JOSCELYN GARDNER

Bleeding & Breeding

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JOSCELYN GARDNER

Curated by Olexander Wlasenko

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Station Gallery, Whitby, Ontario, Canada

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Introduction

The announcement was glorious. Joscelyn Gardner was awarded the Grand Prize at the International Contemporary Printmaking Biennial in Quebec! Six months have passed and Station Gallery is delighted to host a solo exhibition by this Caribbean/Canadian multimedia artist to kick off the 2012 exhibition season.

Gardner bases her studio practice in both Barbados and London, Ontario, where she teaches at the School of Contemporary Media at Fanshawe College. She has exhibited in international biennials, museums and galleries around the world. *Bleeding & Breeding* marks a significant survey of Gardner's career for an Ontario audience.

This compelling exhibition offers a rare glimpse into the print- and site-specific dimensions of Gardner's production. The artist enters a dialogue with past voices. Her project distills archival sources, adding a new understanding to Caribbean history. As someone who traces her familial lineage in the West Indies to the seventeenth century, Gardner is uniquely positioned to offer fresh insight on a colonial past in a post-colonial context. The artist explores her Creole roots and the Caribbean routes that inform her work.

Gardner's print-based production intersects with the printmaking heritage preserved in Station Gallery's permanent collection. Her exquisite lithographs are outstanding examples that offer retinal and conceptual engagement.

As a sustained body of work, *Bleeding & Breeding* resonates with multiple voices. Through her studio output, Joscelyn Gardner has created a very important space for us. This is a gathering, a site replete with textured imagery infused with women's stories. In Gardner's art, beauty and brutality, and horror and honour coalesce.

Olexander Wlasenko
Curator, Station Gallery

Jennifer Law, PhD

Knowledge is Made for Printing: Joscelyn Gardner's Creole Portraits Series

On this earth, one pays dearly for every kind of mastery.
~Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

"Effective" history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting.
~ Michel Foucault, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*

Knowledge, empire and print culture

The desire to gain mastery over the world through the systematic collection, classification and dissemination of empirical knowledge reached a fevered pitch during the Age of Enlightenment, as rapid empire-building and global expansion necessitated the development of an epistemological means to command distant lands and subjects. This period of circumnavigational exploration witnessed an unprecedented transfer of people, labour and commodities within and between Europe and the colonies. Bolstered by the scientific revolution and fuelled by an imperialist agenda, 'reason' was advocated as the primary ideological basis on which to establish an authoritative system of ethics, governance, aesthetics and religion in which objective truths about reality could be produced and upheld. Consequently, a new way of 'knowing' the world took hold based on a classificatory episteme and vision, in which the body of the colonial subject emerged – indeed, was *invented* – as an object of knowledge and analysis, as well as a site of domination and resistance. Thus does Foucault, following Nietzsche, write that "where religions once demanded the sacrifice of bodies, knowledge now calls for experimentation on ourselves, calls us to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge… For, to knowledge, no sacrifice is too great." [1]

Barbadian artist Joscelyn Gardner takes this extraordinary moment of knowledge production and dissemination as a starting point to engage a history of mastery that continues to inform contemporary post-colonial Caribbean social relations and identity politics. Drawing on eighteenth-century archival material referencing life on Caribbean sugar plantations during the period of the transatlantic slave trade, Gardner has created a body of work that positions white Creole identity, originating with a personal family history in Barbados that dates to the seventeenth century, in relation to the largely unwritten narratives of black female slaves. In this, Gardner is interested in undertaking an investigation into genealogy, race and gendered subjectivity that takes account of the ruptures, blind spots and discontinuities in the historical archive.

