

*The Art of*

# EMBEDDED HISTORIES



*“I believe a philosophy of history may well be buried in the arts of the imagination... my concern is with the epic stratagems available to [the] Caribbean... in the dilemmas of history which surround [us].”*

WILSON HARRIS, *History, Fable & Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas*

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# CURATORIAL NOTE

Detail of *Memory Window #10*

**T**he *Art of Embedded Histories* brings to Brown University a carefully chosen set of works by the internationally acclaimed Haitian-American Artist, Edouard Duval-Carrié. Since 2014 Duval-Carrié has been engaged in a series of artistic experiments. An exceptional and innovative maker of objects who has been called an “international assemblage,” Duval-Carrié is a Caribbean artist not bounded by any linguistic Caribbean divide nor his current residency in Miami. As an artist, he works between these two worlds operating as the Legba figure, always standing at the crossroads.

In this exhibition the artist continues his preoccupations with two things, Haitian history and reframing the colonial gaze about Haiti. The exhibition is between two galleries. In the Cohen Gallery we present a part of the exhibition titled, *Memory and Embedded Histories*. Here we will find three of his most recent works, *Henri Christophe*, *Burning Amazon*, and *Migration*. These along with three of his *Memory Window* pieces and the extraordinary rendition of a figure in Caribbean folk tale, the *Soucouyant*, tell us a narrative of Haiti’s history, the plantation, migration, and the artist’s growing preoccupation with the environment. For Duval-Carrié, the question of history is central to his work. So in the backlit multicolored *Memory Windows* we see images drawn not only from his earlier works but the placing of a plethora of images taken from Florida’s plantations; Haitian Vodou pantheon and well known images of slavery jostling in the embedded resin of the plexiglass frame. The repetition of some of these images is an intentional artistic practice to unsettle the color composition of the pieces telling us a set of stories which often remain buried or elided. The telling of these stories constituted by memory in repeatable forms posit something new. In Duval-Carrié’s hands, repetition is not about the same but the creation of the novel.

Duval-Carrié is a visual narrative artist which is why in the CSSJ gallery we see a series of works which were inspired by his repeated readings of the classic Caribbean novel by the Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier *The Kingdom of this World*. A novel about the Haitian revolution told from the perspective of a once enslaved person, Ti Noël, the four pieces, *Ti Noël à Sans Souci*; *The Kingdom of this World*; *Le Royaume de Monde*, and *La Fin De Ti Noël* illustrate that although the artist thinks favourably about the Haitian revolution and in earlier works painted many times different renditions of the revolutionary slave leader, Toussaint L'Ouverture, that he is concerned about what one might call the deflections of the revolution. There is a deep contrast in this exhibition between the artist's imposing reframing of Christophe in the Cohen Gallery and the ways he presents his renditions of *The Kingdom of this World*. The show was curated for these pieces to jostle against each other, to complicate the early 19th century Haiti. What the artist captures is how the brilliance and splendor of the palace Sans Souci and the fortress Citadelle while remarkable in their architectural structures strayed from the ethos of the revolution.

Before coming to Brown, Duval-Carrié had a residency at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa. Working with the collective, *Artist Proof*, he learned the linocut method of printmaking. Again this was for him an experiment in form and making. The results of this can be seen in the two pieces on paper, *Amazon* and *Migration*.

With this exhibition, the CSSJ continues to engage with important critical artists around the theme of the relationship of history to memory and the different ways in which the afterlives of colonialism and racial slavery continue to haunt our present.

## **ANTHONY BOGUES**

*Anthony Bogue is Asa Messer Professor of Humanities and Critical Theory, Director of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice and Professor of Africana Studies at Brown University. He is also a writer and curator who has published 8 books and curated shows in the Caribbean, USA, and South Africa.*

# ARTIST STATEMENT



BY EDOUARD DUVAL-CARRIÉ

In retrospect, decades of research has made it evident that my endeavors have always been to elucidate the trials and tribulations of my native land Haiti via the visual field. This new exhibit at the Cohen Gallery and the CSSJ Gallery at Brown University is an overview of the different subjects that have caught my interest lately. My collaboration with the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice has provided me with inspiration and access to a vast array of information that would not have been readily accessible. Again, thinking retrospectively, placing the history of Haiti in a more global context has permitted me to evaluate many of the issues concerning that nation in a new light.

Returning recently from South Africa where I spent time in Johannesburg made me realize that the colonial enterprise had a stranglehold on many parts of the world. Sequels to that history are to be looked at carefully to avert the dramatic results which occurred in Haiti. We recall how the reaction to Haiti as it delivered the first blow was unforgiving for a nation which simply wanted to enter an economic system on different terms. The revolution did prove that slavery was untenable and the formal ending of apartheid in South Africa has proven again that domination is not eternal. Both the Haitian story and the South African one are very disheartening stories but they cannot or should not be erased or forgotten. We need to recall them so that we may avert the inherent tendency to repeat history.

The interconnected histories of the New World are fascinating but when we look at this history and connection to the African continent we grasp the whole. It is not a simple task and to condense volumes into a visual format presents even more challenges. With this exhibition we have an overview of my attempts to solve these issues. Creating non-linear and fragmented bits of histories, as in my *Memory Windows*, was an attempt to induce, hopefully, the viewers to at least connect the dots from what are well known stories that lurk in their subconscious. Using layers of these histories and suspending them in an aqueous murky medium probably results in replicating our own way of storing and archiving stories in our own brains.

When I knew that the South African trip was underway I began to study what I thought was that country's favorite expressive medium, the print. To me it was pervasive in their national artistic production and they truly excelled at it. However then I did not truly understand the reasons for it. I quickly acquired a taste for it and settled, trying to push the envelope, in the dry-point on plexiglass techniques. This in the hopes that I could create editions in that format! From what I learnt in Johannesburg there

was a purpose to the use of prints! The anti-apartheid movement had to produce, at a rapid rate, visuals that would communicate information, notions of liberty, democracy and other tenets of the movement as the apartheid state had successfully created authoritarian structures. The technique that suited that purpose was the linocut. Hence working with my peers at the Artist Proof Studio in Johannesburg I had to redress my intent and curb it to that more expressive technique. This can also be seen within this exhibit. In the end what I can say is that my collaboration with academia is one that I truly relish. Whether working with a student body of excellence like those attending Brown or browsing the incomparable collection in the august halls of the John Carter Brown Library, all these are experiences that have informed my practice. Hopefully this exhibit can attest to that!

### **EDOUARD DUVAL-CARRIÉ**

*Edouard Duval-Carrié is an artist and curator. Hailed as one of the most important contemporary Caribbean artists, his work has been shown in galleries and museums in the USA, Caribbean and Europe. His most recent major commission was for the opening of the Museum of Black Civilization, Senegal. He is the recipient of many awards including the Medal Chevalier of the Order of the Arts from France (2016) and the Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Lion from Senegal (2018).*

# MAGICAL DOMINIONS

## *Christophe and Visions of a New Republic*



Figure 1.  
*Henri Christophe, ou la dernière danse Taíno*

Engraving on plexiglass  
84 x 84 inches  
2019

Two large, mirrored portraits of Henri Christophe by artist Edouard Duval-Carrié reimagine the revolutionary leader and controversial king of the former Kingdom of Haiti (1811–1820), located in Northern Haiti. In Duval-Carrié's 2019 charcoal rendering *Henri Christophe ou la dernière danse Taíno*, the leader emerges from the right on an exterior raised throne with a curtain, as if to overlook his new nation. Comprised of sharp, precise lines and surrounded by fantastic patterns and textures, the king is met by symbolic apparitions of his masses. To his left are two small Taíno figures dancing, while an audience of figures representing the various ethnic groups of Africa watch in the background. The massive 84" by 84" rendering is doubled by a twin work of art holding the same title (*figure 1*). The piece appears as the monochromatic negative of the delineated charcoal rendering, with a back layer of plexiglass forming a shiny black background. The clear layer above the black plexiglass is engraved in a manner identical to the charcoal rendering, and filled with white paint. In these works Duval-Carrié reimagines the figuration of one of Haiti's famed leader. The viewer encounters, at an aggrandized and spectacular scale, the fantastic stage of Christophe's dominion. All of this is part of Duval-Carrié work to provide new images for Haiti's history, remaking the architectures and spatialities of Christophe's reign to signify the magical and the divine.

Images and imaginings of Christophe are rife with both stereotypes and pointed political critique. Such representations began during the time of Christophe's reign. For example, Duval-Carrié's charcoal and mixed media renderings of Christophe are based on the 1811 print by the artist Dridier (*figure 2*). In the print, the leader wears elaborate, luxurious vestments and a laurel wreath upon his head. Christophe stares directly at the viewer, with his

BY ALFREDO RIVERA

Figure 2.  
Dridier,  
“(Cristoforo)  
Enrico I.  
Re de Hayti”  
(1811).

