Caridad was exposed to the goldsmith trade from the tender age of 12 when his mother secured him an apprenticeship with a neighbourhood jewellery factory. "In that time all young guys had to take a sustentation home" he shares but what would start as an introduction to a trade, would cultivate a profound passion for art, jewellery and amber. Caridad credits experience at Norberto de La Rosa for diligently developing his abilities as a goldsmith resulting in the birth of Ambar Nacional "an innovative brand on the artisanal jewellery market" featuring the Dominican amber 'stone'.

Caridad appreciates the vital role of participating in trade shows and exhibitions to gain recognition for creative designs, as initially this was the primary form of marketing employed by the young company. "Caribbean Export for us was the weapon to penetrate other markets in the Caribbean," Caridad proclaims and notes that through participating in trade shows such as Design Caribbean, vital contacts were secured permitting entry into new markets. "Caribbean Export provided the support for us to contact costumers in any part of the Caribbean, they supported us at the correct moment and helped us expand in the markets." In addition to many Caribbean countries, Amber Nacional and the Amber World Factory, also export to Asia, North and South America, and Europe.

Exportation and increased visibility for the amber jewellery line has brought with it competition, which Caridad admits he welcomes. "To have a lot of competition is an advantage, this is the way to keep motivated, always working to produce the best products for our existing and possible customers." Competition is not without its challenges however and Caridad notes that for Ambar Nacional the ability to match different components using technology and compete with large jewellery industries in countries like China, India and Thailand poses a hindrance. In this increasingly competitive environment both locally and internationally based, Amber Nacional distinguishes their brand by a sound reputation for quality amber products and continual diversification of the product line.

The addition of Larimar has added a new dimension to the Amber Nacional brand. Pectolite is found in many locations around the world, however Blue Pectolite, or Larimar, with its distinctive volcanic blue colouration is unique to the Dominican Republic. The gemstone was discovered recently in 1974 and the Larimar Dominican Museum is the first scientific unit for the study of the stone in the world. Museum founder Caridad observed that Larimar has successfully been integrated into the jewellery industry and credits the vibrant blue hues of the semi-precious gemstone for this speedy achievement.

For Caridad success is best enjoyed when shared and the one time apprentice has assumed the role of mentor through his non-profit organization FUNDARTE (The Foundation for the Development of Crafts). The organization aims to provide an opportunity for Dominican youth to learn the art of creating local craft towards ensuring the cultural identity of the Dominican Republic is reflected in each of the handcrafted products manufactured. "FUNDARTE aims to promote activities within our indigenous roots through education, preservation and management." Over 1,500 have graduated through the FUNDARTE programme and some 220 children and 50 adults are currently enrolled. "It is a celebration of our country," Caridad says, "through the implementation of our resources in what we do, we exhibit our products and culture beyond our borders." \*









JUDITH UITERLOO  
ATELIER DORE  
SURINAME

# SILVER WHISPERERS

*Photos by Brian Lesly Photography*

**The journey for Judith Uiterloo did not commence with jewelry designer as the intended final destination. A teacher for many years, Uiterloo would learn the trade from husband Hendrick who inherited both the skill and a gold- and silver-smithy from his father, internationally renowned jeweler Doremus Hendrick Uiterloo.**

Husband Hendrick, Hank, as she affectionately refers to him, would assume the role of chief designer and professional goldsmith when his father became ill. Uiterloo would leave her job as teacher to support the family business. Learning the trade herself, the novice would embark on a new career path and would take an arduous voyage from teacher to student, to artist, to voice of inspiration.

Husband and wife team Judith and Hank comprise the whole managerial and employee team of Atelier Dore in Suriname. The couple produced “traditional jewelry” at first, then both being inherently creative, the designers started to branch off into new avenues. “In Suriname at that time gold was mostly used for jewelry,” Uiterloo states, but admits that along with Hank she was attracted to working with silver. “Silver can be manipulated more,” Uiterloo explains, “You can hammer, shape, mould silver differently.”

The introduction of a line of silver jewelry into the country that held a deeply rooted love for gold however would at first be a struggle for the pair. “Clients would comment on how lovely the line was then would inevitably add, ‘but it’s silver’,” with a deep chuckle Uiterloo notes, “and this was not a compliment.” It was a matter of little concern to the former teacher, the designers remained consistent in concept, “as long as we have fun and enjoy what we do, we are not concerned by what people think.”

"Silver can be manipulated more,"  
Uiterloo explains, "You can hammer,  
shape, mould silver differently."





The “big break” for Atelier Dore would come through partnership with The Caribbean Export Development Agency (Caribbean Export). Through assistance and encouragement from Caribbean Export, the jewelers would attend Caribbean Fashion Week and exhibit their work to an audience outside of Suriname for the first time. “Caribbean Fashion Week would change everything,” says a thankful Uiterloo, who admits she was overwhelmed by the unexpected reaction they received on returning from the exhibition. Atelier Dore received front-page media coverage and one newspaper heralded the jewelers as the “show stopper” of the regionally based show. The extensive media coverage served as a revelation in Suriname, highlighting the high degree of skill and talent the jewelers possessed and the Uiterloos “immediately gained respect locally”.

Over time Suriname “became more fashion-minded”, embracing Silver by Atelier Dore. Steadily gaining fame over the years the couple would come to be viewed as artists more than jewelers and in their homeland would finally be recognized and accepted for their non-traditional work. According to Uiterloo the company would transform the local perception of jewelry and the community would establish a strong sense of pride for the luxury brand.

Seeking to attain similar recognition in regional and international markets, Atelier Dore needed to showcase their work beyond Suriname and from necessity the couple started a modeling agency. The agency not only provided talent for the jewelers to exhibit their designs, it created new opportunities for grooming other careers within the Creative Industries.

The company enabled emerging models, make-up artists, hair stylists and photographers to hone their skills. The entourage travelled together attending regional and international exhibitions and shows, the exposure molded the team turned “family”, who individually and collectively raised the bar in Suriname to “international standard”. The growth achieved through the subsidiary company is a source of gratification for Uiterloo, “The creative industries have a substantial contribution to make to our economy, country and region, we are proud to have been able to demonstrate that.”

While Atelier Dore “never competed with anyone else locally” penetrating foreign markets was particularly important to the silversmiths and the future of the high-end luxury brand. Securing buyers in some territories proved difficult however due to challenges with travelling. While able to access London and by extension Europe easily, visa requirements for entry into the United States of America needs government assistance and is an agonizingly “long and slow” process. Noting that attending London Fashion Week was a highlight in their career achievements, Uiterloo credited Caribbean Export for facilitating the opportunity. “We have worked with Caribbean Export for years now and they have created many ways to allow us to develop and showcase our product.”

It is a relationship that Caribbean Export seeks to build with as many creative industries practitioners who demonstrate the talent and ability to be world-class. According to manager of the agency’s Competitiveness and Innovation division, Chris McNair, “We are all about building world-class brands. Being able to identify those with what we call the DNA to be globally competitive is a big part of what we do.” The agency took several designers including Aterlier Doré to London during the Olympic games in 2012 to participate in a showcase under their programme dubbed, “London Engage”. The exposure on such an international stage is the type of continued exposure Caribbean Export is committed to. According to McNair, “It’s all about taking Caribbean Excellence to the world and finding the right places with the right mix to show what the Caribbean brand is all about.”

Atelier Doré has not disappointed. Their jewelry line became internationally integrated with many links to Europe and the Netherlands. However, there is still work to be done as although known in the Caribbean region, securing links with their English-speaking counterparts continues to provide challenges.

The exposure generated a high demand for the rare jewelry that Uiterloo suggests may double as art pieces and be displayed around the home.

The unique properties of the silver designs with its rough, unfinished surfaces hammered into delicate and intricate shapes, became a signature for excellence in Caribbean jewelry. “The imperfections make the pieces perfect.” Pieces are crafted entirely by hand using simple, basic tools of the trade and one may take months to complete. This means mass production is not an option for the Atelier Doré line. “We want to expand,” Uiterloo reveals, “but we cannot lose the integrity of what we do.” Yet the designer admits that mass production is exactly what buyer’s demand, presenting an ongoing dilemma.

Uiterloo is no stranger to predicaments in her life and faces all challenges head on. Judith Uiterloo was diagnosed with cancer twice and endured an extremely difficult four-year period. “I honestly didn’t think I would live,” she confesses, “but I didn’t stop going and I didn’t stop trying.” Using her work to tell the story, Uiterloo credits her strongly rooted faith in God, husband, children and craft for providing the strength for her ultimate rehabilitation.

The silversmith notes she was at peace throughout the turbulent time yet she is not looking back, rather she continues to look ahead. Although husband Hank was born into jewelry he is a qualified engineer and his approach to crafting jewelry is structural. The former teacher, Judith, has a more creative approach that is visually complex and interesting. Hank is primarily responsible for necklaces and bracelets while Judith produces bodices and bags. The couple has found balance through each other’s differences and together continues to diversify their unique line. “We fill each other up” Uiterloo shares, “we complete each other.”

It is the crafting of relationships such as theirs and the ones developed with their clients that Uiterloo counts as true success, yet the public perception and appreciation for the jewelry is also a marked achievement. People referring to the rare pieces as being “from another world” was such a frequent comment that it became the slogan for Atelier Doré. The founders of the art jewelry are content with the probability that mass production is not within their future and proclaim that Atelier Doré would rather 1 happy customer than 2,000 without an understanding of what the art they wear represents. “Each piece is a part of us and selling our work can be emotional, it can feel like putting up our child for adoption.”

Health restored and unwavering enthusiasm intact, Uiterloo looks forward to a future laced with silver linings. Uncertain what Atelier Doré will create next she is assured it will be “a showstopper, chunky, big and outstanding.” \*







Pieces are crafted entirely by hand using simple, basic tools of the trade and one may take months to complete. This means mass production is not an option for the Atelier Dore line.

# BAGGING THE LOOK OF LEATHER

Almost 5 years after the onset of the global financial crisis, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) released a statement in April 2013 that indicated the economy for the Caribbean Small States remained “unacceptably weak”. The report prepared by the Honourable Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance, Canada, implored the Caribbean countries to implement policy actions that will “benefit the global recovery, promote job creation and boost growth.”





This huge undertaking requires a massive and dedicated effort and one of the defining factors towards promoting job creation and boosting growth may lay in the diversification of regional entrepreneurial business. Based on the assurance that entrepreneurs will help to construct the bridge to reach the region's economic salvation, in Barbados a couple is busy laying a foundation not in mortar but in the appearance of leather.

Mark Daniel studied Fine Arts and aspired to be an architect although he had a love for fashion. His high-school sweetheart, Ava, is a skilled seamstress and enjoyed making one-of-a-kind shirts for her partner who developed a knack for painting them. For this couple their business would grow in an odd manner with the demand preceding the product. "People wanted to know where they could get what I was wearing," Daniel shares and the growing demand would prompt the birth of Mark and Ava's line Avark.

The couple set up a studio and started producing. "We were business focused with no clue of merchandising. We were selling fashion but not fashion designers." Increasing demand served as

motivation for the self-made designers and in a rather short time frame, Avark exploded onto the fashion scene in Barbados with a distinctive carefree easy-to-wear style. The collections were painted with a free-hand design ensuring that the line, while cohesive, was composed of individually unique pieces. Thanks to Daniel wearing the works of art, many associated Avark almost exclusively with men's wear. It was a deliberate strategy and one that would pay off for the husband and wife duo. "No-one was really catering to men so the demand for customized men's wear was high." On runways the collection featured the men's line exclusively, further propagating the myth. Yet Daniel confesses that in fact Avark produced 85% women's wear from inception for the simple reason that the primary purchasers were female. Seeking to outfit their partners, many women seized the opportunity to dress themselves. It was a winning situation for all parties.

Avark's introduction to the runway followed a similar path as the development of the business, initiated by the encouragement of others. "We were enrolled into Caribbean Fashion Week by another designer," Daniel tells. In resulting media reviews of the popular event, the Avark collection would make front-page news,



**MARK & AVA DANIEL**  
AVARK  
BARBADOS

*Armed with knowledge, raw talent and an innate desire to succeed, Avark sought to dominate the local and regional runways but the designers noticed a key element was missing from their presentation.*

propelling the company into a whole new direction. "Up to this point we had no formal training and Ava said we had to make a decision, if we were going to do this, we would do it well," and with the future of their business in mind, the entrepreneurs sought a formal education in fashion.

Armed with knowledge, raw talent and an innate desire to succeed, Avark sought to dominate the local and regional runways but the designers noticed a key element was missing from their presentation. "Our models were barefoot," Daniel explains the rural ethnic feel of the line did not lend to pairing with conventional footwear. With a shrug of the shoulders Daniel states matter-of-factly, "so we made shoes."

The couple would creatively diversify the brand over time, adding soft furnishings, mirrors and furniture to the product line and private villas and homes to the expanding clientele. Continuing to

find new ways to compliment the runway showings Avark started designing and producing bags, to help "finish the look."

The customized bags became the magnum opus for the Avark line. Daniel created the limited edition product by hand using basic tools - material, knife, ruler, needle, thread, paint and paintbrush. Taking days to complete each premium priced bag the designer was challenged by how to take the new product into the market.

Participation in Caribbean Fashion Week served as an introduction to Caribbean Export for Mark and Ava Daniel. Partnered with the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation (BIDC), the development agency aligned Avark with buyers for their product. Buyers held the promise of a secure future for the line but Daniel understood that buyers required products with the consistently high quality associated with the brand.







The designer remains positive of Avark's future success and works diligently to bring the highest quality to their work.