Such a project entails a consideration of embodied sovereignty in relation to both the subject and the nation, and the ways in which knowledge is correspondingly manufactured, legitimised and transferred between and across continents. Sovereign power is very much dependent upon making itself visible – its representations, ideologies and discourses rendered and embodied as truths. In the mid-eighteenth-century, the printing press enabled the mechanics of sovereign visibility, revolutionising the ways in which knowledge was produced and circulated across vast distances in order to maintain and enforce absolute power. As Tony Ballantyne has argued, however, European print culture was not simply reproduced and exported to the colonies from Europe, but was specifically adapted to each colonial context, thus informing the individual development of colonial regimes and the ways in which these societies were collectively integrated into the empire.[2] Nevertheless, while print culture facilitated the reproduction, standardisation and preservation of textual and visual representations of imperial interests, it also historically played a significant revolutionary role in the margins of empire, challenging and undermining centralised ideological authority. [3]

Joscelyn Gardner with Jill Graham at Open Studio, Toronto (November 2011)

Weapons and wounds

Based primarily in stone lithography, Gardner's work, which also includes video and multimedia installation, is firmly rooted in the history and practice of print-based culture. In her three-part *Creole Portraits* series (2002–2011), Gardner has created a collection of lithographed portrait heads on frosted mylar, referencing a complex history of print-based representation that spans the eighteenth-century to the present. Gardner draws upon wide-ranging traditions of representation, including conventions of portraiture of black and white subjects, abolitionist publications, and natural history and scientific illustration.

Thirty portraits in total, the three suites of lithographs portray the backs of black female heads donning elaborately plaited hairstyles intricately entwined with instruments of bondage and torture. Referencing artefacts preserved in the colonial archive as material evidence of corporeal violence, these tools of oppression (whips, chains, locks, leaden balls, spiked collars, facial cages, and even a full-body "mantrap") concurrently stand in for the violent oppressor and the subjugated body in pain. Signifying both weapon and wound, instruments of discipline and torture necessarily articulate the pain they inflict. As Elaine Scarry writes, "the mental habit of recognizing pain in the weapon (despite the fact that an inanimate object cannot "have pain" or any other sentient experience) is an ancient and enduring one."[4] In fact, as she goes on to explain, "[t]he point here is not just that pain can be apprehended in the image of the weapon (or wound) but that it almost cannot be apprehended without it."[5]

Prior to institutionalized forms of social control, colonial societies dependent upon the production of foreign commodities through a slave-based labour system were reliant on the systematic enforcement of discipline and authority made visible in often public displays of extreme brutality and cruelty, including (but by no means limited to) beatings, lashings, brandings, rape and other often perversely creative acts of torture. Considered 'legitimate' violence by the colonial state, the use of shackles, chains and bondage marked the body as subservient, enforcing compliance through spectacular example. While life on plantations was a routine subject of colonial reports and artistic imagery, the habitual violence and tyranny that kept the slave system operational was notably absent from the visual record. Early printed illustrations of colonial life on plantations designed for genteel European audiences offered idyllic portrayals of pastoral life in exotic landscapes, often including images of indigenous 'natives' dressed in classical garments rather than African slaves toiling the land in shackles.[6] Prior to 1800, pictures of actual slaves on plantations were exceptionally rare.[7] As Tim Barringer explains, "considerable amounts of capital, both financial and ideological, were invested in these images, in the production of which artists and their patrons colluded in an attempt to naturalize the moral injustice enshrined in laws that made some men and women the property of others."[8]

With the rise of abolitionist and anti-slave movements in Britain and the continent at the end of the eighteenth century,[9] printed literature was increasingly used to more accurately represent the violent reality of slave life on colonial plantations to populations back 'home', depicting the casual routine violence of empire and the often cruel punishments to which slaves were prone. This printed material largely consisted of pamphlets, broadsides, treatises and other short literary documents sparsely illustrated with schematic diagrams of the inhumane practices of the slave trade, such as overcrowded slave ships. One of the few British images depicting an individual slave in shackles was the Wedgewood medallion (1787), a silhouetted image of a crouching slave shown in profile, which became the official seal of the British Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.[10] While French anti-slavery literature available in Britain did provide a few illustrations of slaves in shackles, it refrained from putting a 'face' on slavery through the representation of suffering individuals.[11]

While it was extremely unusual to depict overt scenes of torture and pain in such prints, it was not entirely unheard of. English poet, painter and printmaker William Blake created a series of sixteen engraved plates (1792-94) for Captain John Gabriel Stedman's published *Narrative of a Five Year Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796) depicting graphic scenes of violent punishment and mistreatment of plantation slaves, several of which included full figured images of tortured subjects.[12] By depicting graphic images of suffering in individualized subjects, the artist created a sympathetic space for identification, inviting the viewer to emotively respond to the subject's pain and suffering. Indeed, the representation of pain is an effective means by which to measure our shared humanity.