Prints, Drawings  
and Watercolors  
from the Anne S.K.  
Brown Military  
Collection. Brown  
Digital Repository.  
Brown University  
Library. [https://  
repository.library.  
brown.edu/studio/  
item/bdr:231274/](https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:231274/)



Figure 3.  
Portrait of  
Henri Chris-  
tophe, King of  
Haiti, Richard  
Evans, 1816.

Courtesy of  
Josefina del Toro  
Fulladosa Collection,  
University of  
Puerto Rico, Río  
Piedras Campus.



right arm angled downward while pointing forward, or to the left. Art historian Erica Moiah James suggests that the “1811 Dridier print illustrates the concerted effort to represent [Christophe] not as a person, but as a type: a racially indeterminate mimic man, outfitted in British-styled royal finery decidedly inappropriate for the climate, self-absorbed, distant from his people, and indifferent to how he was perceived.”<sup>1</sup> James challenges such popular representations, relating them to mischaracterizations that permeate across time and prohibit more complicated readings of Christophe’s regime. In Duval-Carrié’s work, such caricatures become the basis for new imaginings, or for new art histories of the nascent black republic.

Both images and literary recountings help reify and reimagine suppositions regarding the reign of Henri Christophe. This translates to an understanding of modernity within postrevolutionary and 19th century Haiti. As J. Michael Dash writes: “The impulse was toward the future and not dwelling in mythical origins. If anything, Haiti was seen as the avant-garde that would rehabilitate the black race.”<sup>2</sup> The Haitian leaders drew from discourses of the Enlightenment, yet reshaping them in distinctive and powerful ways. They also encountered incredible bias from their global contemporaries, while still strategically drawing from European models and fashions. Such is seen in the famous portrait *Henri Christophe, King of Haiti* by painter Richard Evans, which shows a more dignified leader in modest yet regal costume (figure 3). As Erica Moiah James suggests, “not only did Haiti demonstrate an awareness of power in what one might describe as a contemporary Western aesthetic language, but its leaders intentionally creolized this language and redeployed it throughout transatlantic arenas of power in self-authored ways.”<sup>3</sup> Visages of power and authority through painting and architecture became central to Christophe’s regime, and becomes further creolized in the works of Edouard Duval-Carrié.

### *Architectures of Marvelous Realism: the Citadelle and Sans Souci Palace*

In Duval-Carrié’s mixed media painting *The Kingdom of this World* (2018), a pair of eyes loom above an oval

shaped rendering of a landscape featuring the famed Citadelle Laferrière in Milot, Haiti (*figure 4*). The central scene, surrounded by painted aluminum frames with quaint stenciled designs, draws directly from Duval-Carrié's series of engravings regarding Alejo Carpentier's 1949 marvelous realist novel *The Kingdom of this World*. The novel itself provides a characterization of Christophe's regime, through the eyes of Ti Noël, a former slave from the Plain du Nord who returns to Haiti from Eastern Cuba following the rise of Christophe. In this print series and related works Duval-Carrié draws from the modernist literary canon of the Caribbean to visualize the optics and architectures of Haiti's new regimes.

The series of 14 prints likewise titled *The Kingdom of this World* is matched by 14 original, engraved plexiglass plates with decorated frames. Each engraving corresponds directly to passages within Carpentier's novel. The opening print in the series, *Le Royaume de ce Monde*, provides the basis for the mixed media work of the same title in English (*figure 5*). Again, a pair of eyes loom above the Citadelle, all set within an oval frame. The oval appears larger in this context, as does the muscular mountaintop fortress. Duval-Carrié bases his opening print of the series from a passage that appears late in the novel:

*Above the summit of Le Bonnet de l'Évêque, dentelated with scaffolding, rose that second mountain – a mountain on a mountain – which was the Citadell La Ferrière. A lush growth of red fungi was mounting the flanks of the main tower with the terse smoothness of brocade, having already covered the foundations and buttresses, and was spreading polyp profiles over the ocher walls. That mass of fired brick, towering above the clouds in proportions whose perspective challenged visual habits, was honeycombed with tunnels, passageways, secret corridors, and chimneys heavy with shadows.<sup>4</sup>*

Carpentier's elaborate recounting of the Citadelle feels magical. Shortly after the more elder protagonist Ti Noël finds himself forced to help construct the massive fort, the reader is provided an image of grandeur. Shortly thereafter Carpentier writes: "Hundreds of men worked in the bowels of that vast edifice, always under the vigilance of the whip and gun, accomplishing feats previously seen

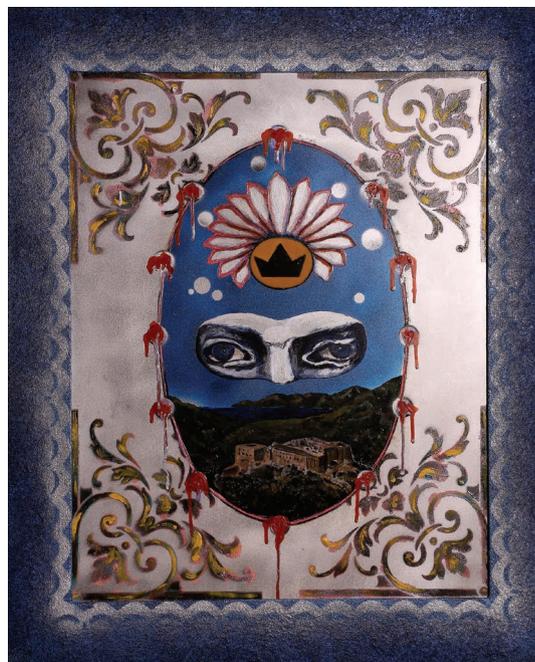


Figure 4.  
*The Kingdom  
of this World*

Mixed media  
on aluminum  
33 x 39 inches  
2018

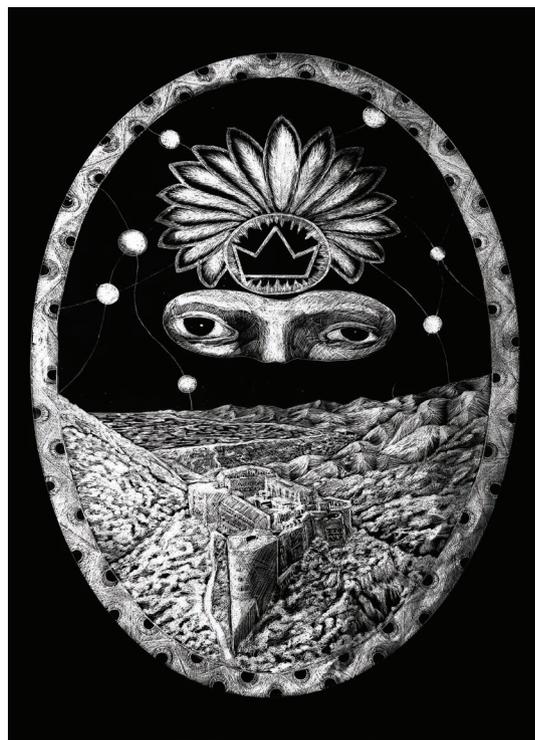


Figure 5.  
*Le Royaume  
de Monde*

Engraving  
on plexiglass  
Oval 20 x 28  
inches  
2017

only in the architecture of Piranesi.”<sup>5</sup> Cavernous, labyrinthine and impressive in scale and form, the Citadelle appears as more than a marker of oppressive rule and labor. The fortress symbolizes otherworldliness in the form of brick and stone.

In both Duval-Carrié’s mixed media painting and its corresponding print, the symbolic value of the Citadelle fortress is emphasized. It appears within a broader mountainous landscape, and the floating pair of eyes in the foreground is topped by the symbol of a crown. The eyes pierce at the viewer, emphasizing a surreal and magical confrontation. Artists, writers and scholars alike have written about the symbolic grandeur of Haiti’s most impressive structure. Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot describes the fortress as Christophe’s “legacy of stone and arrogance.”<sup>6</sup> Historian Mary A. Renda suggests that while countless workers lost their lives in its production, “the sheer enormity of its mass stood as a statement of Haitian will, independence, and defiance in the face of international racism.”<sup>7</sup> The fortress came to appear in many examples of literature and popular visual culture within Haiti and across the Caribbean region.