To create a marketable and affordable bag for export Daniel experimented with several materials, burlap, leather and canvas. Burlap held "Caribbean appeal" but the Barbadian designer was unsure this would translate well internationally. Leather offered the luxurious look Avark wanted but carried an equally luxurious price tag for the raw material making creating prototypes expensive. Through trial, error and dedication, Daniel worked 18 months before finding a viable solution for the material of his bags. Through a process of manipulating canvas with paints, Daniel achieved the luxe look of leather without the hefty price tag. It was a pinnacle moment for production.

There was only one hurdle left for the leather-looking bags to be ready to hit retail markets, Avark with 3 employees needed to be able to produce more of them. Although not targeting mass production, Daniel recognized Avark needed to be ready to sell in greater numbers and balancing those numbers correctly was essential. "We want to keep the numbers small, not to lose the integrity of our work, but we still need to be able to produce greater quantities to meet the market demand." Design Caribbean, facilitated through Caribbean Export Development Agency, acted as the source for the solution. The exhibition was "excellent" Daniel affirms, "Caribbean Export brought all the players together, the artists, designers, suppliers, buyers and investors." The experience provided the Daniel duo with a reformulated plan for their business, sourcing a manufacturer held the key to unlocking their full potential and the couple is en route to breaking onto the international platform.

Manufacturing in the Caribbean is possible however, consistency in quality

held major concerns. Each bag is hand-signed by the designer and bears the company stamp of approval therefore the assurance of quality could not be questionable. Daniel explored manufacturing internationally. This provided the benefit of generational quality from producers knowledgeable in the art of mass production but outside of the region the costs proved too expensive. "This is our biggest hindrance," Daniel shares, "finding the right balance in the equation, education and knowledge versus costs." Ideally Avark's owners hope to secure government funding or private investors to move forward. He has been approached by investors previously, but notes they were the "wrong kind." Avark is not seeking investment accompanied by ulterior motives Daniel explains. "We are not selling our company or looking to hand over the majority of shares to someone else, we just need a financial boost." Daniel believes this is possible if investors have the right motivation. "Fashion's role in the economy is small now but the potential is huge." Sure that if the potential growth for this creative industry was understood the support would quickly follow, Daniel is hoping for a greater education on the economic contribution of all the segments of creative industries.

While continuing to explore all avenues of manufacturing for the bags, Avark progresses with soft furnishings and their established clothing line that accounts for 90% of the business.

The designer remains positive of Avark's future success and works diligently to bring the highest quality to their work. Crediting wife Ava and their son for his emotional strength, Daniel believes that Caribbean people need to instil a greater sense of self confidence in their children. "The Caribbean is the centre of the universe and we are its people," he says, "we need to step boldly forward and accept what is ours." \*





# SEEDS OF SUCCESS

THE DYEING ART

Vegetable ivory has been used as adornment for hundreds of years. Most popular during the 1880's, this material was used to produce buttons. The ability to dye the material to match and complement the colour of fabrics made vegetable ivory very practical. The enterprise that exported 40,000 tons of vegetable ivory during its peak was eradicated with the later invention of plastic.



Harvesting of a raw material traditionally found in certain parts of the region and transforming it with cultural knowledge, creative expression and technical expertise have created for themselves a viable business.

The special method for dyeing this material was preserved however and it is this safely guarded process that would provide Luna Designs with a colourful recipe for success and the resurgence of vegetable ivory as a sought after item.

Luna Designs founders, Ernesto Neira and his wife Gloria Plata, are not novices to the crafting of jewellery. When the couple met more than two decades ago in Colombia, Neira, a trained architect, was “a carver of jade” and Plata, who studied law, was regarded as an experienced, specialized artist. They would quickly realize a shared passion for jewellery and collectables and together established a line that was “non-traditional and very fresh.”

Vegetable ivory is derived from the nut of the Corozo (Phytelephas Macrocarpa) palm tree that grows in tropical rainforests. “Harvesting the nut is harmless to the trees, helping to preserve the rainforests,” Neira explains. This contributes to maintaining a healthy ecosystem for these precious resources that are collectively responsible for 28% of the world’s oxygen turnover.

Neira and Plata’s harvesting of a raw material traditionally found in certain parts of the region and transforming it with cultural knowledge, creative expression and technical expertise have created for themselves a viable business. This, Caribbean Export believes, is the power of the Creative Industries—It’s ability to empower creative individuals and enfranchise communities is something the agency’s executive director, Pamela Coke-Hamilton believes is, “transformational” The ability to take our Caribbean culture and make a living from it will continue to lead the way.

For Luna Designs, their ability to use the authenticity of the Caribbean aesthetic makes a difference. According to co-founder Neira, this is “very much a Caribbean product, vibrant and colourful.” When preparing the line for export however, they have learnt over the years that necessary adjustments must be made for sales to be realised. The primary markets for Luna Designs are the United Kingdom and Canada. Both markets tend to prefer a more conservative palette with the UK showing a stronger preference for the subtleties of black and grey. It is an important observation for the entrepreneurs to note, as exports provide the vast bulk of business for Luna Designs.

“It is to our disadvantage that we need unique visas to travel to each Caribbean island.” While the couple relocated to Barbados more than 20 years ago, operating Luna Designs exclusively from this location, they retained Colombian citizenship and must secure visas when entering neighbouring islands. The tedious

and sometimes timely process is not guaranteed to be successful and proves particularly challenging where striving to travel within specific timelines for targeted events. “Imagine it is harder to export to the places closest (to us),” a limitation that hinges on the inability to meet and establish partners and buyers in the Caribbean.

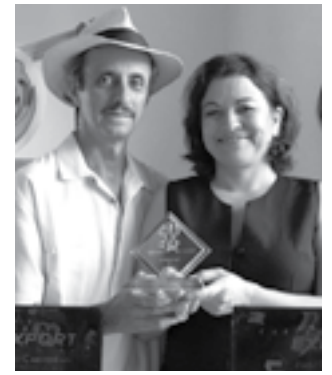
It is an area where the assistance of Caribbean Export Development Agency has been critical Neira points out. Caribbean Export has provided instrumental guidance and opportunity for Luna Design to connect with necessary regional associates. Along with the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation (BIDC), the agency has “identified the shows and exhibitions to go to without great expense and helps us maximize Luna’s exposure.”

Expressing a deep sentiment of gratitude for the support received from Caribbean Export and BIDC, founders of the multi award-winning Luna Designs noted their love for participating in trade shows. The atmosphere of being surrounded by other creative industry individuals is for Neira, “like breathing in fresh air.”

Luna Designs exclusively employs single mothers and during the peak “high season” supports of team of 16-20 women.

Beyond the “fresh air” however, trade shows are a “great help” towards attaining new and solidifying repeat business for Luna Designs. The biggest challenge is always the cost associated with attending. “The cost to do one show is US \$12,000 to US \$15,000. We must build a collection of product to showcase, then travel, accommodation, transportation, shipping, it all adds up quickly.” For a brand that produces a high quality product range at a conservative price point, show costs are often difficult to recuperate with “jewellery at US \$5 a piece”. Caribbean Export helps to create alliances with regional buyers, making these potentially taxing shows profitable.

The opportunities are extended to the international market as well. Through collaboration with Caribbean Export, Luna Designs attended an accessories show in the United States. A successful venture, the founders returned to Barbados with 40 new buyers secured. Speaking confidently, Neira states that this is only a part of the task, “to maintain relationships we need to go back repeatedly.” Frequent interaction with buyers provides vital information across various areas, “previous



**ERNESTO NEIRA & GLORIA PLATA**  
PLATA LUNA DESIGNS  
BARBADOS (CREATIVE DESIGN)







One of the many strengths of Luna however is in the designs and Plata's ability to create new designs every season. "My wife is inspired by nature," says a doting Neira, "she creates harmonious designs."

year's sales, what product moves faster, which colours sell best, challenges with packaging, we need feedback," Neira says, noting that the strategy to moving forward is determined by understanding where one is positioned currently.

The company that commenced with the embellishment of seeds has planted another seed that has bourn rich fruit for its community. Luna Designs exclusively employs single mothers and during the peak "high season" supports of team of 16-20 women. The company's Single Mothers Initiative started in 2005 led by Plata who noted a need within the community for single mothers to generate income while being able to be present in their homes to raise their children. "The parent module has changed," Neira says, "parents are younger, even grandparents are younger, so parents are working and grandparents are working too. Grandparents can't watch the children as before." Identifying women with harsh backgrounds and in dire circumstances, Luna sought to create opportunity for single mothers to be home with their children "to nurture, care, provide and teach" in a familiar and safe environment.

The initiative to rehabilitate the women through fair trade has been successful and Neira refers to the team as his "family". Functioning without government support, the Luna Designs business model has been applauded by the Commonwealth and Plata has been invited to recreate the model in identified countries around the world.

Luna Designs has been "doing well," according to Neira, "The recession has worked for, not against us." In the face of strained economies and the continued global recession many consumers sought refuge in curbing spending. The Luna founders recognized that even in harsh economic

climates there was a need to still be gratified. "People wanted to still look and feel beautiful without spending a great deal." By providing a fashionable, high quality but less expensive jewellery alternative Luna Designs was able to fulfil this need.

Neira and Plata would further diversify the product range noting that lower priced items moved faster. Key-rings and earrings were conveniently packaged with gift cards and the ready-to-give gift items directly resulted in increased sales.

Luna Designs continues to work on packaging and is streamlining the product line to less items, "The range of products will be less to fit a targeted price range but we will enhance the overall value of our product." Neira notes that this strategy includes a more aggressive marketing approach and the redevelopment of Luna's website. "Previously our website was abused, used as source for plagiarising designs." Unable to successfully dye the seeds, similar product designs were replicated in plastics and produced in Taiwan.

One of the many strengths of Luna however is in the designs and Plata's ability to create new designs every season. "My wife is inspired by nature," says a doting Neira, "she creates harmonious designs." It's a formula the Columbian couple trusts will continue to be a winning one. \*





**THE  
PRESERVATION  
OF THE MAYA  
CULTURE  
IS IN  
THE BAG**



The company that started with 6 women making reusable Christmas gift bags, now consolidates 90 women from 8 different villages to produce the increasingly diverse handcrafted product line and the impact has been tremendous.



**DESIREE ARNOLD**  
MAYA BAGS  
BELIZE

Nestled in the rich and nourished landscape of Belize, American environmentalist Judy Bergsma would meet a special group of people – The Mayas.

Belize is a country which supports a wide range of climates and habitats, and is also home to a diverse society comprised of many cultures and languages including a large population of Maya people. Living much today as they did 2000 years ago, Bergsma endeavoured to lift impoverished Maya women from the rampant practice of begging in the streets to empowered entrepreneurs owning 42% of a thriving business. It was this desire to make a difference and enfranchise a people who would have contributed significantly to the cultural richness of Belize that led to the birth of MayaBags.

Executive Director, Desiree Arnold, speaks ardently about her work and personal involvement in the company that grants the poor Maya women of Southern Belize the welcomed opportunity to provide income for their households. “It is not just a job for me, I am passionate about the things we are doing.” Through collaboration with MayaBags founder Judy Bergsma, Arnold works towards making this organization fully sustainable in her native Belize.

The company that started with 6 women making reusable Christmas gift bags, now consolidates 90 women from 8 different villages to produce the increasingly diverse handcrafted product line and the impact has been tremendous. The preservation of this aspect of the Mayan culture directly benefits the families, villages, community and country.



## For the tribal artisans and the MayaBags business is vital to "Caribbean Export profoundly"

The women work from home, enabling them to sustain their households and care for their children while still making a substantial contribution to the families' income. "There are fewer women begging in the market place," and for Arnold this accomplishment is heartening.

The investment by MayaBags into ensuring these women continue to sustain their villages exceeds USD \$100,000 to date and this does more than help to send the children to schools and put food on the table; it has uplifted the Maya woman, raising self-esteem and fostering independence. "We have made the ladies more involved in our marketing efforts, such as having a presence at our booth during sales events. This exposure gives them a world view other than their own culture."

Arnold, who has been with MayaBags for more than 6 years, acknowledges the change in the women's demeanour with what can only be referred to as a sense of reverence. Arnold's clear pride is shared throughout the country, Belizeans are aware of the social, cultural and economical contributions made through MayaBags and appreciate what a great positive impact this has for Belize regionally and internationally.

Belize has a mostly privatized enterprise economy, relying primarily on exportation of petroleum and crude oil, agriculture and agro-based industry. "We have an opportunity that was never before envisioned for Belizeans, to be designing and producing products marketable on the international market" says Arnold who credits the company for establishing a brand for her homeland that has global recognition for its quality and mission. "Belize is known for agriculture, not luxury," but through the successful growth of the first luxury brand for this Caribbean country, that perception will hopefully change and create an opportunity for others locally and regionally to follow. Arnold believes that the benefits of this, in turn will bring more value to Belize and by extension the region, generating additional jobs and enticing tourism. The increased knowledge of the Maya community has also had a remarkable impact within the villages it supports. The brand has accredited the incredible art form of traditional Maya craft, instilling renewed pride for their work and encouraging the preservation of these trades. The method of back-strap loom weaving employed by the Maya women is indigenous to this group in Belize. Producing the luxury line has preserved the culture of weaving with the Maya women training their daughters in the technique ensuring the sustainability of the art form and organization.

The level of creativity and talent is evident as well in the finish of hand embroidery items, hand coiled and stitched basketry that also represents Mayan culture and biodiversity. "We are preserving traditional Maya craft" a deeply passionate Arnold shares, "and we have made each of the Maya artisans we work with shareholders in our business."



their community, the success of the  
to sustaining their improved lifestyle.  
y assisted in driving our company forward.”