Fashionable bondage

As Gardner's portrait series progress from *Creole Portraits* (2002–2003) to *Creole Portraits II* (2007) and *Creole Portraits III* (2009–2011), the apparatuses of punitive bondage become increasingly elaborate, dramatic and fetishistic. These are not faithful copies lifted unaltered from the archive; they have been artistically interpreted by the artist, so that at times the implements appear to seamlessly meld from weapon to decorative macabre embellishment. In this, Gardner poignantly alludes to a lengthy history of socially sanctioned misogyny and repression of the feminine subject, not only with specific reference to the black female body, slavery and colonialism, but also more generally in relation to a history of 'fashionable bondage' designed to literally shape the female body to the desire of a patriarchal gaze.

Fashion, cosmetic and sartorial traditions that intentionally restrict, constrain or alter the female body have long been connected to deeply ingrained social values associated with status, discipline, youth and beauty. Such practices are essential to the mechanisms of objectification, simultaneously creating and reproducing difference across gender, race, generational and class lines. In Gardner's portraits, however, she adds yet another layer to the trappings of entrapment, so to speak, which again may be contextualised historically in relation to eighteenth-century English print culture and social satire focusing on female fashion, bourgeois consumerism and the 'shackles' of a foreign commodity-dependent economy.

The growth of British commerce and mercantilism in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and a growing dependence on foreign commodities and labour led to fervent debates in the public sphere regarding the corrupting influences of imported luxury goods on society. Much of this public discourse focused on women, fashion and the domestic sphere. In the wake of the financial crisis following the collapse of the South Sea Company in 1720 during Robert Walpole's administration, English artist, editorial cartoonist and political satirist William Hogarth, produced a series of printed images parodying Londoners' excess consumption and the destabilising effects of foreign dependence.[13] In her discussion of Hogarth's satirical imagery and social critique, Catherine Molineux notes the artist's "distaste for excess or gaudy ornamentation"[14] including fashionable "shacklings" such as "steel collars" and other "iron-machines" employed to teach British children proper posture.[15] To Hogarth, such unnatural constricting of the body in the name of fashion reflected a larger concern with national freedom, bourgeois taste and growing social and economic restraints on British liberty. As Molineux argues, Hogarth's primary point of critique was not the oppression of black slaves *per se*, but rather the implications for English society of a mercantile system based on foreign (indentured and slave) labour and imported commodities.

Hogarth strategically positioned his representations of black subjects within a history of European portraiture, print and literary traditions. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, 'exotic' black servants were often included in the background or margins of portraits of elite white Europeans, signifying elevated social position and wealth, and alluding to the civility and virtuosity of the master in fashioning a 'civilized' domestic servant from a 'primitive' savage. Hogarth parodies this *ficelle* role of the black subject, frequently inserting black domestic slaves into the boudoirs and parlours of elite white women, implicating them in scenes of licentious behaviour, and thus transforming them into "empty icon[s] of fashion" and moral corruption.[16] In Hogarth's satires, black slaves and servants were no longer the passive symbols of the benevolence and civilising influence of their mistresses as represented in earlier portraiture traditions, but appear rather as the fashionable accessories of upper-class English women. In this, they are portrayed as accomplices to the corrupted maternity of these women whose insatiable taste for fashionable luxuries seemingly blinds them to the decaying domestic realm in which they are cast and for which they are responsible. Thus, women, both black and white, become the representational scapegoats for a patriarchal mercantile system gone awry.