The infamy of the Citadelle is perhaps best expressed in its very form, as highlighted by architectural historian and critic Sibyl Moholy-Nagy: “Instead of the usual succession of castmates, magazines and galleries, here is a maze of enclosed battlefields, connected by arched openings of totally irregular height and size.”<sup>8</sup> Moholy-Nagy focuses on the unusual forms and permanence of the defense structure, one which stands as unique within a New World context. Duval-Carrié’s mixed-media work recalls the complexity of the Citadelle. Imagination and contemplation are reflected in its rendering and the mask of eyes, while the oval is bordered by dots of dripping blood. The impressive structure appears within a broader Haitian landscape and imaginary as both violent and wondrous.

In another mixed-media work by Duval-Carrié, *Ti Noël à Sans Souci*, appears the Sans Souci palace, Henri Christophe’s other famous structure within the landscape of Milot (*figure 6*). In this rendering the protagonist

of Carpentier’s novel appears to the left in the foreground, while the palace appears in the middle-ground surrounded by a lush, tropical landscape. From this vantage point the viewer cannot see the famed Citadelle, and attention is placed on the figure and expansive abode of Christophe. This work is likewise based on a print from *The Kingdom of this World* series – the 13th or penultimate print from the series. This print is based on a passage in the novel where Ti Noël first encounters the splendor of Christophe’s kingdom:

*Against a backdrop of mountains violet-striped by deep gorges, rose a rose-colored palace, a fortress with ogival windows, rendered almost ethereal by the high socle of its stone stairway. To one side stood long-roofed sheds that were probably workshops, barracks, stables. To the*



Figure 6. *Ti Noël à Sans Souci*

*other stood a round building crowned by a cupola resting on white columns where surplice priests went in and out.*<sup>9</sup>

In Duval-Carrié's rendering the pinkness of the rose-colored palace is matched by its framing with an Erzulie Freda-like charm. The oval is dotted with painted pink gems, and the stencil designs and framing emphasize hues ranging from white to pink to red atop the aluminum surface. Further, a pink sky emerges from the mountainous horizon within the image. While today the structure stands in ruins due to pillaging and a major earthquake in 1842, it remains a marker of a former opulence.<sup>10</sup> Its imaginings are as rich as its ruins. It was in this famous palace where Christophe held court, as well as where he famously committed suicide in 1820.

## *Humor and Hubris in the Black Republic*

Edouard Duval-Carrié recreates history in a guise. He not only draws from art historical and literary canons, but also brings historical pasts to our contemporary forefront through playful critique and humor. This is made apparent in his earlier political works, such as his famous 1979 painting *J.C. Duvalier as Mad Bride*, where Haiti's former dictator appears in a white wedding dress with a gun. One could say there is a tongue-in-cheek nature to Duval-Carrié's historical re-imaginings, where joy and kitsch encounter horror and spiritual splendor. One may wonder how this reflects a particularly Haitian ethos, with an adaptation or creolization of biases and hardships that is cunning and brilliant, both visually and thematically.

Duval-Carrié's double portraits *Henri Christophe ou la dernière danse Taíno* exhibit a rich, humorous complexity. Notions of the corrupt and opulent leader are not lost on the viewer. At the same time, the recreation of the Dridier print elides these stereotypes. The black figures in the background of the Dridier print are reinterpreted as exotic figures recalling peculiar ethnic groups in Africa. The reign of Christophe here does not appear literal, as over the people, but rather fictive, or as encapsulating a constructed Caribbean imaginary. Perhaps this speaks to the historic representations of Christophe, as Rosalie

Smith McCrea reflects: "Press coverage of [Christophe's] character and military activities mingled fact with fiction and, in most cases, he was made out to be a spectacular and savage despot not to be trusted by any 'civilized' European government."<sup>11</sup> In his double portraits, Duval-Carrié unexpectedly juxtaposes the problematic image of Christophe with stereotypical imaginings of the Caribbean. That which was savage and spectacular becomes a template for a new, decolonizing Caribbean imaginary.

In his regarded 1963 play *La Tragédie du roi Christophe*, Martinican writer and politician Aimé Césaire contributes to the common tropes of Christophe as a tragic, farcical figure. This relates to an array of literary and historical texts that draw from the longstanding image of Christophe as despot, often analogous to more contemporary forms of political turmoil in Haiti. Yet a more complex rendering of the famed leader of Northern Haiti is needed. As historian Laurent DuBois suggests, Christophe's "wide-ranging and ambitious efforts aimed at creating a sustainable postemancipation state deserve[s] more attention than historians have usually given them."<sup>12</sup> The power of images to dictate memories of the past are as enduring as Christophe's famed architectural structures. Such representations belie the inherent complexities of the era, and the global ordering within which a new, fantastic kingdom was being defined. In his depiction of Christophe and his architectural structures, Duval-Carrié's work allows us to confront such histories through this work. Folklore, literature, myth and the historical archive coalesce to trouble stereotypical renderings of Christophe, Haiti, and the greater Caribbean. These mixed-media and imaginative works or art permit new spatial and visual understandings of a past both powerful and surreal, and of a history worth revisiting.

### **ALFREDO RIVERA**

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- <sup>1</sup> Erica Moiah James, "Decolonizing Time: Nineteenth-Century Haitian Portraiture and the Critique of Anachronism in Caribbean Art," *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, no. 44 (May 2019), 11.
- <sup>2</sup> J. Michael Dash, *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 45.
- <sup>3</sup> James, "Decolonizing Time," 10.
- <sup>4</sup> Alejo Carpentier, *The Kingdom of This World* (New York: 1957), 113.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.
- <sup>6</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 31.
- <sup>7</sup> Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation & the Culture of U.S. Imperialism 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 51.
- <sup>8</sup> Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture in North America* (New York: Horizon Press, 1957), 134.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Kingdom of This World*, 107-108.
- <sup>10</sup> *Silencing the Past*, 33-36.
- <sup>11</sup> Rosalie Smith McCrea, "Portrait mythology? Representing the 'Black Jacobin': Henri Christophe in the British Grand Manner," *The British Art Journal* 6, no. 2 (Autumn 2005), 67.
- <sup>12</sup> Laurent DuBois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Picador, 2012), 64.

*What then is history?  
Hardly even fable  
Hardly even myth.....  
Oh it's the factories,  
The accounting houses  
Over there  
Just along the river  
Where they produce  
Neither grain nor  
sugar nor anything else  
The "social science"  
of slavery*

BRENDA MARIE OSBEY  
*History and Other Poems*

# THE PAST AS AN INDEX OF THE PRESENT

## *Living History and Aesthetics in Edouard Duval-Carrie's Art*

The Caribbean novelist George Lamming once remarked that history and politics were the oxygen of Caribbean society. With regard to history he noted that it was deeply connected to politics since it was the latter which provided the means of “escape and liberation that has been the foundation of this tradition.” The Caribbean region constructed within the cataclysmic vortex of racial slavery, plantation and colonialism has been preoccupied with history. It was the history of European colonial empires and racial slavery which gave birth to the region as a modern social formation. In doing so these social formations created the conditions whereby the majority of the Caribbean people were not considered human enough to make history. The genocide of the Taino population, the harnessing of African slave labor to the sugar plantation was not just a history of murder and domination since for domination to occur required a dominant political and ideological practice in which the Taino and the African slave had no history and therefore no future life outside of the colonial structures. Edward Long, the 18th century English Jamaican planter and historian had noted in his 1774 book, that the African “in general ... are void of genius and seem almost incapable of making any progress in civility and science.”<sup>1</sup> This hegemonic perspective on the African slave meant that when the 1791 Haitian revolution occurred in the minds of the planter class it appeared as

the late Haitian intellectual Michel-Rolph Trouillot noted, “unthinkable.”<sup>2</sup> All of these things congealed into forms of racial knowledge by the West. These forms of racial knowledge produced the African human figure as a type, an external object without complications and any interiority. In the words of Fanon, “an object amongst other objects.”

In such contexts one question which faced the enslaved and the colonized native besides that of positing practices and ideas of being human was the issue of history. It is something which continues to haunt the Caribbean. Lamming describes a Haitian ritual which he calls the “ceremony of the Souls,” in which the “Dead return to discuss and dispute with the Living all those issues which were left unresolved.”<sup>3</sup> These unresolved issues are around accounts of history. In these accounts the conventional understanding of history as primarily a gathering of facts from an archive which is then interpreted within a linear chronology sustained by the narrative form is unsettled. Trouillot notes that human beings, “participate in history both as actors and as narrators.”<sup>4</sup> This participation means that while history is made there is not only the matter of the narrative from of telling history, as well as who tells the story; there is also the issue of time. Both historical writing and documentation foreground the temporal because as we write or narrate the past we do so from the vantage point of another time. Thus the conversation between the dead and living always occurs in another time in another spatial-temporality, one where

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concerns may differ or where unresolved concerns haunt and thereby trouble a present.