For the tribal artisans and their community, the success of the MayaBags business is vital to sustaining their improved lifestyle. “Caribbean Export profoundly assisted in driving our company forward,” remarks Arnold. In particular, she noted that partnership with Caribbean Export has “opened (her) eyes” and enlightened Arnold on methods towards improving business strategies. “Attending trade fairs outside of Belize gave us valuable insights to product creation, resource information, marketing strategies and capabilities.” Design Caribbean 2011, which Arnold attended through the assistance of Caribbean Export, was “greatly successful” for MayaBags. Through the experience they “gained more exposure, knowledge of other markets and (an understanding of) what competitors are out there.”

At Dominicana Moda, another exhibition facilitated by the export agency, Arnold expressed that this trade fair too was “significant” to MayaBags’ business development, “it gave us education in doing exports within the EU (European Union).”

Training with the Barbados-based regional export agency was an opportunity well embraced by the organization and Arnold confirms that MayaBags has employed the use of the knowledge acquired, implementing research methods and providing international customers with key information on their products before exporting. “Caribbean Export has given us the opportunity to see what the competition is really like in other places and ideas on resources used by others.” Noting as an example that the Agency was able to provide information regarding the duties imposed by various international markets, she appreciated that the knowledge allowed the organization to calculate pricing before hand, a notably valuable asset.

According to Caribbean Export’s Manager of Trade and Export Development, David Gomez, “helping to equip regional entrepreneurs with useful information to help them make a better decision is why we have invested so heavily in a new market intelligence system.”

Relevant case studies were provided in Arnold’s experience with exporting to Australia and Japan, “getting information on what duties they will incur was a selling point for us, as our buyers were able to make informed decisions on price status, product standards, regulations and customs codes in their own markets before buying.” As a result, export ready capacity for MayaBags has been reviewed and developed into a more refined plan making success more attainable when conducting international business.

E-commerce has also influenced the cottage industry organization’s business model. A website that facilitates ordering merchandise and a presence on social media conglomerate Facebook have helped to build international clientele. However, Arnold observed that, “to improve the exports of our products, what needs to be put in place is tax relief on materials needed for the production process.” She suggests that this will allow the luxury brand to be more competitive on the global market with better pricing.

The authenticity of the vibrant, colourful, intricately woven product line of MayaBags makes it a unique accessory and the line rivals international top name brands such as Coach and Tory Burch among others. “Our price point, rare product ancestry and quality, defines our market.”

Since the business was founded, MayaBags has found a highly receptive market. MayaBags was a main floor line of bags for 9 seasons with all the flagship stores for Barneys New York and has also been purchased by England’s Brown’s of London, reaching as far as multiple stores in Japan. Featured on acclaimed websites including Vogue.com, the list of accolades is long for what Rachel Zoe.com describes as “the must have item”. The line continues to infiltrate the international market and has established an exclusive contract in Australia for yoga bags.

Arnold promises there is much more in this company’s future. Working closely with Bergsma who plays an active role in the organization, they continually expand the product line and find innovative ways to further enhance the product. MayaBags has launched a line of hand-embroidered hobos with “the chic US store” Anthropologie, and the executive director also anticipates the addition of women’s wear accessories such as scarves and jewellery with crocheted work.

The MayaBag is a truly distinct accessory. It is not merely a bag that elegantly graces the arm of the sophisticated bearer, it is an assertion of independence, a declaration of culture, a preservation of livelihood and a bold expression of luxurious style. “When we look back on the past twelve years of MayaBags, our history of responsibility and our success makes us want to dance and celebrate. We’re making a difference in the lives of our artisans and in their families and in their future.”\*



Unquestionably the region's creative talent overflows in fashion.



# FASHION FORWARD

Fashion is not just about pretty dresses, slick suits and outrageous creations. In fact, this often misunderstood industry encompasses communication, drives employment, boosts tourism and utilizes many of the surrounding services required to effectively run a business. More importantly there is money in fashion and lots of it.



**KINGSLEY COOPER**  
PULSE  
CONTRIBUTOR  
INDUSTRY INSIGHT - FASHION

Kingsley Cooper has been at the forefront of the Caribbean's creative industry development for 32 years and is Chairman of Pulse Investments Ltd., Chairman of Jamaica's Entertainment Advisory Board and Chairman of the Caribbean Fashion Industry Association.

An attorney at law, Cooper founded Pulse in 1980, the first fashion production, modelling, music and general entertainment company of its kind. He effected a number of innovations and firsts for Jamaica and the wider Caribbean, including Caribbean Fashion Week, the lifestyle TV programme Caribbean Fashion Weekly and the CMS Reality TV show featuring Jamaican, regional and international legs of The Caribbean Model Search.

The true stars of the fashion industry are the designers and this is where the opportunity opens up for the region.



In a report commissioned by the British Fashion Council, it indicated that in 2010 the value of the British fashion industry was £21 billion a year to the UK economy and it's the 15th largest industry (out of 81) in the UK. India on the other hand, considered one of the world's largest producers of textiles and apparel, generated \$63 billion in 2010 from their fashion industry.





The true stars of the fashion industry are the designers and this is where the opportunity opens up for the region. Unable to fully compete on production cost and fabrics our inherent design aesthetic and talent allows a designer in Trinidad, Haiti or Antigua to rub shoulders with a designer from London, Paris, Milan or India. It's this natural and cultural influence resident in our Caribbean islands that allows for the opportunity of a regional fashion industry to emerge; but that is just half the story.

“Fledgling but having significant talent and potential.” That is how Kingsley Cooper, the creator of Caribbean Fashion Week responds when asked about the views of the Caribbean fashion industry by international counterparts. Though these sentiments might appear harsh and even for some a bit skewed, it is certainly not at all far from the reality.

Unquestionably the region's creative talent overflows in fashion. From the numerous carnivals to catwalks, the creative expression and level of innovation is undeniable. Converting this natural talent into viable business opportunities and economic growth is where the second half of the story begins. According to Cooper, the Jamaican attorney turned fashion entrepreneur and model agent, “There is demonstrable talent and capacity in certain areas, but much needs to be done to make the

*Despite the challenges, the region has still been able to produce notable success in the area of fashion.*



In fact in the UK alone the fashion industry is the largest employer of all the creative industries, directly employing 816,000 people.







industry the significant contributor to regional GDP that it is capable of being.” And understanding the makeup and requirements of those critical ingredients to drive future growth are essential.

For the fashion industry a key element is the design sector and for regional growth to occur every effort must be made to enhance, empower and drive the designers who are at the heart of this sector. More importantly however, must be the realization by those talented designers that any design house they seek to establish is in fact a complete business and not just an expression of their creative talent. These businesses must be treated as such and require the input that any other business would need to facilitate a successful operation.

Explaining this, a passionate Cooper emphasizes that, “Our designers must be able to produce marketable collections regularly and have the ability within their businesses to create, produce and sell in reasonable quantities.” Of course this is certainly not always the case as most continue to struggle to produce multiple collections annually or even have the capacity to fill multiple orders. Cooper believes that the key inputs which are required for the development and growth of the industry, can be listed as follows:

- Increased training options, which will lead to more and better trained designers
- Funding opportunities, including venture funds, appropriate grants, partnerships and other equity options
- Business management, including a more serious and focused approach to business generation.
- Greater and more enlightened Government and grant agency support
- Production facilities, capable of significantly increased quality output
- Increased guidance, at an international level
- Increased assistance for institutions currently contributing to designer development and related support services

Despite the challenges, the region has still been able to produce notable success in the area of fashion. Most recognizable would be Cedella Marley of Jamaica and Meiling from Trinidad and Tobago who have both been able to achieve some international success. Sustaining that success itself also becomes a challenge as frustrated designers struggle to raise capital, find adequate production capacity and often blindly navigate the hostile waters of the international waters without much guidance.

There is certainly a very strong argument to be made for more adequate support for the very promising section of the Caribbean’s creative industries. In fact in the UK alone the fashion industry is the largest employer of all the creative industries, directly employing 816,000 people. The Caribbean Export Development Agency recognizing the importance and potential contribution of the industry has stepped forward to help push forward the development of the necessary elements. Developing their signature initiative, “Caribbean Essence” which took regional designers to do showings in London Fashion Week, London Olympics, Berlin and Caribbean Fashion Week. There is still a lot more to be done but when asked about the future of the region’s fashion industry, Cooper, who is also the Chairman of the Caribbean Fashion Industry Association is quick to say, “Very bright, if we do what’s required!”\*





RU  
TO  
RE





**JEAN MARIE THOMAS**  
AJEANTÉ  
ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

# UNWAY

# TAIL

Born in the twin-island republic of Antigua and Barbuda known for majestic beaches, Jean-Marie Thomas has always had a passion for the fashion industry. From the age of 17 Thomas was a model and over the next 15 years she would develop into a noted fashion designer, no longer only wearing the clothes on the runways, but making them.

In the late eighties and early nineties the fashion industry in Antigua & Barbuda was thriving. The economy that was reliant on tourism as the primary industry home to many reputable designers and a young Thomas was determined to be counted among them.

It was therefore disappointing for Thomas to observe that over the years the fashion industry in Antigua & Barbuda has dwindled. "I can probably count the number of designers still around now on one hand."

While fortunate to be educated in her field, Thomas is pleased to note that for upcoming designers, there are even greater opportunities than there were in her time. Referencing the availability of accredited qualifications in fashion from as early as O Levels through the Caribbean Examination Council, Thomas is enthused about the future of this creative industry. "In the last 3 to 4 years there has been an emergence of young designers," she states, further noting that regionally produced and televised programs such as Mission Catwalk provided valuable insight into the fashion industry making the field more enticing.

A secure future for this sector of the creative industry is important to Thomas who views the fashion industry as being not only viable but also imperative to the diversification of the Caribbean economy. Thomas witnessed the possibilities for the sector first hand during a Study Tour facilitated by the Caribbean Export Development Agency. "I am thankful I had the opportunity to attend the Study Tour with Caribbean Export; it completely changed my mindset where production and distribution is concerned."

Harnessing the information received from the experience, Thomas changed the business plan for her company ajeanté and developed short- and long-term strategies to further the business. Once implemented, the revised model increased demand for ajeanté's signature resort line and Thomas outsourced production to neighbouring island Jamaica, enabling the capacity to fill the growing orders.

This significant step directly correlates with the opportunity to "meet with key individuals in the industry," Thomas explains. Referencing networking opportunities through Dominicana Moda and Caribbean Fashion Week, from which Thomas notes she is still receiving calls within and outside the Caribbean, the sole designer for ajeanté credits Caribbean Export with enabling the development of critical relationships among regionally based entrepreneurs. "Through cultivating relationships I learned how to overcome some of the hurdles we face regionally and I was able to duplicate the models used outside the Caribbean here at home." Thomas expressed gratitude to Caribbean Export for their continued partnership. The agency's presence has not wavered as ajeanté has grown and in the past year Caribbean Export has been instrumental in marketing the line beyond Antigua & Barbuda according to Thomas.

The alliance with Caribbean Export is more important than ever for the fashion designer who was compelled to close the ajeanté boutique in order for the business to expand. In the past 4 years the model turned designer has concentrated on retailing the line. While she confesses that creating couture pieces is her passion, the business-savvy Antiguan recognized that profit for her line rests in mass production and wholesaling. "Wholesalers prefer the brand they are purchasing not to retain a boutique, selling directly to the consumer," explains Thomas and to secure the buyers she assented to make the shift.

Pleased with where ajeanté is positioned, Thomas looks to continue expanding. Seeking to return to her couture line more intensively, the designer wants to create more for individuals than companies. Her aspirations are well supported by her family who encouraged the statuesque model to pursue her dream and they also provide physical support through "much needed man-power." The effort is hindered by financial assistance however. While acknowledging being able to more



*A secure future for this sector of the creative industry is important to Thomas who views the fashion industry as being not only viable but also imperative to the diversification of the Caribbean economy.*

easily secure loans from traditional lending institutions within the past 3 years, this has not always been the case and the result is often sporadic. "It is exciting that new designers are coming to the forefront but it remains to be seen if without financial aid these businesses will be sustainable." It is a concern shared by Caribbean Export who has sought to alleviate this by exploring working with commercial banks to use its grants programme as security for issuing loans to entrepreneurs. It continues to be a work in progress as commercial banks remain cautious when lending to SME's.

Thomas is unscathed by the limited resources and hopes to permeate the international markets, focusing on the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The ajeanté owner recognises that internationally the demand is for "different and new" brands as African and Arab fashion is "big" at the moment.


Confident that the Caribbean holds the potential to unlock the next big thing in fashion, Thomas is busy preparing for her 2014 collection. The resort line will feature lots of white and soft hues of colour, meeting the demand for this market segment. By contrast the couture line that Thomas states is her speciality, will boast vibrant colours from a palette of Caribbean landscapes.

Preparing for the arrival of her first child the designer hints that a baby collection may be in store for ajeanté. "I over plan," Thomas admits, "I'm already thinking ahead to years in the future." It is a future the designer looks forward to with great expectation, noting it will feature "more than just clothing." Thomas continues to work towards a success she believes is within reach, not only for her but also for Caribbean fashion. "We're going to get there," she says confidently, "it is only a matter of time." \*









# MASTERING THE BUSINESS OF STYLE

Sourcing fabrics is a difficult task for Caribbean-based fashion designers that seek to stand apart from their local counterparts. Yet the Eastern Islands of the Caribbean possess the perfect growing conditions for the most superior and most rare strain of cotton in the world.





**ARLENE MARTIN**  
drennaLUNA  
JAMAICA





Jamaican Arlene Martin, owner of Drenna Luna, believes that the Caribbean is not maximising harvesting and exportation opportunities for this rare commodity.