Plaited portraits

Gardner is well-versed in the art of upending and subverting representational tradition, recognising the fertile ground that fashion provides for contesting social paradigms. Elaborately styled hair plays a dominant role in her portraits, offsetting the weapons, bondage and, in the final portrait series, botanical specimens, with which it is intricately entwined. Each of the thirty Creole portraits is represented by a unique and distinctively individualised hairstyle. Skilfully drawn with reference to photographs of contemporary black female hairstyles, the artist consciously binds history to the present, acknowledging that hair continues to be a dominant signifier of individual expression in relation to socio-cultural norms and expectations. In this, hair may be very effectively styled as a visual marker of conformity or rebellion, belonging or exclusion. An extension of the body, yet separable from it, hair is simultaneously natural and cultural.[17] Correspondingly, as Angela Rosenthal explains, hair has long been intimately associated with the "essence of individuality and personhood",[18] and the accompanying rites and rituals that mark the boundaries of the self in relation to a collective social order.

In the eighteenth century, hair played a significant part in the formation of social identities influenced by localised fashion trends as well as by global economic and cultural exchange. European men and women alike carefully crafted their hair in order to make their public selves visible in a hierarchical social arena, donning theatrical hair prosthetics and powdered wigs in the performance of socially sanctioned roles. Indeed, wigs were one of the most successful commodities of the eighteenth century.[19] At the same time, hair informed scientific theories of sexual, ethnic and racial difference, which took account of variations in the texture, colour and thickness of hair between Europeans and non-Europeans. In this, hair became a primary measure of differentiation in the taxonomic classification of human subjects. Nevertheless, while hair was a principal marker of social, economic, sexual and racial boundaries between subjects, it was also an important medium for individual expression, social critique and resistance. For black slaves, hair was one of the few outlets for individual expression, pride and defiance in an otherwise highly restrictive and punitive social structure.[20] As Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton note, "[r]esistance is produced through the deliberate control of visibility."[21]

In Gardner's portraits, the carefully braided and imaginatively styled hair not only speaks to the individuality of the subject, but to a 'labour of love' necessitating a sisterhood of hands. Informal rituals of hairstyling among black women continue to play an important role in the creation of social and familial bonds; bringing women together and providing opportunity for social exchange and dialogue.[22] Individuality and self-mastery is here located in community. Hair is not simply a significant feature of Gardner's portraits; hair literally is the portrait. As a defining feature of embodied personhood, Rosenthal writes that "a lock of hair can serve as a synecdoche for the body whence it came, possessing in the eye, or rather fingers, of the beholder stronger *representational* power than, for example, a painted portrait."[23]

The potential of hair to embody the essence of individual personhood became particularly pronounced in the nineteenth century in relation to rituals of mourning. The 'work' of mourning was primarily the responsibility of women during the Victorian era who would create intricately crafted jewellery and small sculptural tableaus from the hair of departed loved ones. In this, the deceased remained connected to their living descendants, thus preserving the memory and knowledge of the individual. As in Gardner's portraits, hair thus becomes proxy for a body no longer present; it is something material to hold on to, a trace and a testament of a life, in the absence of that life. Gardner's tenderly rendered images of faceless subjects lost to memory function as 'likenesses' in the absence of a physiognomic or physical record of the historical individual. Gardner respectfully accepts her role as descendent to a history she has not chosen but has nevertheless inherited as a white Creole woman. Hers are, in a sense, portraits of mourning; commemorating and bearing witness to lives lived, inserting lost or silenced narratives back into the historical archive.

Inverted tradition

The representation of women in portraits has historically offered an unequal biographical record in relation to that of men. Over the centuries, women have regularly appeared as mythical or biblical characters or allegorical embodiments of classical virtues and social ideals, such as beauty or modesty.[24] Even in portraits of women of social standing, their biographies were most often ancillary to the biographies of their male counterparts (husbands, brothers, fathers), denying women the individual subjectivity evidenced in portraits of men. As Felicity Edholm argues:

> Behind many portraits… is an assumption of a biography, a known or knowable story, for men in particular a story of potential when young and achievement when middle-aged. Women's lives and faces cannot tell the same story…[25]

The gender inequity in the visual record is even more pronounced for black women, who are almost entirely absent from historical Western portraiture traditions. More often than not, historical portraits of black women have been used to reference the social status and identities – that is, the *faces* – of others.