Today the Caribbean inhabits the afterlives of racial slavery, plantation and European colonial domination.<sup>5</sup> It was in Haiti that the thralldom of plantation, colonialism and racial slavery was first breached. Thus for Haitians the question of history oftentimes revolves around the revolution, its symbolic universe and the leaders of the revolutionary army. Many Haitians tell this historical narrative through either the success or what they might consider to be failures of the revolution. The Haitian artist, Tessa Mars, reflecting on the dominance of this narrative notes that “We were always told ... we have fought for the revolution... I do not feel like this story was really mine, and yet it was.”<sup>6</sup> If the rendering of the revolution dominates Haitian historical consciousness then similarly in the field of art there has been a tradition in which the interpretation of the revolution is central.<sup>7</sup> So while the question of history today haunts the region there is a complex specificity to the historical haunting in Haitian Art—the presence of the revolution and its figures. Indeed, from the moment the revolution was successful there began a plethora of what the Haitian art historian Carlo Celius calls neoclassicism in both Haitian paintings and architecture.<sup>8</sup> Michel-Philippe Lerebours’ recent book on the history of Haitian art illustrates the many portraits of the revolutionary elite.<sup>9</sup> And, of note we are aware that Henri Christophe founded the first formal school of Art in Haiti after the revolution inviting the English portrait artist Richard Evans to be its first head. Some of the finest images we have of Christophe were done by Evans. What is crucial for this essay is to note that while Haitian artists were painting portraits of the revolutionary elite that Western art was depicting this leadership in anti-black racial frames. As well, that the Haitian revolution was being portrayed in historiography, literature and art as the most horrific historical event of the late 18th century.<sup>10</sup> This created a ground in which there has been a genre of Haitian historical art that deliberately sets out to overturn and repurpose the images of the dominant western archive.

## *Art Practice*

Since 2014 this intentional artistic act of overturning the dominant western art imaginary of the Caribbean has been a distinctive aspect of Edouard Duval-Carrié’s art practice. In his 2014 show at the Pérez Art Museum Miami his quarry was the Hudson school of landscape painting. This show I argue marks an opening for the artist as he begins a process of systematically reworking the colonial imaginary of the Caribbean. If in 20th century Haitian art beginning with the work of Petion Savain, landscape becomes a central motif, today in the hands of Duval-Carrié, landscape becomes a site from which the artist can now create works of art that critique the colonial gaze. What is at play is a critical sensibility producing a form of critique. In this current show it can be seen in his rendering of the 1811 Drider print of Henri Christophe.

Christophe was a central leader in the revolutionary army led by Toussaint L’Ouverture. It was said that he was born in Grenada and worked for a while in Louisiana before coming to the colony of St. Domingue. With the arrest and sending into exile of Toussaint by the French followed by the assassination of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Christophe rose to become the ruler of a split post revolutionary Haitian state. Ruling in the north he created a set of public programs. His extensive education program conceptualized and implemented by the African American Prince Saunders was an important achievement. However a problem which faced the revolutionary elite in the post revolutionary period was the military protection of the post slavery state. A review of the proclamations of the period promulgated by Christophe would illustrate this. In many of them he argues about the necessary military protection on the new black state as it was surrounded by colonial-slave powers and nations. Some of the proclamations paid attention to the abolishing of the slave trade and considered both abolition and the emergence of the Haitian state as a new moment which would secure the “redemption of Africa.”<sup>11</sup> Both to secure military defense as well as to demonstrate the creativity of Haiti one proclamation called upon the country to “impress our minds with the sacred duties we have to discharge towards ourselves, and those in like situations.”



*Great Florida Marsh*, Edouard Duval-Carrié, 2014.

Here Christophe had two things in mind: the palace of Sans Souci and the building of the Citadelle.

A representation of Sans Souci was painted in 1818 by Numa Desroches. The Citadelle was painted by Petion Savain in 1926 when the building was already in ruins. As well, Celestin Faustin in 1975 painted *Building the Citadelle* illustrating how central to the Haitian imaginary this fortress is. Some writers who visited the palace wrote of its splendor. Baron De Vastey noted that “its structures erected by descendants of Africa [showed] ...architectural taste and genius.” Yet in all this splendor resided a

system of labor, one in which Trouillot noted, “hundreds of Haitians died building his [Christophe’s] favorite residence, in surrounding towns... because of the harsh labor conditions or because they faced the firing squad for a minor breach of discipline.”<sup>12</sup> So here the artist is faced with a conundrum. How to rework and reimagine Christophe critiquing the colonial gaze of the Dridler print while noting the consequences of Christophe building these architectural splendors? It is an important element of this show for Duval-Carrié is a critical artist and nothing escapes his artistic gaze.

It is at this point that we might turn to Duval-Carrié's engagement with the Alejo Carpentier novel, *The Kingdom of this World*. Published first in 1949 after the Cuban novelist had travelled to Haiti, the novel maps the course of the revolution through the eyes of its main character, Ti Noël a former slave. Duval-Carrié has read and reread this novel and over the last few years it has become one of his main source for a re-interpretation of the Haitian revolution. In his readings and then artistic rendering of the novel he is able to critique the revolution for its lack of full attention to the aspirations of the ordinary enslaved person. Thus in *Kingdom of this World* the opening piece of this series we get the piercing eyes and many drops of blood. Although taken from a specific scene in the novel the artist now makes this a critique of Sans Souci. The weight of the novel is about the deflection of the revolution. Macandal an earlier leader of the revolution is permanently invoked throughout the novel as the authentic figure of the revolution.<sup>13</sup> Ti Noël recalls him often and when he confronts the deflections of the revolution he thinks: "Try as he would, Ti Noël could think of no way to help his subjects bowed once again beneath the whip lash... and as a result, Macandal took hold in his memory."<sup>14</sup> At the end of the novel, Ti Noël transforms himself into animal form and folds himself in the "thick shade of Bois Caiman."<sup>15</sup>

In this exhibition the juxtaposition between the extraordinary reframing of Christophe positioning him outside the colonial gaze and then working with the figure of Ti Noël in *The Kingdom of this World* points to complexities of specific moments in the Haitian Revolution. In this regard Edouard Duval-Carrié continues his preoccupation with the Haitian revolution as an artist who critiques the various deflections of that revolution.

### *Historical Haitian Art*

There is a tradition of painting history in Haitian Art. In the early 20th the work of Pierre Augustin, Dieudonné Cédor, and of course Philomé Obin stand out. Augustin and Cédor were interested in painting the figures of the revolution and the Cedor 1948 painting of the Bois Caiman ceremony is a marker in Haitian art works which



*Memory Window #5*

both represent and reinterpret the Revolution. Obin on the other hand created a genre of paintings about Haitian history which were marked by historical events as well as the everyday. Moving from the Le Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince to Cap-Haïtien in the North, Obin created an entire school of historical painters. These included many members of his family. In a 1945 letter to the director of the Le Centre d'Art he wrote the following:

*As I see it, painting should be considered in part like the Holy Book in this way: by means of painting, that is a picture one is able to learn something .... with paint one can leave documents for future generations that writing alone would not provide.<sup>16</sup>*

In other words the genre of Haitian painting of history created by Obin is not historical paintings in the Western Art history conventional sense. In the latter convention, historical painting functions as a visual ideological production which narrates the social order and can be

understood as one aspect of its dominant representation. In this regard some of Cedor's work as well as various artistic representations of the revolution can be understood that way, all be it they are representations of a revolutionary state. However Obin's work is about the painting of history which produces other forms of imaginaries about Haiti. From his paintings of the every day to his extraordinary 1955 *Crucifixion of Péralte*, we do not see any preoccupation with representing the social order nor works which function to reproduce that order. Rather we see the work of history as both representing and sometimes troubling the order by presenting the everyday in contrast to the imaginaries desired by the elite. These works operate within the moment. They are not produced with any sense of timelessness but rather to show the elements of ordinary life at specific moment. I would argue that Duval-Carrié work belongs to this genre of historical painting but with some distinctive features which reworks and then transforms the tradition. This can be seen in another stream of his artwork shown in this exhibition, *Memory Windows*.