While not as famous as Egyptian cotton West Indian Sea Island (WISI) cotton is the longest, strongest, silkiest and highest grade of cotton found anywhere in the world. Sea Island cotton is grown successfully in select hot, moist environments in other regions however the rarest strain, accounting for 1% of the world's cotton and certainly the most expensive, is found exclusively in the West Indies. According to Exclusive Cottons of the Caribbean Inc. this is because the best Sea Cotton can only be grown "in the small land masses of the Caribbean islands which have the right amount of sunshine, rain, humidity, as well as a dry season and wet season in the right sequence for the right duration." It is a very specific formula and makes the WISI cotton 5 times more expensive than the next best grade available.

Jamaican Arlene Martin, owner of Drenna Luna, believes that the Caribbean is not maximising harvesting and exportation opportunities for this rare commodity. There are two distinct sides to Martin, the assertive businesswoman and the dramatic fashion designer. But both sides agree equally that another opportunity for regional diversification is lost by not producing textiles from our own rare WISI cotton. "The fibre is here," she says, "but the fabric is not." Referencing the success of The Republic of the Philippines in producing Pina a delicate, translucent silk fabric made from the leaves of a pineapple plant, Martin suggests that the Caribbean needs to return to producing and exporting fabrics aggressively. "We have to find better ways to use the resources available around us, to maximise our opportunities for securing the Caribbean's economic future."

It is topics such as these that Martin seeks to address through the recently developed Caribbean Fashion Industry Forum (CAFIF), the region's first fashion industry association that has a commitment to develop regulations in the fashion industry across the region. "Our issues in the (fashion) industry are not unique to each country, they are the same across the Caribbean." Therefore, Martin hopes that by bringing select regional partners in the industry together, solutions can be achieved for all. The association is focused on providing funding, market development, sourcing new raw materials and the standardization and quality of production.

Martin is confident the role of the CAFIF aligns perfectly with that of the Caribbean Export Development Agency, sharing the pursuit of bringing regional businesses together to achieve mutual success in the Caribbean and abroad. "Caribbean Export plays a significant role for regional businesses," Martin says, crediting the agency with providing "many different types



of support as needed." The Jamaican entrepreneur and fashion designer attended Caribbean Fashion Week, London Engage and London Fashion Week through the assistance of Caribbean Export and notes that these exhibitions "provided a foundation for understanding the export market."

Martin is a believer in laying strong foundations and secured one for herself from early. The fashion designer holds an MBA and prior to launching her career in fashion, worked in the export trade. Previous experience in business helped Martin tremendously. She takes a strategic approach to her creative work and notes that her knowledge specifically in export has been useful.

The designer states she is running an enterprise and not just delivering creative products. It is therefore important to understand both aspects of Martin, the designer and the business professional in one person. "Fashion has its own nuances in business such as different buying cycles," and Martin recognises that the business of fashion has a learning process of its own.

According to Martin, where greater education is needed is in comprehending the enormous contribution which can be made to the regional economy through the creative industries and specifically through fashion. "The fashion industry directly contributes to the employment and subsequent empowerment of women." Enhanced opportunities for mass production both locally and for regional and international export, provides employment for seamstresses. Additionally the trade supports a cottage industry, permitting the employed women to work from home, restoring balance to home life, supporting a better community while contributing to the household and wider economy.





The potential for mass production of fashion garments in the Caribbean is attainable. Martin's fashion line, Drenna Luna has achieved significant growth over the years. Only one year since her first showing in 2009, Martin started retailing locally to boutiques. Finding buyers was not difficult she notes but Martin was strategically selective. Selling directly transitioned Drenna Luna's business model and Martin opened a studio. This enabled the designer to embrace ecommerce and Drenna Luna is positioned to partner with a buyer in the United States to retail the Jamaican brand online to the US market. Hoping for the rebirth of the Jamaica shopping network or a similar entity, Martin hopes regional businesses are able to sell to international audiences through the web more frequently. To the Drenna Luna entrepreneur, the Caribbean needs to be perceived as a viable source for fashion, she believes this will strengthen trust when approaching buyers and establish a better market trade. Her vision for the Caribbean and how it is perceived is one strongly shared by those at Caribbean Export who suggest that building recognition for the region lies in the effective promotion of Caribbean talent and product. "We cannot want to see a change in the prospects for the region if we continue to do and promote the same things we did 30 years ago. Being able to demonstrate the diversity of the regional brand is and must be about showcasing the creative talent which drives that diversity," explains, Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Executive Director of Caribbean Export.

The ability for regional designers to penetrate the international market has many hindrances however – using all imported products increases costs, the precarious sliding value of the dollar, concerns with quality and the challenge

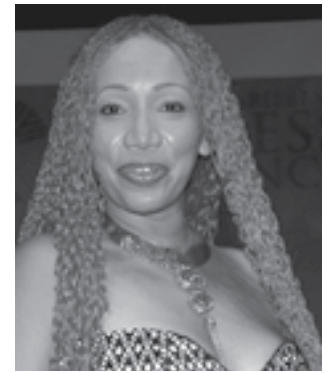
The fashion industry directly contributes to the employment and subsequent empowerment of women.

of consistency, among others. "There is still a long way to go," according to Martin, yet she is enthusiastic. "The Caribbean needs to establish our own brand, label, identity. Starting here and growing internationally with serious commercial presence and significant exports." \*





# LAYING A FOUNDATION FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION



**SONIA NOEL**  
MARISKA DESIGNS  
GUYANA

From a very early age it was clear to everyone that Sonia Noel was destined to be an entrepreneur. One of five children from a single-parent household in a remote area of Guyana, Noel sold confectionary and homemade delights to fellow students and staff in her primary school, even ‘throwing a box-hand’ (meeting turn) to make a contribution to her family. At the age of 11 years the pre-teen would already be outfitting herself, making her first ‘award-winning’ dress for a community pageant and over the past 16 years, the fashion designer would attempt to outfit the world.

While being an advocate for education and training, the designer and owner of Mariska Designs is fully self-taught in the field of fashion. Programmes for textile and fabric design are in preparatory stages in Guyana but to date there are still no existing schools, programmes or training modules for upcoming designers in that country. As a result Noel observes that there are many ‘fly-by-night’ entries into the fashion arena often deterred by the lack of provision and financial support to develop their trade. “Fashion is not all glamorous as people think, to succeed it is a lot of hard-work and raw determination.”

Yet Noel has made significant strides in the local and regional industry, clearing a path for others to follow and extending a helping hand along the way. She is the founder of the Sonia Noel Foundation for Creative Arts (SNFCA), a newly launched initiative to develop the creative industries in Guyana and the wider Caribbean. The foundation seeks to nurture raw talent in dance, drama, visual arts, acting, fashion, photography and other creative energies in hopes of developing the specific art forms. “It is difficult for artists to have a platform to showcase their work,” Noel points out, so in addition to cultivating the talent, the designer has provided the platform through Guyana Fashion Week another initiative she has founded.

Originally debuted six years ago as Guyana Fashion Weekend, the event has grown into a full week of events showcasing a wealth of talent in the creative industries. “Fashion is beyond the runway,” says Noel and incorporated into venues for each evening of fashion, are exhibitions

of sculpture, art, photography, music and cuisine. It is a model Noel seeks to duplicate across the Caribbean, “we are too small to be insular, we need to see beyond each individual island state and recognise we are one Caribbean.”

Noel has started to bridge the gap of regional penetration and exports her extensive line to Barbados, Jamaica, St. Lucia and Trinidad with an exclusive line called ‘First Resort’ retailed through a boutique in Tobago. The accomplishment has come on the heels of attending Caribbean Fashion Week (CFA) an opportunity the designer thanked Caribbean Export Development Agency for. “I couldn’t have gone without Caribbean Export. The line was well received and CFA increased the visibility of Mariska Designs locally and regionally.” Noel called for the support demonstrated by Caribbean Export for the creative industries to be duplicated by other regional partners who needed to follow the remarkable example set. “Visitors to the Caribbean are hungry for unique pieces, Caribbean retailers need to be more receptive, accepting and supportive of this fact.”

The Guyanese fashion designer extended appreciation to Caribbean Export for also being able to attend London Engage, an initiative designed by the Agency to expose regional designers to buyers and a captive audience gathered in London for the 2012 Olympic Games. “This opened new opportunities,” says Noel, who was able to dress a British talk show host during the European tour. The SNFCA founder noted that key connections were made and “seeds were planted that will grow in the future.” While noting that she is still seeing results from the exchange, Noel says follow up is required and suggests repeat visits are necessary to cement relationships and seal agreements.

“What now needs to materialize is for the Caribbean to produce our own version of London Engage. A regional showcase that we take internationally to the diaspora, buyers, media and investors.” It is a challenge Noel hopes her Caribbean counterparts will readily accept and one that she hopes will become a reality. Her vision is one obviously shared by Caribbean Export. The Agency developed a branded intervention titled “Caribbean Essence” which seeks to bring designers and buyers together through showcases.

In an effort to bridge the borders of the Caribbean countries, Noel works tirelessly to create new opportunities for regional integration. The designer turned publisher recently released the first issue of the magazine Makin’ Style as “a new platform for the creative arts and a celebration of Caribbean style.” Guyana Fashion Week will boast the addition of instructional workshops and Noel serves as a mentor and inspiration for imprisoned women. Noel aims to further develop this latter initiative into creating a factory for women in prison, “it is a way of rehabilitating women, giving them a renewed sense of pride, they are providing a service towards creating something beautiful.”

Her efforts have not gone unnoticed. The Mariska Designs owner was the first Caribbean designer to be invited to host a lecture at the acclaimed Brown’s University in Rhode Island. Noel was selected by Caribbean Export to represent Caribbean fashion in the thriving economic milieu of the 2012 Olympic Games in London. Celebrity recording artist Michelle Williams of Destiny’s Child fame wore a piece by the Guyanese designer during a televised interview. The piece featured Noel’s signature interlocking fabric design, which according to Noel is inspired by the latticework, windows and architecture of the Caribbean.

Accomplishments such as these keep Noel motivated and when asked about her future plans, the list is long. She continues to work with diligence, allowing her natural talent and passion to be presented through her many endeavours. “I want to be remembered as someone who contributed to society.” \*





Noel has started to bridge the gap of regional penetration and exports her extensive line to Barbados, Jamaica, St. Lucia and Trinidad with an exclusive line called 'First Resort'.



When fused with other popular genres, we witness world-dominating superstars such as Bob Marley, Rihanna, Nicki Minaj, Sean Paul, Jimmy Cliff and many others.



Arturo Tappin - Barbados



# THE BUSINESS OF MUSIC:

# MAKING THE CARIBBEAN THE NEXT MUSICAL FRONTIER

It can be argued that the greatest exportable commodity that the Caribbean has to offer is to be found within our culture and creativity. From a musical perspective, we have always done a great job in the creation and performance of the art form. However, we have not been able to create wealth and employment from this invaluable commodity of music. We have exported numerous global superstars, but not the business professionals to support them globally. What this creates is wealth for a few artists and thousands of taxable jobs for non-nationals to work closely with our exported talents, resulting in foreign governments and their private sectors benefiting more than our regional governments and private sectors. Today we have a large amount of talented individuals at the top of the pyramid, supported by very few business professionals at the bottom of the pyramid. This is not a very good model and it is time to correct this inverted pyramid structure found in the Caribbean music industry.

Caribbean music is more than just reggae, dancehall and soca, with unique, diverse rhythms that are well known and popular around the world. When fused with other popular genres, we witness world-dominating superstars such as Bob Marley, Rihanna, Nicki Manaj, Sean Paul, Jimmy Cliff and many others. Caribbean artists are particularly strong in live performances as it is our number one line item for making a living. We forget however, about the many other supporting roles that can generate income ; individuals such as songwriters, graphic designers, arbitrators, stylists, makeup artists, sound engineers, producers, publicists, business managers, choreographers, dancers, photographers, video directors, script writers, social media specialists and the scores of other roles that make up a vibrant and perpetual music industry.



**IVAN BERRY**  
CEO OF C2W MUSIC LIMITED  
CONTRIBUTOR  
INDUSTRY INSIGHT - MUSIC

Born in the Caribbean island of St. Kitts, Ivan Berry has over 30 years of experience as a senior executive in the Canadian music industry. He is currently the CEO of C2W Music Limited, a Caribbean music publishing and artist development company publicly traded on the Jamaica Stock Exchange. Berry's notable career includes top-level positions with music management and publishing company tanjola entertainment inc., Ole, the number one Canadian music publisher and Sony BMG Canada. Berry is also an established educator and has created curriculum courses at two universities in Canada where he lectured.

In order to capitalize and enhance the capacity of underlying career opportunities, we must build a local syndicate of persons for the identified areas in the business of music, who will participate in the full development of the sector, to support our superstars of tomorrow. We have to strategically strengthen linkages with international executives, artists, songwriters, producers and others to build on the collaborations for future marketing, promotion and exploitation. We have to perfect the art of songwriting and artist development and create 'hit' songs for export to the international market, while the intellectual property and the foreign earnings remain in the region. Our formal educators have to offer new career options in the business of music in an effort to impact job creation, encourage entrepreneurship and alleviate poverty, while giving a sense of purpose to idle youth, increasing their earning potential, and reducing crime associated with unemployment. Our governments will have to enhance legislation, while strongly enforcing laws that create wealth for our content creators. All this will eventually bring recognition to the Caribbean as the new musical frontier.