Modern ideas of selfhood and individual subjectivity have their roots in the philosophies of the Enlightenment period, although the figurative emphasis on external physical and physiognomic characteristics as representative of a person's "socialised self" in portraiture – what Erving Goffman refers to as the "front' of an individual – has persisted well beyond the eighteenth century.[26] The subjects of Gardner's portraits, in an inversion of such established tradition, are shown from behind. With their backs turned against the proverbial gaze, they seem to say, "You don't know me; I am my own master." They thus resist possession and the epistemological processes of objectification.

This strategy of deflecting the objectifying gaze by portraying the black female subject with her back turned away from the viewer may be considered in relation to contemporary conventions of portraiture and representations of black subjectivity. Contemporary artist Lorna Simpson routinely photographs and depicts black female subjects from behind. As bell hooks explains in contemplation of Simpson's seminal work *The Waterbearer* (1986), "[b]y turning her back on those who cannot hear her subjugated knowledge speak, she creates by her own gaze an alternative space where she is both self-defining and self-determining."[27] Here, the mechanism that serves to bind the individual to an historical stereotype is interrupted by the shifting of position. An opening in perception and a new knowledge of the subject is thus made possible.

Naming conventions

Although Gardner's portraits speak to a collective history of colonial oppression and subjugation, they remain representationally rooted in the individual, as is tradition in portraiture. In her second suite of portraits, *Creole Portraits II: "A Collection of Singular & Scarce Creole Portrait Heads to perpetuate the Memory of the WOMEN of EGYPT ESTATE in JAMAICA"* (2007), each lithograph is specifically named for a female slave who lived on Egypt Estate in the eighteenth century, while under the control of British overseer Thomas Thistlewood. An immigrant from England, Thistlewood arrived in Jamaica in 1750, where he lived and worked on sugar plantations until his death in 1786. During this time, he kept detailed diaries and records of plantation life, including the particulars of financial and business transactions, slave logs, garden books and a weather journal. A well-educated and astute businessman, Thistlewood could be brutal in his discipline of slave workers and routinely raped the female slaves in his possession. Thistlewood carefully documented his sexual conquests in his daily diaries. Written in Latin (a written language reserved for learned men of science and religion), these marginal notations record the unsettling details of where, when and with whom sexual encounters took place and how much he 'tipped' afterwards, but otherwise omit any personal reflections of his actions.[28]

There were few options available to enslaved women for resistance or opposition to such abuse. Trevor Burnard explains that a slave woman's response to unwanted sexual attention from her master was curtailed by the number of children she had, for a woman with dependents had to worry about retaliation on her kin and did not have the option of flight.[29] Exercising what little control they had over their bodies and the destinies of their unborn offspring, many slave women chose to secretly abort their fetuses using local knowledge of indigenous abortifacient plants, rather than bring children into their world of brutal servitude and oppression. Like livestock, enslaved women were valued by slave-owners for their reproductive potential in replenishing and increasing the slave-labour pool. Penalties were severe for women suspected of voluntarily terminating their pregnancies and even for midwives accused of assisting this practice. In addition to brutal beatings, floggings and other tortuous discipline, such women were frequently made to wear iron slave collars for lengthy periods of time, usually until they fell pregnant again. Extremely heavy, awkward and cumbersome, slave collars were designed for discomfort and public spectacle and would often prevent women from lying down easily or from leaning back for support. They were intended to shame and humiliate the wearer.