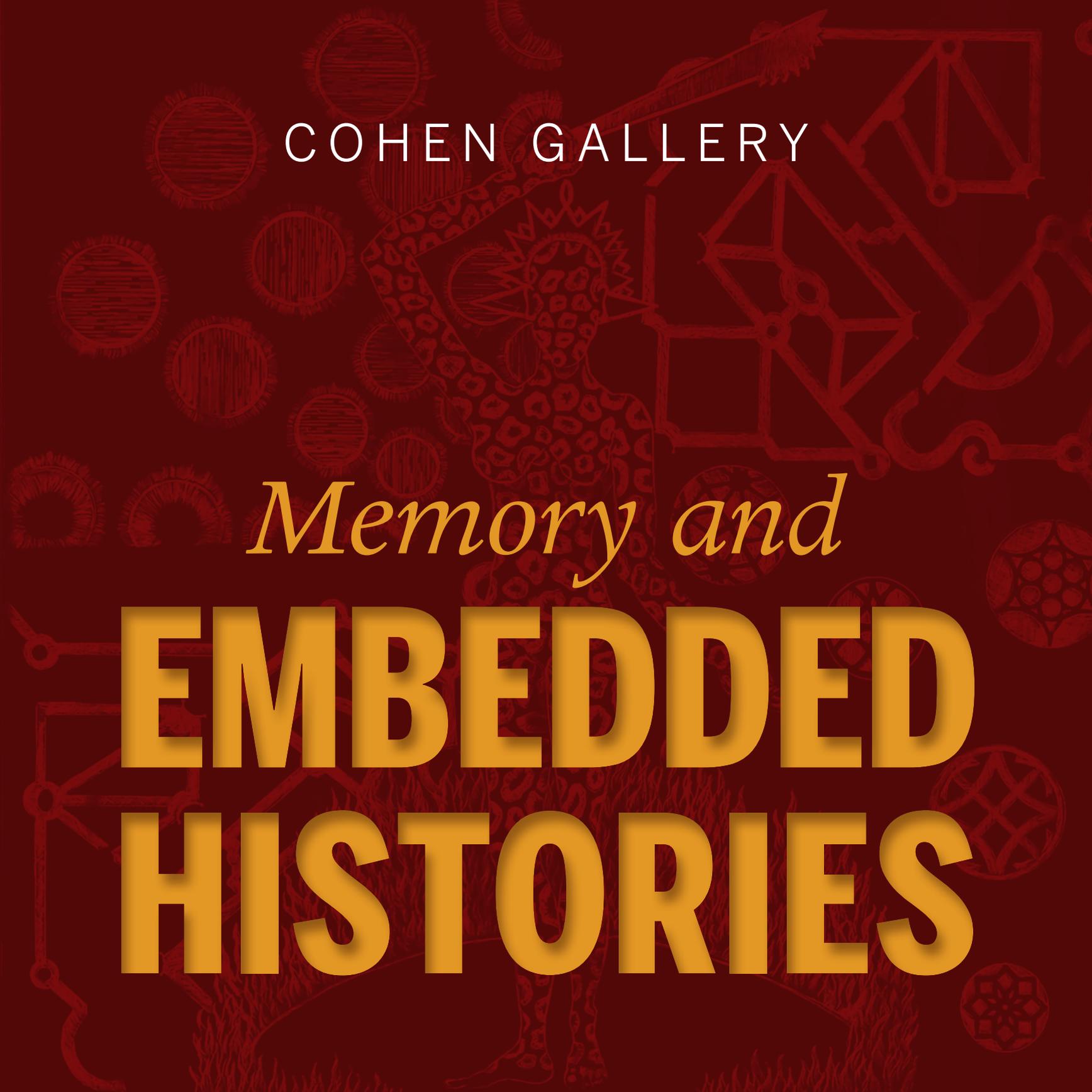
First created for a show at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami in 2017 and then added to for shows at Florida State University, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Museum and then the Clemente Arts Center in Martinique, the *Memory Window* series when backlit at first blush look like a kaleidoscopic regime of colors: orange, green, purple, yellow. So the viewer is first struck with the color composition of these works. On closer examination the viewer realizes not only are the works done on plexiglass embedded with resin, but that each *Memory Window* is constructed with blocks which are then placed and fitted alongside each other. With a further look we see that different objects are placed / painted within the blocks. Within the blocks are some of the artist's earlier motifs, then there are mixed media objects, well as some of the Loas of Haitian Vodou, found objects from archeological sites and objects from plantation life alongside with images of figures of slavery in the USA. Combined each *Memory Window* tells a narrative tale. This is one of the distinctive features of Duval-Carrié's work. In *Memory Windows* he tells a layered version of history of the Caribbean and the American South. It is a history which

I have called a *living history* because not only does it evoke the present as an index of the past and therefore the past lives, it also works through memory.<sup>17</sup> This is a distinctive feature of the work of history in the Caribbean. History and Memory within Caribbean life and thought are not two distinctive unrelated genres of thinking about the past rather they embrace each other. In this embrace linear time is unsettled.<sup>18</sup> Duval-Carrié in thinking about these pieces and their making noted in the first showing of the *Memory Window* series that, "what I wanted to do is first a revision of my work and then to translate it into something novel." Within his artistic practice it means that he works through the past and the present simultaneously creating a new aesthetic.

## *Historical Aesthetics*

In conventional thinking around aesthetics it is commonly understood that aesthetics is connected to the art object and its supposed beauty. However recent debates around the subject have pushed against this conception instead arguing that aesthetics is related more to a form of experience. In this argument aesthetic is neither about judgment nor form.<sup>19</sup> In thinking about aesthetics as form what is often elided is the making of the object. However understanding that art practices are reflective ones in which we "take a stance towards ourselves (and the world) in the midst of practicing our culture"<sup>20</sup> opens up another passage for thinking about the art works of Duval-Carrié. Thinking this way about the art practices of Edouard Duval-Carrié one could argue that the reflective process of making art objects which posit a form of history while working through both memory and history not only produces a "living history," but creates a form of historical aesthetics. In this aesthetic what is foregrounded is critique, the production of objects which are deployed as critique. For Duval-Carrié producing "living history" then becomes a language of artistic critique. In this he has pushed open the traditions of Caribbean historical art. One cannot tell the directions in which any artist will travel but in the case of Duval-Carrié we are aware that the experiment with form and making history will open new ways for us to think and understand the Caribbean.

- <sup>1</sup> Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2002), ix. It is of interest to note that Thomas Jefferson extensively cites Long in his *Notes on Virginia* (1785).
- <sup>2</sup> *Silencing the Past*, 70-107.
- <sup>3</sup> See introduction of unpublished play of Lamming, *Columbus From The Other Side*.
- <sup>4</sup> *Silencing the Past*, 2.
- <sup>5</sup> Not all Caribbean countries live in this temporal space. There are still colonies in the Caribbean, eg French colonies although called departments of France eg Martinique & Guadeloupe; Dutch colonies, eg Curacao. The US has colonial like relationships with Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands; and then there are British colonies called, dependences, eg Anguilla, Bermuda to name two.
- <sup>6</sup> “Those I Know, Those I Don’t “ Memory Keeping, Intimate Spirits and New Readings of History “ Tessa Mars in conversation with Geri Augusto in *The Art of Haiti: Loas, History and Memory* (ed) Anthony Bogues (Colorado Springs Fine Arts Museum, 2019) It is important to note that in Tessa Mars alternative rendering of Haitian revolutionary history she transforms the father of Haitian Independence, Jacques Dessalines into a female figure Tessalines.
- <sup>7</sup> For a discussion of this, see Cecile Accilen, Jessica Adams, & Elmide McMeleance, *Revolutionary Freedoms: A History of Survival, Strength and Imagination in Haiti* (Coconut Creek: Educa Vision, 2006).
- <sup>8</sup> For a discussion of this, see Carlo Célius, “Neoclassicism and the Haitian Revolution” in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, ed. David Geggus & Norman Fiering, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 352-92.
- <sup>9</sup> Michel-Philippe Lerebours, *Brief Overview of Two Centuries of Haitian Painting* (1804-2004) Editions de l’Universite d’Etat’Haiti, (2018).
- <sup>10</sup> For a discussion about this and the creation of the dominant western archive on Haiti, see Anthony Bogues, “Two Archives and the Idea of Haiti” in *The Haitian Revolution and the Early United States: Histories and Textualities* (eds) Elizabeth Dillion & Michael Drexler (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), Epilogue.
- <sup>11</sup> This idea of the Haitian revolution as a one which would redeem Africa can also be seen in the writings of Baron De Pompee-Valentin Vastey, the chancellor to Christophe at the time. See his, *An essay on the causes of the Revolution and the Civil Wars of Hayti* (Exeter: 1823).
- <sup>12</sup> *Silencing the Past*, 35.
- <sup>13</sup> In the Haitian historiography of the revolution, Macandal is a key figure. A healer within the African tradition, he was an expert with plants. He organized a poisoning campaign before the inauguration of the revolution against the planters and slaveholders. The campaign was partially successful but when he was discovered the colonial state made an attempt to burn him at the stake. It is said that he slipped his bonds particularly because he had one hand. However he was ultimately caught and killed. Both he and Dutty Boukman remain the authentic male figures of the revolution.
- <sup>14</sup> Alejo Carpentier, *The Kingdom of this World* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Girouz, 1985), 172-173.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 180. Bois Caïman is the site where the slave revolution in Haiti was inaugurated buy a vodou ceremony. I would argue here that the artist foregrounding Ti Noël in his work points us to an argument that Haiti needs to return to the grounds and meanings of the revolution.
- <sup>16</sup> Full letter cited in Selden Rodman *Where Art is Joy: Haitian Art the First Forty Years* (NY: Ruggles de Latour, 1988), 72.
- <sup>17</sup> For a further discussion of this, see Anthony Bogues, “Making History and the Work of Memory in the Art of Edouard Duval-Carrié’s in *Decolonizing Refinement: Contemporary Pursuits in the Art of Edouard Duval-Carrié* (eds) Paul Neil, Michael Carrasco & Lesley Wolff (Florida: Florida University Press, 2018).
- <sup>18</sup> One instance of this embrace can be seen both in the practices of Rastafari and in Vodou songs. For a discussion of the latter see, Benjamin Hebblethwaite, *Vodou Songs in Haitian Creole and English* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).
- <sup>19</sup> For a discussion of this, see the conversation between Mark Foster Gage and Jacques Rancière published in *Aesthetics equals politics: new discourses across, art, architecture, and philosophy* (ed) Mark Foster Gage (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2019).
- <sup>20</sup> For a discussion of this see George Bertram, *Art as Human Practice: An Aesthetics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).