Despite the turmoil or even downturn of the physical record selling business, the music industry, and more importantly, the entertainment industry, has remained healthy and has in fact prospered. Copyright owners and brand managers are exerting more creative and strategic autonomy than ever before. Technological developments have made it possible for music creators to record, distribute, market, and sell their own music within their own networks, globally.

With the shifting industry paradigm that has seen the emergence of an artist-entrepreneur model, major Caribbean labels have been slow, and reluctant to take risks in exploring how to utilize emerging technologies and exploit potential new business models to maintain their reign over the music marketplace. They have become increasingly obsolete over the past several years, and indeed may be extinct in the not-too-distant future.

With this harsh reality staring us in the face, it is time for Caribbean independent artists and companies to take steps toward the so-called '360 All Rights' business model, in which there is profit-sharing with the artist in earnings from a variety of artist-driven revenue streams. The model has drastically changed from the selling of the physical CD to the selling of the all-encompassed BRAND. We have to perfect the effective monetizing of the entire brand of our artists, while creating a new and improved industry, with



*Claudia Edward - St. Lucia*



Despite the turmoil or even downturn of the physical record selling business, the music industry, and more importantly, the entertainment industry, has remained healthy and has in fact prospered.





Mr. Dale - Barbados

Capacity building in the music business industry would aid in employment generation, poverty reduction and the creation of wealth in the industry, resulting in benefits for our youth.



Michele Henderson - Dominica

young entrepreneurs at the helm of the supporting jobs that sustain the artist's brand. There are now, much more than before, a range of jobs that create numerous revenue streams in a cohesive manner within the music industry. This means intellectual property could be created within the region, to generate revenue globally, wealth comes back to the region to its rightful owners, and governments benefit from an increase of taxable income.

Capacity building in the music business industry would aid in employment generation, poverty reduction and the creation of wealth in the industry, resulting in benefits for our youth. We need to effectively groom leaders in the Caribbean music industry, so that they can genuinely represent the interests of our talented and creative right brain thinkers. We need to establish sustainable, structured, transparent, accountable and profitable business models for the sector. We need to align risk and reward, where the interests of creative citizens, governments, investors and the public at large, are matched in order to establish the music industry in the Caribbean, as a viable and respectable avenue for wealth creation and retention.

Popular music as an outlet for youth expression is undeniable. The disproportionate attraction to music as an area of professional interest among youth is equally as undeniable. In fact, it is believed that the vast majority of 'youth at risk' identify music as their primary area of professional interest. What is disturbing about this is that music, from the perspective of those same young people, is defined simply as its live performance and nothing else. They are oblivious to the hundreds of distinct roles and role-players that contribute to the success of any one artist and their performance. They are also oblivious to the low probability of success associated with careers as simply a professional vocalist/recording artist.

Our youth must first be taught to align education, both practical and formal, with their creative talents to create a sustainable, vibrant and perpetual recording music industry in the Caribbean. We must not fail our right brain thinkers; we **MUST** educate them towards a global perspective of the Caribbean creative marketplace. In doing so, young people will recognize the plethora of options available to them and that the combination between talent and education is an indomitable fortress. \*



Quite easily Caribbean music is as rich and diverse as its people. Comprised of a multiplicity of enriched genres, the music oozes with influences from the many cultures of the region including African, European, Indian and Indonesian.



# THE LANGUAGE OF MUSIC

Think of Caribbean music and most may probably think Bob Marley, Sean Paul and the genres of Reggae and Dance Hall. Though very notable in their achievements, it can be said that the real beauty of Caribbean music is in the amazing eclectic mix of its genres and expressions.

Quite easily Caribbean music is as rich and diverse as its people. Comprised of a multiplicity of enriched genres, the music oozes with influences from the many cultures of the region including African, European, Indian and Indonesian. While the more popular genres such as reggae, salsa, calypso, soca and perhaps to a lesser extent, zouk, bouyan and punta are known across the world, the just as exciting expressions of benna, merengue, spouge and bolero that are yet to meaningfully find their way beyond the region's shores. There is one artist however, who is determined to see barriers broken down and the beauty of the region's music take flight. Especially those derivatives found in the Spanish speaking Caribbean.

Dominican Republic recording artist, Xiomara Fortuna, known simply as Xiomara, is a musician with a mission. The artist's own music is itself strongly diversified, a reflection of her native folk rhythms with influences from Cuba and Brazil. Xiomara fuses jazz with contemporary music and incorporates mangulina, pripi, salve, congos and gaga to create beautiful expressions of her varied cultural background. Her compilation, Kumbajei, is more than a CD. Xiomara expresses that "it is a work that includes much of the Dominican unusual rhythms and integrates new ways of making music, blending the contemporary with the traditional, respecting the most valuable elements of each." The end result is a unique sound which has made this product a reference for musicians, artists and music schools, both nationally and internationally.

According to Xiomara, music is one of the quickest ways to close the divide in the Caribbean and she encourages all attempts of cooperation such as CARIFORUM. The singer and songwriter credits Caribbean Export for contributing to this effort of unification through the creative industries. "Never has there been such a regional business environment prior to Caribbean Export," says Xiomara. The Dominican notes that before the agency's intervention, profitable relationships only existed with others in the Hispanic Caribbean, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Cuba, etc. Caribbean Export has "broadened the possibilities" yet while providing a foundation for "artists to know what happens in other markets" Xiomara believes that more support is needed.



**XIAMARA FORTUNA**  
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

“Music promotes the country, attracting tourists and investors therefore we need a cultural policy from governments, economic sectors, entrepreneurs and artists.” The artist also encourages embassies and cultural attachés to provide visas more readily to artists that are promoting festivals in the Caribbean. “We need to promote live performances and take advantage of existing platforms such as international festivals and cultural encounters.”

Purer rhythms can more readily secure easier placement on the international market and there is the bias to compete in a market already spending on pure rhythms neglecting the new genres, fusions and syntheses. Xiomara hopes to raise awareness of the need to bring together musicians and artists from across the Caribbean to explore the



path of new musical trends and reaffirms her role as a representative of three generations of Caribbean music.


Her chosen path is not an easy one, “it is super hard to permeate in the genre of jazz, even when fashionable in certain social class jazz, the music I make is largely a component of African roots and has not been received in the media, or club environments or even by jazz lovers.”

Holding firmly to a conviction “to do the right thing”, Xiomara embraces the support she receives from some of the best musicians in the country and hopes that her “African brothers” identify with her music. However, she notes that hers is a “difficult situation”, where merengue, bachata and technology flows cannot survive without the possibility of touring in other countries.

Performing internationally to often English-speaking communities is not a deterrent to the Dominican artist. “I think the songs are like movies, best in the mother tongue.” Noting that people love the rhythms of music and the sound of different languages, Xiomara does not view language, as an obstacle rather the artist believes that music transcends the language barrier, “since the music itself is a language that communicates.”

Influenced by major figures of American Jazz such as Ella Fitzgerald, Nina Simone, and John Coltrane as well as by Brazilian figures including Maria Bethania, Milton Nascimento, and Gilberto Gil, Xiomara decided to make a career in music to carry a message to the people and of course share the joy that singing produces. Deeply rooted in her passion for music, Xiomara will continue to give the gift of music to the world. “I’m writing for other artists as well as recording two new conceptual products, writing my memoirs and promoting my music better via interpreters.” Still she finds time to give back to her community and is forming a music school in an impoverished community, guiding the students in the preservation of the cultural identity in the Dominican Republic and the Caribbean. \*



A photograph of a woman with short, curly hair, wearing a black sleeveless top and a white shawl, singing into a microphone. She is gesturing with her left hand. In the background, a man in a white shirt is playing an electric guitar. The scene is lit with blue stage lights.

Purer rhythms can more readily secure easier placement on the international market and there is the bias to compete in a market already spending on pure rhythms neglecting the new genres, fusions and syntheses.



# A FUSION OF MIND, SPIRIT & SONG

Almost one quarter of the Caribbean population speaks French or a French-based Creole while the English-speaking community accounts for a mere 14%. Yet the vast majority of Caribbean artists that have successfully attained international recognition in the music industry come from this significantly smaller community.





**JEAN BELONY MURAT**  
BÉLO  
HAITI



Haitian singer, songwriter and composer BÉLO is undaunted by this revelation. Christened Jean Belony Murant, BÉLO is making a mark on the world music stage with his unique fusion of jazz, world-beat, rock, reggae and Afro-Haitian or Ragganga music. "Being Haitian means my sound is a melting pot of music with French, English, Latin, African and French Colonial influences."

Recording and performing in his native Creole tongue, BÉLO does not believe language presents any barriers to reaching a wider audience. The artist admits that he is selective of what he brings to music but is consistent in his approach. "Music is not just lyrics, it is an expression of emotion." BÉLO addresses social problems of humankind, such as violence, the HIV/AIDS epidemic and homeless children in his music and this emotional connection is what permits the international artist to engage audiences around the world who connect with the singer through his soul rendering tunes even when they remain oblivious to what he is saying. The connection is instead established through the passion of song and the feelings evoked when listening to it rather than through its interpretation.

A product of his environment, BÉLO hails from an intensely cultural community and proudly proclaims his native village is the only one in the country with over 300 artists living together within a 2 to 3 mile square. Surrounded by clay and metal sculptors and paintings depicting the complete spectrum of colour, music was deeply integrated into the life of the community. From the women who crooned on their way to the river, to the men who harmonized while cultivating the land, "everything was done with song." Yet BÉLO notes that while music was inherent and part of the average lifestyle where the local car dealer doubles as a keyboardist in his band, music was not accepted as a form of art.

The singer and guitarist is certainly validated and assuredly recognized in Europe and Africa where he is quite popular. An accomplishment enhanced through Caribbean Export during his participation in WOMEX (World Music Expo) and 'Soul Fusion', a multi-genre Caribbean concert featured at Design Caribbean. The first of its kind to be staged by Caribbean Export, Soul Fusion brought together regional artists from across the Caribbean representing the various cultures and languages to put on show within the Dominican Republic with the best of what Caribbean musicians have to offer. "It was a huge opportunity to be there, meeting people and understanding first-hand how the industry works. It helps you to understand the whole picture." BÉLO's brand of music was also exposed to an appreciative audience in London during the 2012 Olympics where he was one of many Caribbean artists to take the stage at the Caribbean Export initiative 'London Engage'.

This affirms that the artist is accomplishing the mission of his music which is "not to make people dance, it is to bring change to Haiti" and through song BÉLO is making a difference to his country. Although dancing is exactly what his music makes any listener want to do, the serious message that underscores BÉLO's sound cannot be ignored. This was evident following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti which killed over 100,000 and affected more than 3 million people. Following the quake BÉLO's primary focus was to create awareness for his country, calling attention to their plight and ultimately raising urgent funds to help restore the country and people.

Such initiatives are not uncommon to the budding philanthropist who continues to be instrumental in contributing to his home community. Noting that things are moving forward since the devastating event, albeit slowly, business has returned to normalcy but much more still needs to be done. BÉLO has initiated long term projects towards continued community development, the artist hosts activities for children with disabilities, works with a local women's prison towards promoting rehabilitation through music and is building a cultural centre in the village of Croix des Banquets where he was born.

With the release of his latest single 'Banm Nouvel Ou', BÉLO is preparing for the release of his album in preparation to go on tour. The sound is "fresh" as always and BÉLO promises to continue to provide an original sound, music with "diverse rich flavour, a West African base, pop, reggae, konpa fusion." \*



This affirms that  
of his music which  
bring change to Ha  
a difference to his





the artist is accomplishing the mission is "not to make people dance, it is to vaiti" and through song Belo is making country.







# THE 'HALLELUJAH' CHORUS

**Networking is the way forward. According to Kittitian born producer John Francis this is what is needed for anything emanating from the Caribbean to work successfully. Francis observes that the countries of the OECS together possess a population of over 550,000 people, less than a small town in Europe. When the full spectrum of Caribbean islands combine however, the end result is a substantially commanding entity with a sizable population, economy, resources, technology and talent that is comparable to its first-world international counterparts.**

It is a seemingly reasonable and feasible proposal, but Francis strongly remarks that “all stakeholders have to be onboard” before any such linkages can begin to achieve success. Referencing regional air travel as an example, the music industry pioneer observes that while Caribbean-based carriers provide the necessary service of connecting the islands, consistently exorbitant fees associated with airfare and cargo are prohibitive to regional business development. Where the costs for connecting to a neighbouring island is the equivalent of travelling to an international destination, many opt to pursue professional alliances with international parties and this does nothing towards building professional associations within the Caribbean. “The infrastructure for fostering regional business growth is not in place in the Caribbean as yet,” and by Francis’ estimations, there is a very long way to go.

Francis spent his formative and early adult years with his family in England before moving to Sweden and it is here where the producer established DanceBEAT Records representing Caribbean artists. In Sweden, where in the 1990’s the economic value of the exportation of music exceeded that of the exportation of Volvo cars, Francis harvested his career in music for 15 years before returning home to St. Kitts and Nevis.

Humble, warm and incredibly frank, Francis is very passionate about the future of the music industry in the Caribbean and with the development of Caribbeandownloads.com provides an avenue for regional artists to be heard around the world. The online distribution company specializes in the digital download market and a strong platform from which to launch the young voices of our islands. The site’s current product portfolio contains multiple titles in various Caribbean music genres.