The third and final suite of lithographs, *Creole Portraits III: "bringing down the flowers..."*, directly references this history by incorporating delicately rendered hand-coloured botanical specimens of abortifacients into the portraits of collared, beautifully coiffed female heads. Each individual lithograph includes a different specimen for which the portrait is named. In keeping with Western traditions of scientific nomenclature, the identifying monikers include the Latin name of the species alongside the common name in brackets (here, individual slave names taken from Thistlewood's diaries). The practice of naming, of course, is closely associated with notions of mastery, possession, lineage, and, as in the case of scientific convention, discovery. Botanical specimens were frequently named for and by the European male botanists who 'discovered' them and their patrons, not for the geographic places of origin of the plants or for the indigenous practitioners well-versed in their properties and use.[30] Correspondingly, comparisons can be made with the practice of naming slaves on colonial plantations, with owners assigning their slaves European names, generally ignoring their original African names, lineages and cultural traditions.

In the eighteenth century, scientific naming conventions were significantly shaped by Carl Linnaeus's taxonomic system of identification, description, labelling and classification. A practicing physician, Linnaeus was well acquaint-

ed with the medicinal properties of plants.[31] However, his primary interests lay in their economic potential, and he believed that natural history was an important tool of the imperial project.[32] Indeed, botany as it was practiced during this period may be considered emblematic of the ways in which knowledge was moved, exchanged and employed to the political ends of the imperial state during the colonial era.

Gardner's portrayal of these specimens mimics the representational style of botanical illustrations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the production of scientific publications, journals and encyclopaedias printed in vernacular language (as opposed to Latin), science grew in popularity among an increasingly literate audience from the eighteenth century onwards. Periodic journals such as *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, launched by British botanist William Curtis in 1787, introduced its readership to exotic specimens collected and recorded from distant lands and colonies. Initially, illustrations were hand-coloured engravings, a labour-intensive process, presented in octavo format and accompanied by text describing the properties, history and common names of species. The public's insatiable appetite for knowledge and education accessed through such publications resulted in a boom in print culture with a readership that included a growing number of middle- and upper-class women. Indeed, several women emerged as accomplished and respected illustrators, translators and contributors to scientific texts, such as Elizabeth Blackwell (1707-1758) and Maria Sybilla Merian (1647-1717).

'Applied' knowledge of plants with regard to their medicinal uses has long been the domain of women, relegated to the realm of nature and domesticity. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, women were widely acknowledged as healers – including educated women of the upper classes as well as 'herb women' and folk healers from the lower classes. European male physicians and naturalists regularly sought the botanical knowledge of these women, both in Europe and in the colonies, offering to purchase their 'secrets.'[33] However, many remained sceptical of 'feminine' indigenous knowledge, which was, as Schiebinger explains, ultimately set in opposition to 'masculine' scientific knowledge.[34] Gardner's portraits recover and pay respect to feminine knowledge, recognising within it the capacity for self-mastery and the potential for challenging white patriarchal authority.

Mastery, labour and knowledge that binds

In keeping with historically established print conventions, Gardner enlisted the assistance of a master printer for *Creole Portraits II* and *Creole Portraits III*. A skilled and experienced stone lithographer in her own right, Gardner initially secured such support to help manage the sheer labour and time of printing separate editions of the large-scale portraits. Printed at Open Studio in Toronto with Technical Director Jill Graham, these works are the product of the technical collaboration between artist and master artisan, requiring the establishment of a supportive dialectical relationship based on the exchange of shared knowledge and labour. In this process of translation and interpretation, conceptual vision must be matched with a technical understanding of how best to materially realise the image; a concept that may be ineffable must be made visible. It is significant to Gardner that this was an alliance that evolved over a period of five years between two women.

In preparation for each image, Gardner begins by coating the virgin stone in gum arabic, and then draws freehand in graphite pencil on the coated surface before engraving the lines shallowly into the stone with a sharp implement. After the lines are greased with asphaltum and the gum is removed, she redraws the image over top of the engraved lines using an oil-based litho pencil. First developed as a technique in 1796 by Alois Senefelder in Munich, lithography is a planographic process in which the printing is done solely from the surface of the stone; it is not standard practice to engrave directly into the surface. Historically, however, there is some precedent for the use of various engraved lithographic techniques by printers, particularly for the reproduction of cartography and mechanical drawings.[35] By engraving into the surface, it allows the artist greater control and precision of line in planning and drawing very elaborate and finely detailed images. Lithography is a notoriously unforgiving process; particularly once a drawing has been committed to the stone in an oil-based medium. Unlike other print processes, such as intaglio, where a mistake in printing may simply result in the loss of a proof, in lithography an error in preparation or printing can result in the loss of both the proof and the image on the stone.[36] While the engraved lithographic approach serves Gardner technically, she is also interested in the sympathy this method holds with many of the historical prints she references in her work, most of which would have been originally printed using etching techniques on copper plates. Here, history is evidenced not only in conventions of representation, but in the very processes of making.