COHEN GALLERY

*Memory and*

**EMBEDDED  
HISTORIES**



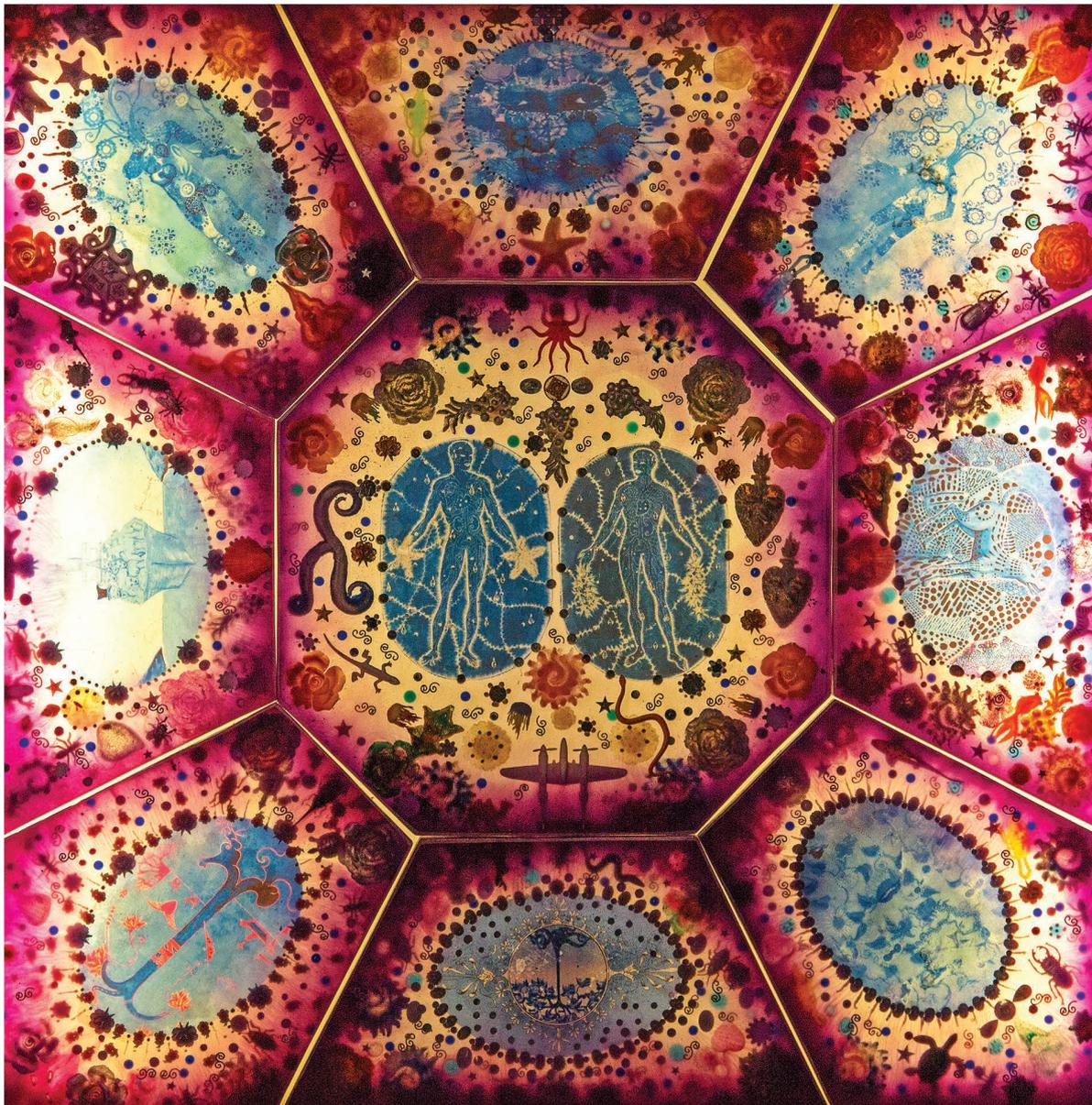
*Soucouyant #4*  
2018  
Aluminum  
96 inches diameter