He credits Dr. Keith Nurse a “then-young” professor from Trinidad and Tobago with the initiative of using music festivals as a means of attracting tourism during the traditional visitor low seasons. However Francis sites that since this original premise was instituted some 20 years ago, the primarily government-run festivals have gone array, “like an overfed child that is still malnourished.” Many of the festivals have strayed from the executions that assured their success in the past. Jazz festivals feature upcoming pop singers. Francis goes on to say that old artists who in many cases have not performed or released a new song or album in recent times, are extremely expensive but touted as show headliners. They perform to diminishing audiences that are confused by ‘oldie-goldie’ favourites sharing a stage with trending dancehall artists. “The model needs to be revisited,” Francis implores, “we

are racing Formula One cars on dirt-tracks. We put on a festival but yet can’t put on a show.” Music festivals are not unique to the Caribbean they exist all over the world and in many cases are quite profitable. With this in mind the producer believes building the regional music festival industry has an attainable solution, “we have to put in the work and build the infrastructure.”

First on the agenda we must develop our regional artists. Caribbean-based talent is often confined to performing in local bars, hotels and nightclubs, receiving little to no real exposure. This means the talent is not being developed at home Francis explains and the entire industry suffers as a result, not only the artists and musicians, but the song writers, studios, promoters, producers and designers. When able to breach the international stage, our Caribbean artists are “making millions on the outside but not bringing that money back home.” Noting this is not necessarily the fault of those achieving stardom, unless an injection is made into the regional music industry these artists stem from, the cycle is perpetuated. Francis credits Jamaica for being successful in this regard, noting that artists from this island are diligent in helping fellow artists along.

The Kittitian producer commends Caribbean Export for their work towards providing a platform for regional artists beyond the bars, hotels and nightclubs. The second Caribbean Export regional delegation to WOMEX hosted the largest stand at the international music exhibition and dominated with a “huge presence” Francis excitedly recalls. Countries were keen and showed initial interest, but in order to foster these relationships and turn interest into income, a repeated presence is required. “The deals are not made during the exhibitions, the exhibitions provide an introduction. The deals come later through relationships, when friends and partners have a chat in hotel lobbies and restaurants. This is really where the business happens.”

The responsibility cannot be borne by one entity alone and while Caribbean Export has made a significant contribution, Francis recommends others need to urgently follow suit. “Caribbean countries need to pool resources,” and Francis advises this is not only financial. Cultural departments need to be in a place where they can provide enhanced copyright protection for regional music and be better equipped to support our agents, promoters and studios.

Likewise regional artists must also step up their game, for Caribbean music to penetrate the international arena it must have international appeal. The “jump up, juck up and wine up” cannot be all our music is about it must be relevant for more than one season. This in turn will encourage the stakeholders to provide the support for music that can be exported to a wider audience outside the diaspora.

The music industry cannot be viewed as one possible scenario for rebuilding the regional economy, according to Francis “music is the region’s only saviour. To escape the confines of economic crisis forget tourism, music is the hallelujah.” The world market for travel destinations is expanding and Caribbean tourism industry is shrinking. “If we don’t find expanding industries we will contract into non-existence.” We are assured of the ever-increasing demand for entertainment however and a thriving music industry may very well propel the Caribbean into fame. \*



**JOHN FRANCIS**  
DanceBEAT RECORDS/  
CARIBBEAN DOWNLOADS  
ST. KITTS & NEVIS





# EMERGENCE OF EXCELLENCE

Practitioners in the creative industries in the Caribbean are well positioned to emerge onto the international stage with the right guidance, partnerships and tools. This is clearly evident in the case of the extremely gifted Jason Dasent who masters the mixes of his creativity in the business he calls Studio Jay.

Jason Dasent worked from a teenager to pursue his innate passion for producing music. Affectionately known simply as Jay, the founder of Studio Jay Recording started 20 years ago by creating jingles. He would progress unto commercials before producing music for some of the best artists over a wide spectrum of genres, cultivating a career that would span multilateral roles as keyboardist, audio engineer, music and film producer. While Dasent focuses on music, his skills as a film producer are not wanting, and he has collaborated on films such as Sans Souci, Tickle Me Rich and the award-winning SEIGE.

Dasent does not undertake his professional development as a solo performance; rather, the owner and musical producer of the band Overdrive readily shares the spotlight with wife and partner Sarah Dasent. In fact, he was quick to point out that the concept for Studio Jay's defining project, Emergence, was Sarah's idea and is assuredly "her baby", but the two work side-by-side in an endeavour to use the Emergence programme to propel the region beyond the confines of our blue Caribbean waters.

It is this commitment to seeing the propulsion of the region's creative talent into viable contributors to the Caribbean's economies that Caribbean Export shares in common with Dasent and his partner Sarah. Understanding that for regional economic growth regional governments must involve the creative industries as a critical part of any economic policy, Caribbean Export has stepped forward with its own plans to help drive the industry with a major focus on the region's creative entrepreneurs.

The duo seeks to create a new perspective for the Caribbean as a place of business, not just for a holiday.



JASON & SARAH DASENT  
STUDIO JAY RECORDING INC.  
TRINIDAD



Embracing the importance of the creative industries to drive the 'economic well-being' of the Caribbean, the Dasents have launched a massive project incorporating the best from many sectors in the creative industries and selected from all across the region.

According to the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, "the creative industries have been seen to become increasingly important to economic well-being with proponents suggesting that 'human creativity is the ultimate economic resource' and that 'the industries of the twenty-first century will depend increasingly on the generation of knowledge through creativity and innovation.'

Embracing the importance of the creative industries to drive the 'economic well-being' of the Caribbean, the Dasents have launched a massive project incorporating the best from many sectors in the creative industries and selected from all across the region. "Emergence represents the best of what the Caribbean has to offer in fashion, art, animation, music, film and videography," promises Jason Dasent, with the ambition to provide a gateway for honing these talents, taking them to the international arena and then propelling them mainstream.



The duo seeks to create a new perspective for the Caribbean as "a place of business, not just for a holiday." The couple shares the belief that the Caribbean is currently not the first place international studios look to for new talent in the creative industries. In fact there is little doubt that in many cases this region is not even considered an option at all. It is this perception they hope to change and the Dasents expressed that with continued support from agencies such as Caribbean Export, they are confident this achievement is in sight.





Paul is CEO of the Playmaker Group based in the United Kingdom with clientele featuring AEG Live, BBC, Nike and Sony. The St. Lucian-born agent is especially interested in working to develop West Indian talent and has represented artists including Damien and Stephen Marley.

Jason and Sarah Dasent are fully aware of the significance of having this vital UK partnership instituted for the success of Emergence to be realized. The Dasents dream of Caribbean music being fully integrated mainstream. It is a vision beyond calypso, soca, reggae and dub, genres that the region is perhaps most widely recognized for, extending outside the narrow brand profile to include jazz, pop, gospel and other artistic styles also found in the Caribbean. "I long to hear Caribbean music played mainstream on international radio stations," Jason Dasent yearns. "Not only during the West Indian hour but alongside other international artists in the same genre as part of mainstream radio. Not the occasional star either," he adds, "but everyone."

It is a position also shared by Caribbean Export but with the unmistakable understanding that we need to get the product and the branding right. "Creating opportunities to develop and showcase the talent and brand of the Caribbean is not only about attending tradeshows but also about building developmental relationships," expresses McNair. "We need to not only look outward but inward to those examples of excellence and make them part of the development of the creative product of the region."

Jason Dasent knows a challenge associated with this international market infiltration is the consistency of the product. Between the neighbouring countries "quality varies" and this is also the case between music genres. Identifying Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago as progressing, these countries still do not achieve the greatest consistency to the product that is so vitally needed. Dasent reiterates the challenge of all budgets not being equal and notes the impact of financial restrictions in some territories as a setback. "Funding is lacking" and there are "no concessions in music" in many instances.

It is financial support that has somewhat delayed the full-scale launch of Emergence. The Emergence Tour is slated to cover 20 major cities throughout Europe, before moving on to Australia, Asia and culminating in the United States. The tour is now scheduled to commence in 2014 once funds are available.

The Emergence artists will keep changing so the project does not become stagnant. With the growth of the artists through the project, the talent will regenerate every 2 to 3 years as previous artists develop and move on. "We are providing a gateway for the future stars and superstars of the Caribbean, we are creating opportunities."

Jason and Sarah speak of the talent in Emergence with an inherent pride. They have created a "family environment" where everyone takes care of each other and together they anticipate great success.

After the initial local and regional launches, Emergence will then promote the artists outside the region "once (they are) market ready." For each of the artists from various creative industry sectors, more than raw talent will be necessary. Readiness will not only take into consideration skill and capability but lifestyle deportment.

The future is bright for Studio Jay and the Emergence team. They have embraced the changing face of the music industry and look forward to making Caribbean music accessible through various platforms other than CDs, such as via streaming or downloading through internet portals. The approach will be consistent in other segments of the creative industries as well. "As the industry advances and changes, we will advance and change with it." Continually improving and doing so as a united entity, the Dasents are answering the call to be excellent. \*

Liberally commending Caribbean Export for encouraging collaboration between regional contacts, Dasent stated that being able to attend international exhibitions coordinated by the Agency with other regional industry partners was "worthwhile, even before international contacts were established." This is because venues such as WOMEX (World Music Expo) provided an environment for fostering not only international but regional contacts and partnerships. Noting that there is "no equivalent to WOMEX in the Caribbean" regional delegates utilize these opportunities to solidify relationships with each other.

"Bringing the region's creative minds together to share experiences and ideas is high on the Agency's agenda," according to Chris McNair, Manager of Competitiveness and Innovation, Caribbean Export. "Building a regional brand for the creative industries which becomes synonymous with the Caribbean the same way Reggae and Bob Marley is with Jamaica, is all part of us ensuring collaboration is encouraged and fostered." Dasent is "grateful" to have had the opportunity to also attend Study Tours and professed he attained "lots of results in Berlin, Manchester and Paris." There is "tremendous potential" in these markets, although the producer discovered that he would also need to present his country, people and culture, all unknown to some of the attendees. "They didn't know of Trinidad and Tobago, where we are, who we are. I had to educate them, raise awareness of our country, let them know our country produced the only musical instrument invented in the 20th century, the steel pan drum." The international experience would play a pivotal role for Studio Jay in redefining his business. Changes to Dasent's business model implemented subsequent to the exhibitions have made Studio Jay "more competitive internationally."

Previously using Sonar music software, in 2012 Studio Jay switched to Pro Tools software, the new world standard platform. By making this switch, Dasent was able to enter foreign studios and "immediately get to work." Due to using the same interface as his international counterparts, they now "spoke the same language." Dasent continues consistently updating the studio using the latest software and hardware technologies and enhancements available.

The seeds planted during his international travels with Caribbean Export would bear rich fruit in other areas for Dasent as well. New partnerships with Guadeloupe would be established in Paris and perhaps most significantly, Dasent would secure a UK agent for Studio Jay and affiliated artists. Ray





# THE STATE OF FILM

**Lights! Camera! ...Time for action! The stage has been set and the crews are in place eagerly awaiting the directors to issue the proverbial call for “action” to the Caribbean region’s film industry. Slowly growing in interest and encouragingly attracting the attention of respective governments across the region, the Caribbean’s film industry’s prospects appear to be looking up but a great deal is still left to be done. The argument is, are we aware of how much needs to be done and are we even doing what needs to be done?**

If ever there be a doubt about the impact of the film industry let’s consider for a brief moment the region’s key source market for tourist arrivals – The United Kingdom. Despite an ongoing recession, UK film contributes over £4.6 billion to UK GDP and supports over 117,000 jobs (up from 100,000 in 2009). Further more, films depicting the UK are responsible for generating around a 10th of overseas tourism revenues, estimating that around £2.1 billion of visitor spend a year is attributable to UK film, according to an Oxford School of Economics study. Of course some might argue that with all the established infrastructure, big studios, corporate support and sheer size of the UK market, achieving those numbers are very much incomparable to anything possible in the region. Maybe so, but there is a greater opportunity for GDP contribution and it resides in the independent film value chain among others.

Most of the big budget films which are produced in the bigger markets, like the US and to some extent the UK are done through studios. In this system, a film is often developed, produced, distributed and exploited without leaving a single integrated company or consortium: a simple corporate value chain. However the independent feature film production and distribution sector provides a value system business, in that a feature film is not made and delivered to its final audience by a single company. Instead there is a chain of companies, businesses, and freelancers, all working on different elements of the production and exploitation process, and adding value in different ways along the chain. This expands the economic impact of a single production to support many smaller private entities. Therefore the domino effect of independent film production is unmistakable. Getting the elements right to support this kind of production is where the region continues to work at perfecting.

Dr. Bruce Paddington, the co-designer and coordinator of the B.A. Film Programme in the Faculty of Humanities and Education and the University of the West Indies, establishes that film in the region already has a rich and vast history dating back to the 1950s in Cuba.



**DR. BRUCE PADDINGTON**  
FOUNDER OF BANYAN  
PRODUCTIONS & THE CARIBBEAN  
FEDERATION OF FILMMAKERS  
CONTRIBUTOR  
INDUSTRY INSIGHT – FILM

Dr. Bruce Paddington is an award-winning filmmaker, founder of Banyan Productions and the Caribbean Federation of Filmmakers. He has directed and produced over 500 films and television programs during his acclaimed career. His most recent production, the documentary “Forward Ever: The Killing of a Revolution”, is based on the historic account of the paramilitary attack on the government of Grenada resulting in its overthrow by political revolutionary Maurice Bishop in 1979. The film is scheduled to premiere at the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival in September 2013. Dr. Paddington is the Founder and Director of the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival.

Currently the co-designer and coordinator of the B.A. Film program in the Faculty of Humanities and Education, The University of the West Indies, Dr. Paddington has taught film and communications and guest lectured extensively at various universities. He has published many journal articles on Caribbean and Latin American Cinema, including interviews with the Cuban director Humberto Solas and the Mexican director Francisco Athie. He is also an accomplished photographer, teaches photography at UWI and has had three solo exhibitions.