Once the image is drawn, the stone is then etched with a solution of nitric acid and gum arabic. The etch does not eat into the surface as in intaglio; rather, it creates a 'memory' of the image on the surface of the stone, intensifying the contrast between the inked and un-inked areas by increasing the porosity and the water absorbency of the surface. A thin coating of gum protects the imageless areas from the ink when kept moist with water, so that when the inked

roller is passed over the surface, the ink is attracted to the oily drawn image and repelled by the moisture on the open areas.[37] This process depends on a skilled knowledge of maintaining the fine balance of a mutual chemical affinity. Simply put, grease attracts grease; water repels it.

Gardner's images are technically complicated by being printed on frosted mylar. The quality of the frosted surface mimics the smooth plane of the stone, while the subtle transparency of the mylar lends the image a luminosity that paper does not afford. It also materially lifts the history-laden images into a contemporary moment. However, unlike paper made of fibre (generally a mixture of cellulose pulp and rag), which is absorbent, mylar is a polyester plastic and therefore will not 'accept' or receive the image in the same manner. In contrast to printing a lithographed image on paper, the use of mylar requires that the image be inked very 'high,' and is technically much more challenging to print; it is decidedly not for the faint of heart or skill.

While Gardner revels in the process of planning, drawing and preparing the image on the stone, Graham has long been drawn to the skilled labour of printing. For Graham, the pleasure in the work of 'making' lies in the labour of perfected repetition, requiring discipline and stamina. Lithographic printing on stone is a very physical undertaking, demanding meticulous preparation and organisation, a close familiarity with the equipment and materials, and an embodied knowledge of technical process that that can only be mastered over time through practical experience. Historically, the technical knowledge of printmaking was generationally passed down from master to apprentice in ateliers or vocational schools run by artisanal families and protected by trade guilds. Such knowledge was traditionally the sole preserve of men and was often highly guarded and shrouded in secrecy, even between master and apprentice, who predominantly learned the trade through practice and example rather than through verbal instruction. With technological developments and the introduction of automated commercial printing presses, ateliers dramatically declined in number through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Even today, the world of master printing remains a male-dominated realm associated with physical strength and machismo, although there have been a growing number of female master printers, particularly from the mid-twentieth century onwards. While contemporary printmakers continue to be drawn to the enchantment of process, the knowledge of making is no longer secretive. Printmaking today is a dialectical medium often practiced in collective or community-based studios. In this, mastery, however solitary the journey, winds along a path defined in and by collaboration.

Intertwined circles

Anthropologist Trevor H.J. Marchand maintains that"[m]aking knowledge… is an ongoing process shared between *people* and *with* the world."[38] Knowledge is in constant negotiation, it is not fixed or a priori to one object or thing. For Gardner, the process of interrogating knowledge systems is as much an exercise in uncovering how something or someone comes to be known as it is a disclosure of the culturally constructed ignorances that inevitably take hold of a society – in the past as well as the present. While acknowledging where history and experience diverge along lines of gender, class and race, Gardner is predominantly interested in revealing instances of overlap and confluence in which empathy and recognition may occur between subjects. Here, she maintains that black and white female Caribbean identity alike has been historically shaped, albeit unequally, by colonial patriarchy and 'mastership.'[39]

In describing "the black/white relationship" in Jamaica during slavery, Erna Brodber references such instances of overlap as being "to some extent like two intertwined circles, a common arc of close relationships with parts totally black and parts totally white."[40] Such an approach does not attempt to negate gross inequities forged and repeatedly enforced along racial and economic lines. Rather, it aims to locate the space in which these circles overlap; a space for productive exchange and dialogue where commonality, rather than difference, is emphasised. As Gardner recognises, knowledge is not static, it is dynamically produced between subjects of often unequal power. As such, it should never be accepted as final or complete. Knowledge, after all, is made for cutting.