*Henri Christophe,  
ou la dernière danse Taino*

2019

Engraving on plexiglass  
84 x 84 inches

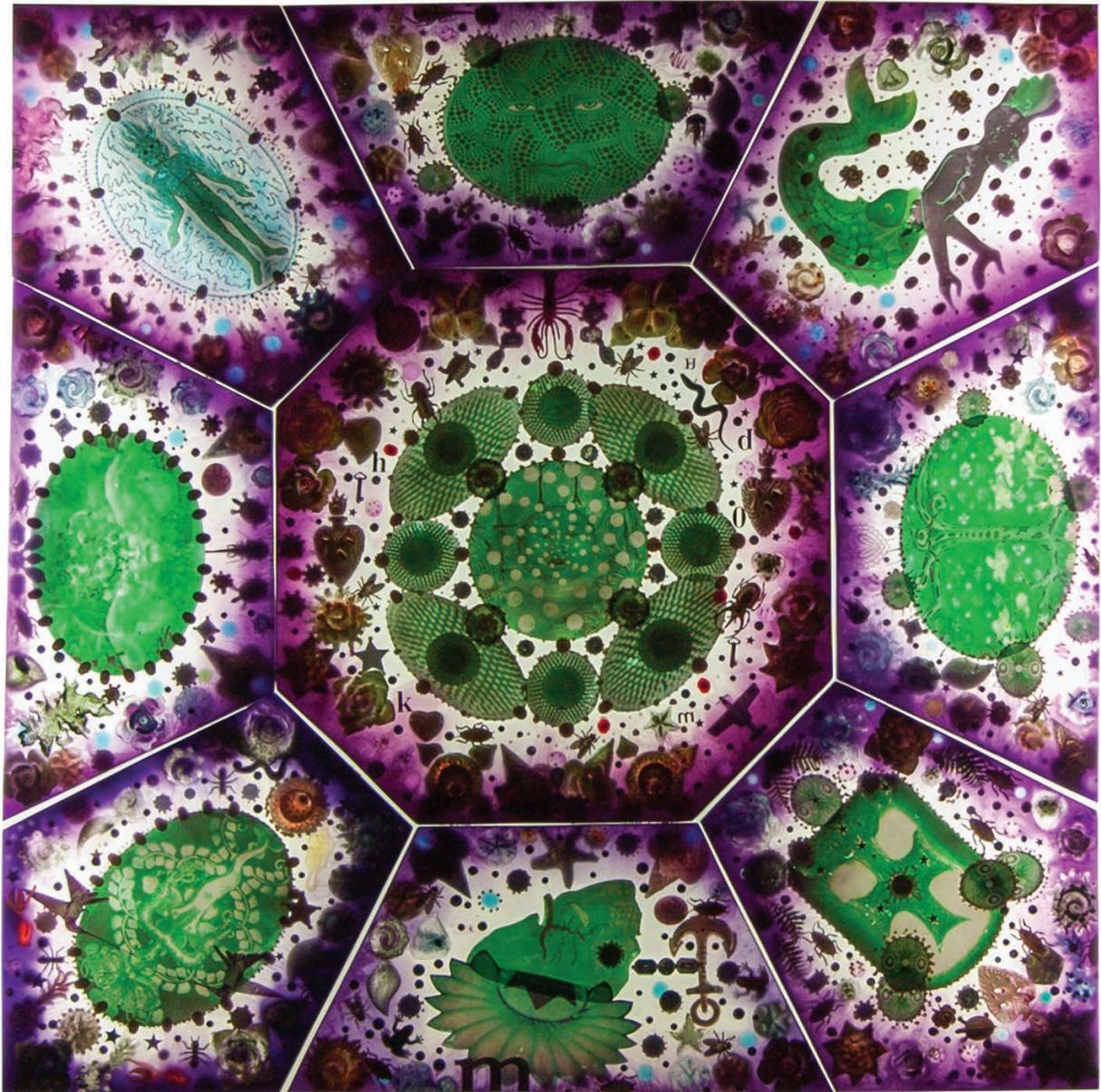


*Memory Window #2*

2017

Mixed media embedded in resin

58 x 58 inches



*Memory Window #3*

2017

Mixed media embedded in resin

58 x 58 inches



*Memory Window #9*

2018

Mixed media embedded in resin

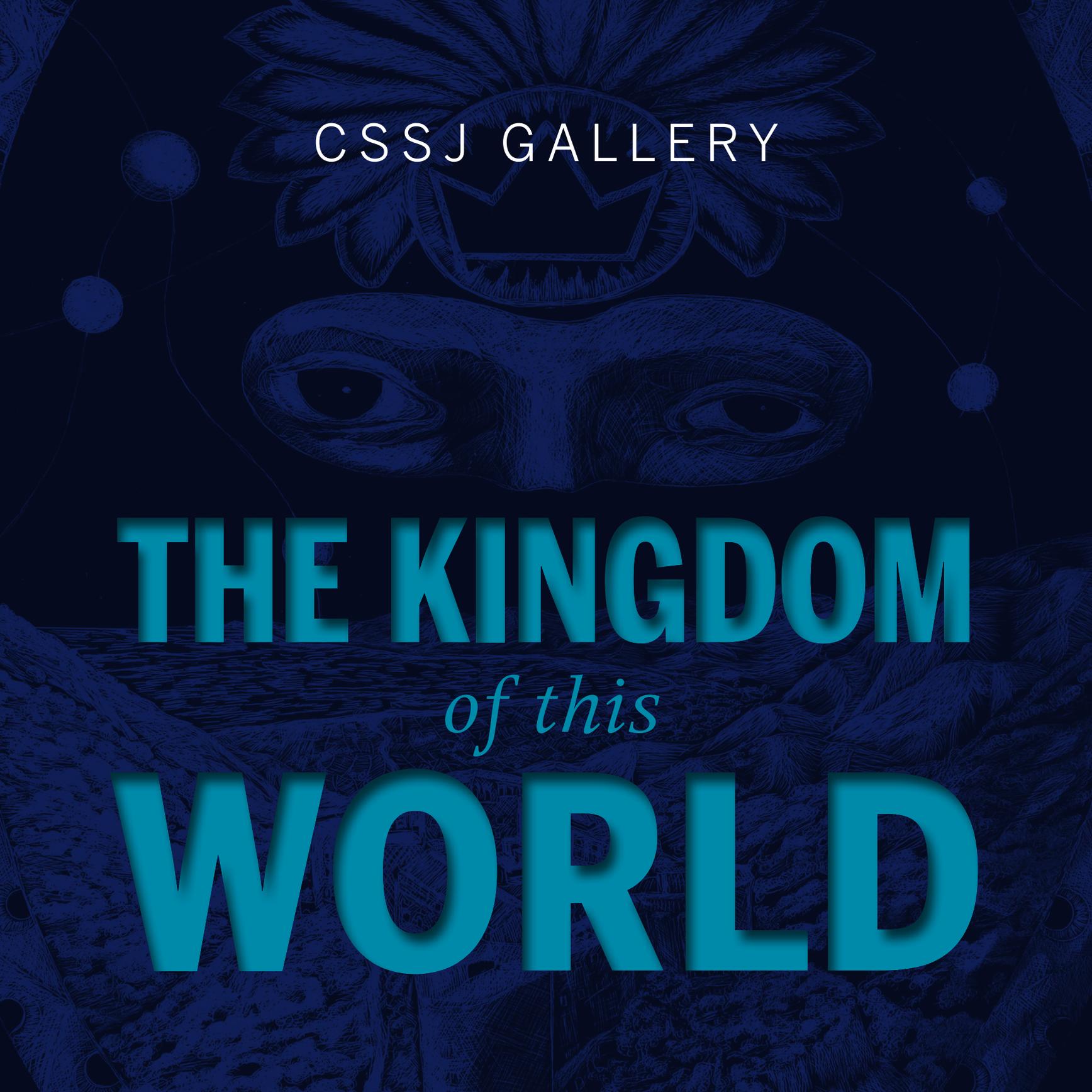
58 x 58 inches



*Burning Amazon*  
2019  
Engraving on plexiglass  
40 x 40 inches



*Migration*  
2019  
Engraving on plexiglass  
40 x 40 inches

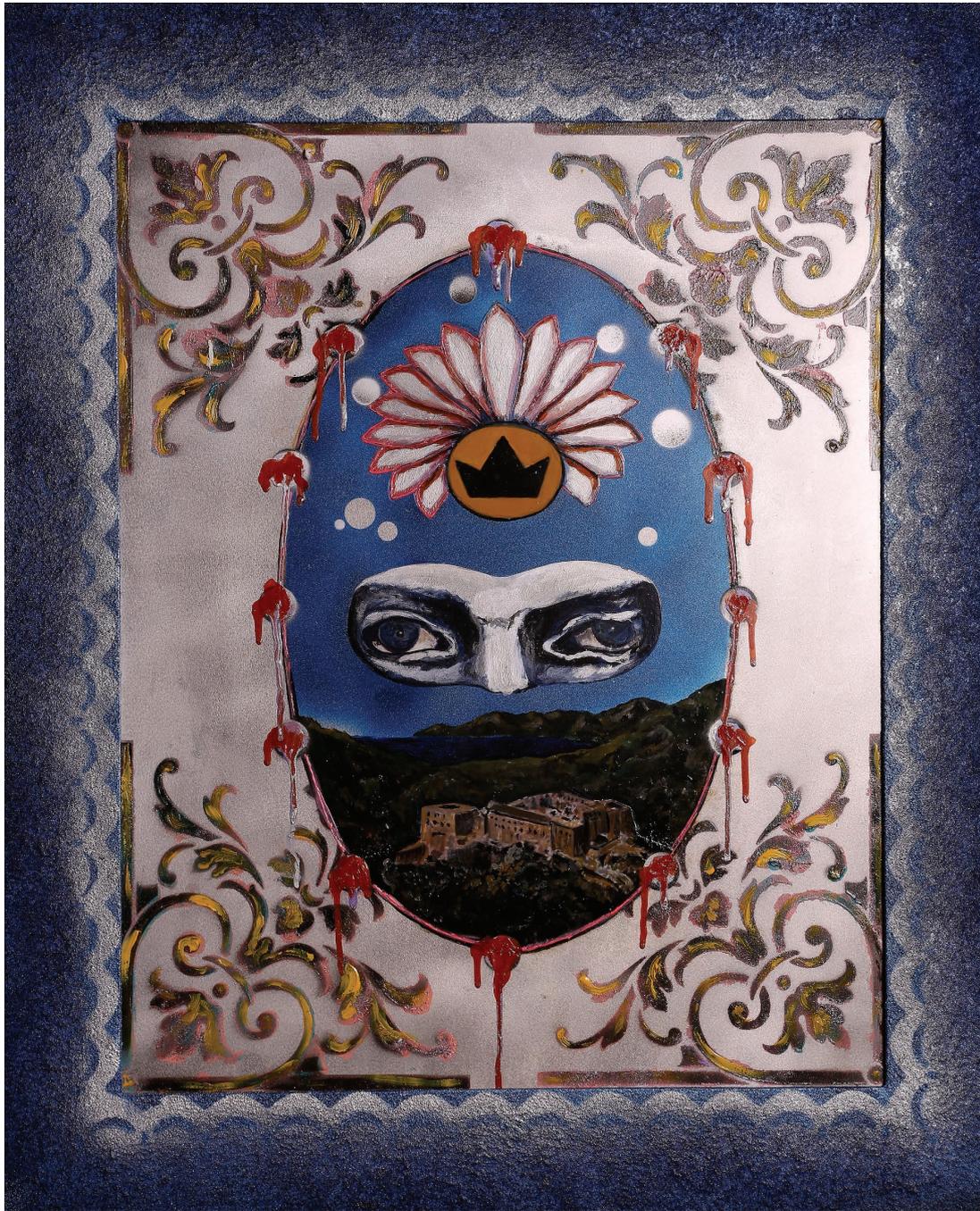
The background features a dark blue monochromatic illustration. At the top, a crown with a sunburst-like top is positioned above a face with large, detailed eyes. Below the face, a cityscape with various buildings and structures is visible. The entire scene is set against a dark blue background with faint lines and circular motifs, possibly representing a celestial or architectural theme.