*Olympic Athletes featured in documentary, Built to Last, Andrew Lewis, Sailing - Trinidad & Tobago*  
*Karle Marte, Women's Volleyball - Dominican Republic*

According to Dr. Paddington, "The rest of the region is really now starting." He sites his home country, Trinidad and Tobago as a leader in initiating the kinds of initiatives necessary to help drive growth of the industry. The government of the twin island republic has instituted a 35% tax rebate for international film companies choosing to have their films produced on the island. This progressive move allows for the employment of local crews, critical knowledge sharing between international filmmakers and their local counterparts and the additional boost to the country's tourism product.

Dr. Paddington however, contends that much more needs to be done not only in his homeland, which he holds up as an example of movement in the right direction but across the Caribbean. Himself an award-winning filmmaker and founder of the Caribbean Federation of Filmmakers, Dr. Paddington believes that there is a greater need for more collaboration and coproduction across the region. "We need more films that deal with the wider Caribbean--Stories that show the linkages of Caribbean countries."

Although doing all this makes perfect sense, the issue of distribution and getting these works seen is still a riddle to be fully solved by regional filmmakers. With international studios holding a monopoly on cinemas, breaking into the mainstream of movie theaters continues to be an uphill battle for the independently produced films. One answer is the coveted spot in the many regional and international film festivals available. Getting there however is an expensive undertaking and is often out the reach of the struggling filmmaker. Dr. Paddington believes that this and the actual production of quality films is the very reason why collectively, Caribbean governments should consider setting up a regional fund for film. Wishful thinking? Maybe not. There however, has not been any movement in that direction.

One regional agency which has shown some movement, has been the Caribbean Export Development Agency. They have made it possible for several filmmakers and other creative industry producers to make the long and expensive trip to Europe to attend international tradeshows and film festivals. The agency also recently commissioned a film on the business of sport in the region titled, "Built to Last" which looked at the Caribbean region's ability to produce world-class athletes. Dr. Paddington lauds the efforts of the agency but contends that greater effort should be made to support the wider development of the industry by exposing many more of the talented regional filmmakers and producers to the art of developing international quality films. He sees this being possible by local governments and regional agencies like Caribbean Export supporting the attendance of international film producers to the various Caribbean film festivals and opening more avenues for co-productions between local and international producers. Dr. Paddington also contends that the time has come for a possible CARIFORUM co-production treaty to help drive and empower collaborative works. He believes, "It's time the region is not only known for its tourism but as a place where the creative industries do well." \*

Most of the big budget films which are produced in the bigger markets, like the US and to some extent the UK are done through studios. In this system, a film is often developed, produced, distributed and exploited without leaving a single integrated company or consortium: a simple corporate value chain.







one dream...

one life...

# GHETT'A LIFE

[www.ghettalifethemovie.com](http://www.ghettalifethemovie.com)

*Award winning Jamaican  
film - Ghett'a Life was screened  
at Design Caribbean 2011 in the  
Dominican Republic*

# Gecko

Inspired by true events

The story of a small gecko who brings  
color to London.





# STEPS TO THE WORLD STAGE - AN ANIMATED APPROACH

In a recent publication petitioning support for an investment opportunity in a Creative Industries Animation Studio, Invest Trinidad & Tobago published “in today’s extremely competitive market, a 30-minute animation feature costs between USD 200,000.00 - 400,000.00 to produce in the US while the same feature can be produced in India, at a cost of USD 70,000.00.” The document goes on to note, “Trinidad and Tobago has the potential to match this cost saving.”

The reality however, is that animation as a serious contender among the range of offerings under the creative industry umbrella in the region, is still in its infancy. This reality nevertheless, is not tarnishing the resolve of some in the region determined to see it live up to its potential. It’s a resolve which has also captured the attention of Caribbean Export.

Working with armoured diligence is Camille Selvon Abrahams of Trinidad and Tobago who wants to transform the reality of animation from the underdog to the champion of the creative industry. The founder of the Anima Caribbean Animation and New Media Festival, Abrahams sees the potential for animation to be a source of economic support not only for Trinidad but for the entire Caribbean. The economic impact is also one shared by Caribbean

The reality however, is that animation as a serious contender among the range of offerings under the creative industry umbrella in the region, is still in its infancy.



**CAMILLE SELVON ABRAHAMS**  
ANIME CARIBE  
ANIMATION &  
NEW MEDIA FESTIVAL  
TRINIDAD



Export who stepped up recently to help publicise the festival and bring people together to share in the concept for growth through animation and film. Though certainly a move in the right direction, animation unquestionably has a long way to go in the region.

The Trinidadian animated film producer of the popular series Krik Krak Anansi hopes in time to establish the Animaë Caribe brand as the Caribbean's Animation Festival and attract international attention.

Launching a career in animation is difficult in the Caribbean, although Abrahams notes that some headway has been made recently. Animation was not available in the Caribbean previously therefore was not an option considered when seeking viable career opportunities. Abrahams is pleased that this segment of the creative industries is "slowly becoming acceptable, but is not there yet." The lecturer in Animation Diploma for the University of Trinidad and Tobago states that parents still express concern when their children persist in animation as a course of study, "many remain unsure about the reality of the profession." The Trinidadian observes that her dual-island country is culturally focused on "oil and gas, not art" making the industry a "difficult sell".

The response to digital media has been warm however and the love for the emerging field made it impossible to ignore. Gradually the art form is becoming more acceptable. "There is an increase in use of animation, in advertising on television, animated music videos and there are more pilot projects." Referencing the notable online series Cabbie Chronicles produced by Jamaican Alison Latchman, Abrahams says the success of projects like these are a "good sign" and she is confident that in few years much more will follow.

In order for the industry to develop, Abrahams observes that education and training will be vitally important and she has already made a substantial contribution towards establishing this. Digital Media will be introduced to the Caribbean Examinations Council syllabi in September 2013 and the CAPE course will provide students with competencies for practical application in segments including video, sound and animation. The festival founder worked on initiating this curriculum addition with a diverse regional team and hopes students will capitalise on the opportunity. The University of Trinidad and Tobago Diploma in Digital Media Studies – Animation that Abrahams teaches will commence offering this discipline as an Undergraduate Degree as of next year. Abraham also noted that institutions such as the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) in Jamaica and the Errol Barrow Centre of Creative Imagination (EBCCI) in Barbados provided excellent resources for education and training in this area.

While many think of humour in association with animation, Abrahams declares that building the festival for the past decade has been no laughing matter. "It has not been easy," she says and the founder describes the first 3 years of Animaë Caribe as "unadulterated hell," an emotional journey of blood, sweat and a great deal of tears.

The festival has received some support and into its sixth year, local government recognized the potential providing additional support, "Animation is highly diverse and is poised to provide viable, sustainable careers in entertainment, medicine, product design, architecture and e-publishing through interactive animated books. The government of Trinidad and Tobago noted this and invested in the festival as well as the art."

CARICOM and the British Council "came on board" and Abrahams noted it became easier to secure assistance once the potential for diversification





*Noka Wheel - A Shaun Escayg Film*

*Filming of Noka Wheel*

through this medium was realised. Though 'easier' should not be misconstrued as 'easy' as financial support from the business community remains elusive. "The challenge with business investors is that while they know animation can make a significant financial contribution to the economy they do not understand this will not happen quickly." Now in its 12th year the Animation and New Media Festival has spread regionally and is slated for other Caribbean countries including Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and Suriname.

The Trinidadian animated film producer of the popular series Krik Krak Anansi hopes in time to establish the Anima Caribe brand as the Caribbean's Animation Festival and attract international attention. "Caribbean Export Development Agency provided a great platform to communicate the festival project to a regional audience and served as an advocate to voice the potential." The result of the agency's support was Abrahams' ability to build a regional network, bringing the industry partners together. "Caribbean Export served as a catalyst for helping people appreciate the feasibility of animation." The next step is to duplicate this effort internationally.

Evidence of how embracing the creative industries can impact on economy positively is visible in the case studies of England, Singapore and Ireland. The Caribbean however is yet to create a similarly sustainable model here. "It is easier for music I believe, this genre seems to be doing well but the challenge is greater for film."

Abrahams has implemented a strategic plan for animation and digital media, a staircase to success through a series of steps towards international penetration. Step one for the Anima Caribe founder was to return to home base in Trinidad. The producer had honed her skills in the United Kingdom over a 5-year period and understood that regional development was best accomplished through being based in the Caribbean.

Secondly Abrahams needed to create awareness for animation as a viable segment of the creative industry. This she established with the birth of the annual animation and new media festival.

The third step was to provide an educational platform for training, to help grow and sustain the industry. With the introduction of secondary and tertiary qualifications accessible in the region, Abrahams checked this off the list.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, Abrahams was determined to monetize the industry. Monetising regional animation would also be undertaken through a strategic series of steps. Abrahams recommends that first the Caribbean needs to create its own unique format, "the world needs new content, something fresh." Next the content will require an audience and for this Abrahams suggests turning to the diaspora in order to "access millions" that already harbour an appreciation for the Caribbean-based content.

Abrahams suggests establishing a platform through online technology, creating an animated television station. "This would provide regional animators with a forum to showcase their work and receive a fee for their efforts."

Finally Abrahams suggests establishing a platform through online technology, creating an animated television station. "This would provide regional animators with a forum to showcase their work and receive a fee for their efforts."

Abrahams continues to check items off her lists confident that while there is still much to do the rewards are forthcoming for this creative industry. "Through the festival we will bring an international audience to our work and through our work we will take the Caribbean to an international audience." \*

# A SOUNDING VIEW OF DIVERSIFICATION

In April 2013 the International Monetary Fund (IMF) adjusted its world economic forecast and projected an economic growth of 3.3% for the world economy over 2012. While the increase, albeit a slight one, at first seemed hopeful, this projection is in fact a downgrade of their original forecast in January of the same year of 3.5% economic growth. The declining projection was worrisome and seemed daunting at best if not dismal.


Yet, the IMF upheld their original estimation for Latin America and the Caribbean, crediting these third world countries with favorable conditions and increasing opportunities for sustained growth, despite constricting external factors. 'French-born Trinidadian', Jean Michel Gilbert believes to realize this growth the diversification of the regional business module to cohesively incorporate the creative industries is a must. With this type of progressive transition he predicts the conditions for economic growth of the Creative Industries are favorable indeed.

Gilbert's belief in the potential of the region's creative industries to be a pivotal player in the future transformation of Caribbean economic growth is one fully shared by the region's agency charged with the responsibility for driving export and attracting investment—Caribbean Export Development Agency. The agency's executive director, Pamela Coke-Hamilton made the burgeoning creative industries sector a primary focus of the organisation's work programme and has gone on record asking regional governments to put more funding behind new programmes which encourage creative entrepreneurship.

Certainly one who can be considered a creative entrepreneur, Jean Michel Gilbert, a seasoned producer and owner of the Trinidad-based film production company Maturity Productions and Caribbean Music Group (CMG) is encouraged by the positive strides towards developing Caribbean music and film within the past decade. Noting that in the Caribbean the film industry has taken a "giant step" with this genre, Gilbert is reassured film is becoming more socially acceptable as a viable avenue for careers and businesses. Though commendable, Gilbert is quick to point out that the industry has far to go and needs the right affiliations and partnerships to get there as it continues its attempts at penetrating the international scene.

His conviction is not an unfounded one, rather it is a conclusion cultivated from personal experience. Gilbert is known for his creative documentary work including *Calypso @ Dirty Jim's* (2006) and *Soca Power in Trinidad and Tobago* (2007). His most celebrated work to date, however, is the intimate portrait of one of calypso's most notable females, *Calypso Rose*. The 85-minute documentary, *Calypso Rose: Lioness of the Jungle* launched in 2012 at the Cannes Film Festival, was an "extremely challenging" feat to accomplish.

The producer admits he was "expecting a positive outcome" and the astounding effort would be well rewarded with *Lioness of the Jungle* achieving second place in the documentary category at FESPACO (Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou), the largest film festival in Africa. The award acknowledges that while the film maintained an authentic Caribbean



*Gilbert's belief in the potential of the region's creative industries to be a pivotal player in the future transformation of Caribbean economic growth is one fully shared by the region's agency charged with the responsibility for driving export and attracting investment—Caribbean Export Development Agency.*





**JEAN MICHEL GILBERT**  
CARIBBEAN MUSIC GROUP  
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO



The trans-media steelband project also features several 52-minute television documentary films specific to networks in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa.





feel, it was accessible to and accepted by an international audience.

The ability of the inter-regional film to reach this wider audience is based primarily on international partnerships and alliances. "It was extremely challenging to reach Cannes," Gilbert notes, referring to the success of his Calypso Rose documentary, "Partnership is the primary reason for (this) success." Backing from the governments of Trinidad and Tobago, Guadeloupe and France together with key strategic support from Caribbean Export are attributed as the partners that made the film's launch onto the international arena possible.

"A critical effort must be made to push the Caribbean as a brand and this is the task Caribbean Export has undertaken." Reiterating the importance of diversification, a passionate Gilbert observes the creative industries must be sustained by the regional market first. "Through opening business opportunities in the creative industries initially among Caribbean countries, with partners such as Caribbean Export, then there is great opportunity to grow the main international market as a unified body."

Echoing Gilbert's sentiments is the Manager for Competitiveness and Innovation at Caribbean Export, Chris McNair who emphasized that, "The ability of the Caribbean Brand to successfully compete internationally riding on the strength of our culture is by far one of our strongest competitive advantages and we at the agency are all committed to seeing this realized." Getting to that realization however, is not always an easy road. For Gilbert his journey to Cannes was thorny for his Calypso Rose documentary but arguably the crucial lessons learned will ensure a smoother path for CMG's latest and highly anticipated film, Pan! We Are The World.

Scheduled to launch in Spring 2014 with a preview at the Cannes Film Festival, Gilbert aims to promote the steelpan movement all over the world through a 90-minute cinematic docu-drama (part documentary, part cinematic reenactment) with a "movie feel".

*Through the many arms of the diverse Pan! project one of the primary objectives is to stimulate cultural tourism, enticing others inter-regionally and internationally to experience first-hand the passion, emotion and modern adventure of pan in its native soil.*

The trans-media steelband project also features several 52-minute television documentary films specific to networks in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa. Initial feedback from local networks in India and Africa and international networks such as PBS and ARTE is positive, "suggesting the environment is there to consume Pan! We Are The World and more pan related products". The project includes production of ancillary items including CDs, DVDs, books, interactive websites and live performances, climaxing with a re-enactment of the history of steelpan in September 2013 in order to address this demand.

The massive undertaking was inspired by the huge revelation of witnessing a pan orchestra in Trinidad, it was an experience Gilbert wanted to share with the world. The unique story of the transformation of a recycled oil drum into a precise percussion instrument, bears a tough political message in its origins and the unfolding tale chronicles how this rare form of music is able to "cross beyond all boundaries of gender, race, age, language and religion." The story of steelpan is applicable in our modern era with messages of unification, cultural diversity, and even environmental concerns being addressed.

Through the many arms of the diverse Pan! project one of the primary objectives is to stimulate cultural tourism, enticing others inter-regionally and internationally to experience first-hand the passion, emotion and modern adventure of pan in its native soil. Producer Gilbert shares that

the pan movement is far reaching with groups and performers as far as in Switzerland and cultural tourism provides a good mechanism for 'pan people' to understand the history of the instrument, bridging the gap between where it is now and where it began.

Pan! We Are The World is set to make a dominant impact on the world stage from the outset through strategic partnerships in the United States of America, Europe, Asia and Africa however across the Caribbean there is no current structure in place to facilitate regional film premiers. "Establishing Caribbean festivals for premiering film productions is pertinent to sustaining this creative industry." The film festivals would serve to not only generate interest in the productions, subsequently this promotion would generate income for the films and the wider film industry.

Referring to his homeland for the past 22 years as an exemplary Caribbean model, Gilbert observed that Trinidad & Tobago provided increasing opportunities for grants, scholarships, accredited qualifications and programs in the area of film and praised various public and private entities for notably increased support. While this is acknowledged as a shift in the right direction, the producer knows much more still needs to be done locally and regionally.

The role of the national television networks and stations cannot be minimized in this effort, as theirs is a vital one and thus far, Gilbert believes they have not been performing up to standard. The challenge for producers is that Caribbean television networks "are not buying the local product (shows, documentaries, films)", a problem that has existed for many years and Gilbert implores that as regional media is not supporting regional films on their own, stringent rules and regulations may be necessary to enforce positive change. "The next step is for television to be regulated" he says, adding that it may be "necessary for broadcasters to be liable, mandated to show locally produced shows/films, we need to understand the importance of showing true culture."

In understanding what may be achieved through creative diversification, Gilbert implores that what needs to follow is financial support. "The talent is there, production is there," however funding is necessary for implementing projects and managing them through to fruition.

Acknowledging the challenges associated with funding, more than ever regional partnerships must be realized. For members of the music environment, access to these critical partnerships is provided through venues such as WOMEX (World Music Expo). Attendance to the annual international networking platform for the world music industry, provides "an excellent opportunity to push regional music mainstream", according to Gilbert. Crediting Caribbean Export for providing access to this international exposure, the producer encouraged that to fully utilize the WOMEX experience and "make it work", a record label and booking agent are essential prerequisites.

Undaunted by the negative and encouraged by the positive, Gilbert is confident that "the creative industries are well poised for the future". Already in the planning and development stages of his next ventures, the 'Trini' promises there are "more projects in the works," including an interpretation of A Thirst for Rain based on the novel by fellow Trinidadian Roslyn Carrington. Gilbert credits his dual French 'Trini' citizenship for influencing his work, driving the creative process to consistently produce films that are easily translated for an international audience, while being culturally authentic. The enthusiasm emanating from the producer is contagious and incites assurance in his forecast that "the timing is right and future bright for music and film." \*

# THE COMING

*The Coming of Drg is a haunting 40-minute tale that shadows three characters as they face their inner demons.*





# OF FILM



**DAVINA LEE**  
LEE PRODUCTIONS  
ST. LUCIA

In an independent report commissioned by the British Film Industry and released at the end of 2012, Oxford Economics stated that the core film industry had contributed more than £4.5 billion pounds to the Gross Domestic Product of the United Kingdom in 2011. The report noted that “despite the on-going recession the UK film industry is thriving” and in addition to supporting an estimated 117,000 jobs, this segment of the Creative Industry was credited with also making an enormous contribution through exports, tourism, inward investment, promoting the national culture, merchandising and new technologies.

The demonstrated success of this emerging industry comes as no surprise to Saint. Lucian film producer Davina Lee. The co-owner of Lee Productions noted that the diversification of film in the Caribbean is hugely important towards building the regional economy and the UK model is one Lee hopes to see duplicated in her home region.

The call into this challenging field did not always resonate in Lee’s ears. “I wasn’t a film buff,” Lee admits, recalling she didn’t always have a passion for film, although her interest in the creative sector was evident as long as she can recall. “My sister (Esther Lee Leach) and I just wanted to be on television.” A simple enough ambition, but finding no existing opportunity to make this a reality, the two entrepreneurs created their own television series.

It was through creating Vibe Central that Lee would discover she preferred a role behind the camera rather than in front of it. The production duo would go on to create the popular television series Access Caribbean and several music videos for Caribbean artists.

It was against this background that Lee decided to undertake what would become the defining pinnacle of her career to date, the production of the short film The Coming of Org.

The Coming of Org is a haunting 40-minute tale that shadows three characters as they face their inner demons. Based on the short story by Caribbean writer John Robert Lee, the producer’s father, the film boasts views of the rolling hills of Saint Lucia and is rich with referrals to folk stories and Caribbean music. The dialogue is predominantly French Creole, preserving the authenticity of the Saint Lucian characters. This was not a difficult choice for Lee who would not be swayed into using Standard English, ensuring her production would be a true representation of her Saint Lucian culture.

The Government of Saint Lucia has recognized the importance of the sector and with the introduction of the Ministry of Tourism, Heritage and the Creative Industries, has taken a bold step towards expanding creative industries.

Holding true to her culture and self, the decision to take the film in this direction has proven sound judgment with *The Coming of Org* already being accepted into the Cannes Court Mètrage (Short Film Corner) at the widely acclaimed international film festival.

The recently released film has been well received, especially in Martinique where the French Creole linkage is prominent in the Caribbean. *The Coming of Org* generated a much better response overseas than it did at home however and Lee would receive an abundance of positive feedback from “homesick Caribbean people residing away.”

While calling for more public support for Caribbean produced films, Lee noted that her family has been extremely supportive and instrumental in developing her career. Lee’s father is a writer, mother a photographer, sister Esther a partner in Lee Productions and brother a member of the crew in *The Coming of Org*. A family comprised of all creatively inclined individuals, this is perhaps partly what enabled a firm support structure encouraging Lee into the emerging field.

“When I came to Caribbean Export, I made it a mandate that the creative industries were going to be high on our agenda,” recalls Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Executive Director of Caribbean Export. “It is where we have a natural competitive advantage and we must do everything in our power to see the potential realized.” The Government of Saint Lucia has recognized the importance of the sector and with the introduction of the Ministry of Tourism, Heritage and the Creative Industries, has taken a bold step towards expanding creative industries. Lee applauded the change, “with steps such as this the creative industries are now seen as an option” and although not integrated into the school curriculum as yet, “the foundation has been laid towards getting there.”

Noting that traditionally students were encouraged to set sights on white-collar careers, in recent years the creative industries are increasingly being perceived as legitimate, viable careers paths and it is hoped that wider support and acceptance follows.

Lee is an advocate for continual studies, training and professional development. Acknowledging the efforts of the Saint Lucia Coalition of Services Industries Inc. (SLCSI) and Caribbean Export to facilitate the opportunity, Lee says she acquired “pertinent knowledge” through attending Study Tours to Manchester, Liverpool, Berlin and Paris. The first-hand knowledge gained about the world stage, would serve to “open (her) eyes to the possibilities” of working together with fellow regionally based partners. Coupled with attendance to WOMEX (World Music Expo), another initiative coordinated through Caribbean Export, these international platforms provided a wonderful opportunity to meet and interact with Caribbean partners, directly increasing business for Lee Productions.

While on the one hand it is encouraging to note the direct correlation between attending these exhibitions and establishing partnerships for increased revenue, on the other hand Lee was disappointed to observe that for regional business partnerships to be established and developed, travel to international countries was required. Lee voices the concern that there is a crucial need for more regionally based opportunities for Caribbean



businesses to interact, “we should not need to go to a world stage to meet other Caribbean people.”

With the production and release of her first film, *The Coming of Org*, Lee observes the importance of international exhibitions such as Study Tours and WOMEX, as more than a mere convergence for regional attendees. The venues are essential market places towards providing international exposure of regionally produced films. This promotes the country and by extension the Caribbean, enabling a platform for business tourism development.

“We are not just showing a movie,” Lee says, “we are exporting the whole

We are not just showing a movie Lee says, we are exporting the whole country through film - the actors, the music, the location, the culture, the ambiance of Caribbean is what we showcase to the world.





country through film - the actors, the music, the location, the culture, the ambiance of Caribbean is what we showcase to the world”.

Lee hopes that through this showcase the business of tourism is stimulated specifically as it relates to film. “The potential tourism impact, others coming to film in Saint Lucia, the Caribbean, is tremendous.” It is not a new concept, since major motion pictures have been filmed in the Caribbean before, including the recent blockbuster *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie shot on location in Dominica. Still, it is an idea Lee hopes will populate and in the coming years be considered the norm rather than the exception.

Projecting a timeframe of 5 to 10 years for the Caribbean film industry to be “booming”, Lee sees the potential for the Caribbean to position itself to be “like Mexico or Bollywood.” However, this is no small task as it requires the islands of the Caribbean to be considered as one regionally integrated market place. “More can be done in the region, we need more collaboration,” Lee says, “we must encourage working together.”

One of the greater challenges faced by the young producer in creating *The Coming of Org* has not been partnerships however. On the contrary, Lee expressed profound appreciation for fellow Caribbean producer, Frances-Anne Solomon, observing Solomon was instrumental in bringing Caribbean Filmmakers together through her film incubators. Rather, the primary concern has been funding. Admitting that *The Coming of Org* stalled during production due to a lack of funds, the absence of financial support could easily have crippled the dynamic film. Traditional lending institutions require securities and sureties and are not accommodating to the entrepreneurial business model. “Film is an art yes, but it is also a business.” Yet Lee feels that

for her industry there is still a long way to go towards being accepted in the financial arena as anything more than creative exploits. “Focus on the industry more and the creative less.”

Remaining upbeat and enthusiastic, Lee hopes to be able to penetrate the world stage with *The Coming of Org* and her future productions. Caribbean music has infiltrated world arena and has in some cases “left a definitive mark for a long time, from Bob Marley onwards”. Admittedly there is great opportunity for music to do more but film has a much greater gap to bridge.

Success stories of Caribbean film producers reaching international acclaim are limited. Lee harnesses her inspiration from award-winning Euzhan Palsy of Martinique, hailed as the first black female Director ever produced by a major Hollywood studio for the film *A Dry White Season*. Haitian-born Raoul Peck acquired international recognition for his film *Lumumba: Death of A Prophet* and would also pave a path for producers such as Lee to follow.

Already busy working on her next venture, Lee holds the well-guarded secret plot close to her heart. Stating only that the series will “cross between two countries”, the air is already heavy with eager anticipation of what is next for the coming of Davina Lee. \*





# WHO WE ARE

The Caribbean Export Development Agency (Caribbean Export) is a regional export development and trade and investment promotion organisation of the Forum of Caribbean States (CARIFORUM) currently executing the Regional Private Sector Programme (RPSDP) funded by the European Union under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF). Caribbean Export's mission to increase the competitiveness of the Caribbean countries by providing export development and investment promotion services through effective programme execution and strategic partnerships.

Caribbean Export carries out numerous work programme activities specifically designed to enhance the competitiveness of firms from CARIFORUM countries through investment, management and product development, market expansion and export diversification.

Some of our key initiatives to support the Creative Industries include the facilitation of the Direct Assistance Grants Scheme (DAGS), Grant Proposal Writing, Export Marketing and ProNet Training. Our beneficiaries have also participated in trade events such as Design Caribbean, Dominicana Moda, The Gallery at Berlin Fashion Week, WOMEX, Soul Fusion during London Engage; and international missions to Europe in the form of Study Tours to Paris, Berlin and London.

With each mission, tradeshow or event Caribbean Export aims to optimise the export potential regional entrepreneurs as well as highlight the investment potential of the Caribbean as we seek to take Caribbean Excellence to the world!

The CARIFORUM Member States are:  
Antigua and Barbuda . Bahamas . Barbados . Belize . Dominica . Dominican Republic . Grenada . Guyana . Haiti . Jamaica . St. Kitts and Nevis . St. Lucia . St Vincent and the Grenadines . Suriname . Trinidad and Tobago





"Creativity is contagious,  
pass it on..."

- ALBERT EINSTEIN





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