CSSJ GALLERY

**THE KINGDOM**  
*of this*  
**WORLD**

*Ti Noël à  
Sans Souci*  
2018  
Mixed media  
on aluminum  
33 x 39 inches





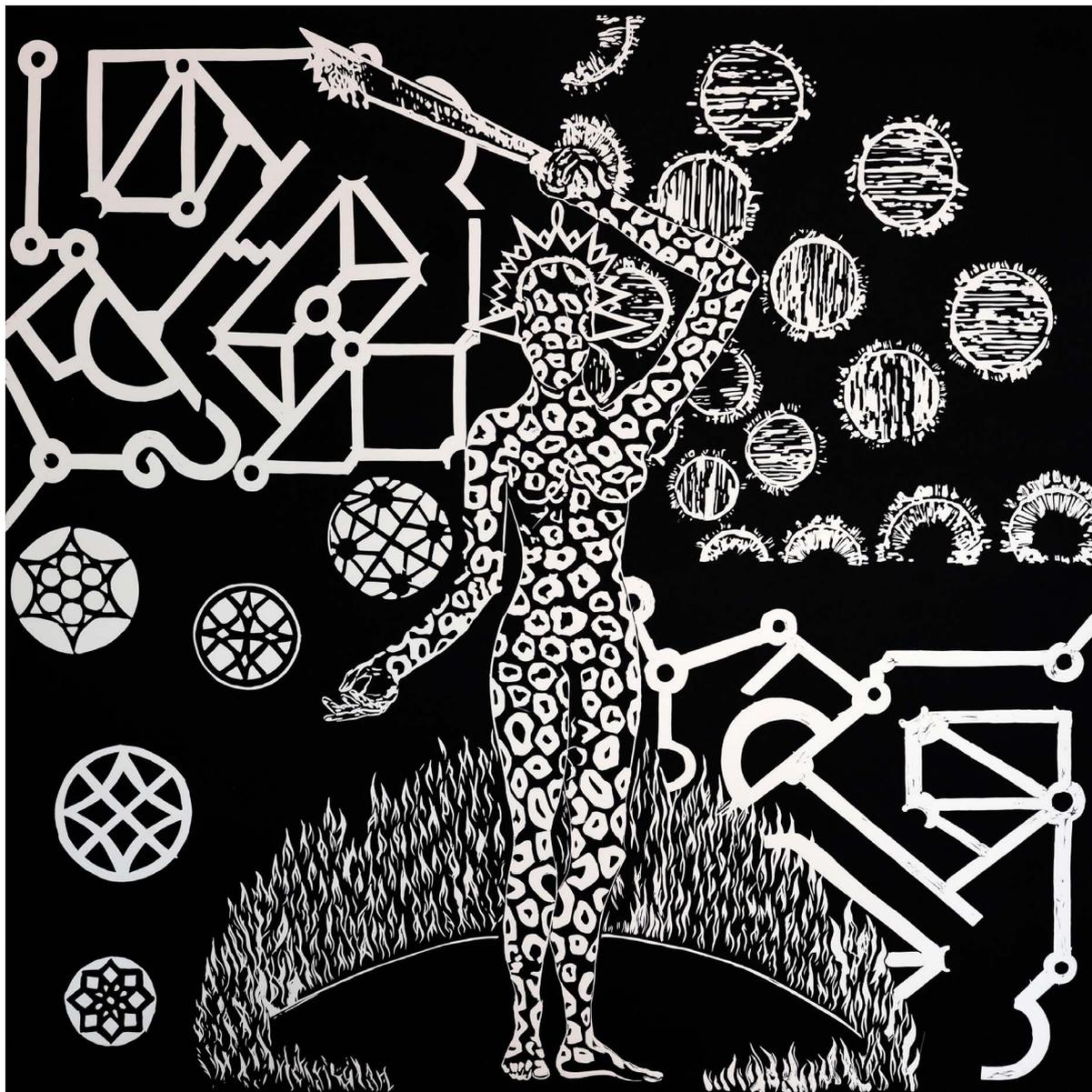
*The Kingdom  
of this World*  
2018  
Mixed media  
on aluminum  
33 x 39 inches



*Le Royaume  
de Monde*  
2017  
Engraving on  
plexiglass  
Oval 20 x 28 inches



*La Fin De  
Ti Noël*  
2018  
Mixed media  
on aluminum  
33 x 39 inches



*Amazon*

2019

Works on paper

48 x 48 inches

*Created in partnership*

*with the Artist Proof Studio*

*(Johannesburg, South Africa)*



*Migration*

2019

Works on paper  
48 x 48 inches

*Created in partnership  
with the Artist Proof Studio  
(Johannesburg, South Africa)*

# Selected Exhibitions since 2010

## *Solo Exhibitions*

May 2 – May 5, 2019

*Édouard Duval-Carrié:  
Frieze N.Y. 2019*

Frieze New York, Randall's Island Park,  
New York, NY.

November 9, 2018 – February 2, 2019

*Decolonizing Refinement*

Schmidt Center Gallery,  
Florida Atlantic University, Florida.

August 23 – October 9, 2018

*Décolonisons le Raffinement,  
Fondation Clement Martinique*  
Clement Foundation, Martinique.

May 16 – July 30, 2018

*Mémoires Encastrées –  
Memory Windows*

MIA Central Gallery,  
Miami International Airport, Florida.

February 16 – April 1, 2018

*Decolonizing Refinement:  
Contemporary Pursuits in the Art  
of Edouard Duval-Carrié*

Museum of Fine Arts,  
Florida State University, Florida.

September 2017

*Metamorphosis*

Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami.

March 10 – May 15, 2010

*Mémoire sans histoire*

MIA Galleries,  
Miami International Airport, Florida.

2010

*Edouard Duval-Carrié:*

*My Life As A Tree*

Cynergi, Miami, Florida.

## *Group Exhibitions*

June 1 – September 21, 2018

*Relational Undercurrents:  
Contemporary Art of the  
Caribbean Archipelago*

Wallach Art Gallery,  
Columbia University, New York, NY.

March 14 – April 29, 2018

*Bordering the Imaginary:  
Art from the Dominican Republic,  
Haiti, and their Diasporas*

BRIC House Gallery,  
Brooklyn, New York.

February 10 – May 20, 2018

*The Art of Haiti:*

*Loas, History, and Memory*

Fine Art Center,  
Colorado Springs, Colorado.

January 25 – March 18, 2018

*En Voyage: Hybridity and  
Vodou in Haitian Art*

Falconer Gallery,  
Grinnell College, Iowa.

October 20, 2012 – January 6, 2013

*Kafou: Haiti, Art, and Vodou*

Nottingham Contemporary,  
Nottingham, United Kingdom.

September 16, 2012 – January 30, 2013

*Haiti in Extremis:*

*Death and Life in 21st-Century  
Haitian Art*

Fowler Museum at UCLA,  
Los Angeles, California.

2012

*Dangerous and Divine:*

*The Secret of the Serpent*

Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal,  
The Netherlands.

2010

*Base Paint*

The Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum  
at Florida International University,  
Miami, Florida.

2010

*Global Caribbean II:*

*Caribbean Trilogy:*

*Focus on the Greater Antilles*

Little Haiti Cultural Center,  
Miami, Florida.

2010

*O Haiti está vivo ainda lá:*

*A arte das bandeiras, dos recortes  
e das garrafas consagradas ao Vodou*

Museu Afro Brasil, São Paulo, Brazil.

2010

*Visual Unity 2*

Polk Museum of Art,  
Lakeland, Florida.

## *Acknowledgements*

We would like to thank the staff of the Brown Arts Initiative particularly Joseph Rován, Thalia Field, Anne Bergeron, Chira Delsesto, Nicole Wholean, Sophia LaCava-Bohanan, Ben Kaplan, Julia Renaud, and Katie Vincelette. Special thanks to the staff at Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre (VIAD) at the University of Johannesburg as well as Artist Proof. We would also like to thank Erin Wells Design for exhibition design support and the students and staff at the Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice, Connor Jenkins, Aaron Castillo, Catherine Van Amburgh, Maiyah Gamble-Rivers, and Shana Weinberg.