[1] Foucault, Michel. "Nietzche, Genealogy, History", Bouchard, D.F., ed., *Michel Foucault: Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 163 – 164.
[2] Ballantyne, Tony. "What Difference Does Colonialism Make?: Reassessing Print and Social Change in an Age of Global Imperialism", Alcorn Baron, Sabrina, Eric N. Lindquist, and Eleanor F. Shevlin, eds.*Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies After Elizabeth L. Eisenstein* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press), 343.
[3] Ibid., 344.
[4] Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), 16.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Andrews, Sharon Andrea. *Abolition and William Blake's Illustrations for Stedman's Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (unpublished MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1995), 11.
[7] Ibid., 27.
[8] Barringer, Tim. "Picturesque Prospects and the Labor of the Enslaved". Barringer, Tim, Gillian Forrester, and Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz, eds. *Art and Emancipation in Jamaica: Isaac Mendes Belisario and His Worlds* (New Haven and London: Yale Center for British Art in assoc. with Yale University Press,2007), 41.
[9] Andrews, 6.
[10] Ibid., 27.
[11] Ibid., 11.
[12] Refer to Andrews, 1995.
[13] Molineux, Catherine. "Hogarth's Fashionable Slaves" (*ELH*,Vol.72, No.2; Essays in Honor of Ronald Paulson, Summer, 2005), 496.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 495. See also Hogarth, William. *The Analysis of Beauty*, Paulson, Ronald, ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997).
[16] Molineux, 2005, 496.
[17] Rosenthal, Angela. "Raising Hair" (*Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1, Fall, 2004), 2.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Kwass, Michael. "Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France" (*The American Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 3, June, 2006), 634.
[20] Rosenthal, 6-7.
[21] Morgan, Gwenda and Peter Rushton. "Visible Bodies: Power, Subordination and Identity in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World" (*Journal of Social History*, Vol. 39, No. 1, Autumn, 2005), 40.
[22] Refer to Nelson, Charmaine. "Black Hair/ Her-Stories: Joscelyn Gardner's Inverted Portraits", Gardner, Joscelyn, *White Skin, Black Kin: "Speaking the Unspeakable"* (Barbados: Barbados Museum & Historical Society and COT Caribbean Graphics, 2004).
[23] Rosenthal, 2.
[24] West, Shearer. *Portraiture: Oxford History of Art* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 148.
[25] Quoted in West, 148.
[26] In West, 30 – 31.
[27] hooks, bell. "Facing Difference: The Black Female Body", *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 94-95.
[28] Refer to Robertson, James. ""The best poor man's country"? Thomas Thistlewood in Eighteenth Century Jamaica"(*Caribbean Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 4, December 2006), 74 – 84.
[29] In Robertson, 79.
[30] Schiebinger, Londa. *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass. And London, England: Harvard University Press, 2004), 20.
[31] Ibid., 6.
[32] Ibid., 7.
[33] Ibid., 98-99.
[34] Ibid., 20.
[35] Refer to Holden, Maria S. "The Development of Lithographic Cartography and the Conservation Treatment of a Large Varnished Map". (*The Book and Paper Group Annual*, The American Institute for Conservation, Vol. 3, 1984).
[36] Knigin, Michael and Murray Zimiles. *The Contemporary Lithographic Workshop Around the World* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1974), 40.
[37] Refer to Holden.
[38] Marchand, Trevor H.J. "Making Knowledge: Explorations of the Indissoluble Relation Between Minds, Bodies, and Environments" (*Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Special Issue, Making Knowledge, Marchand, Trevor S.J., Guest ed., 2010), S2.
[39] Refer to Gardner, Joscelyn. http://www.joscelyngardner.com
[40] Quoted in Robertson, 82.

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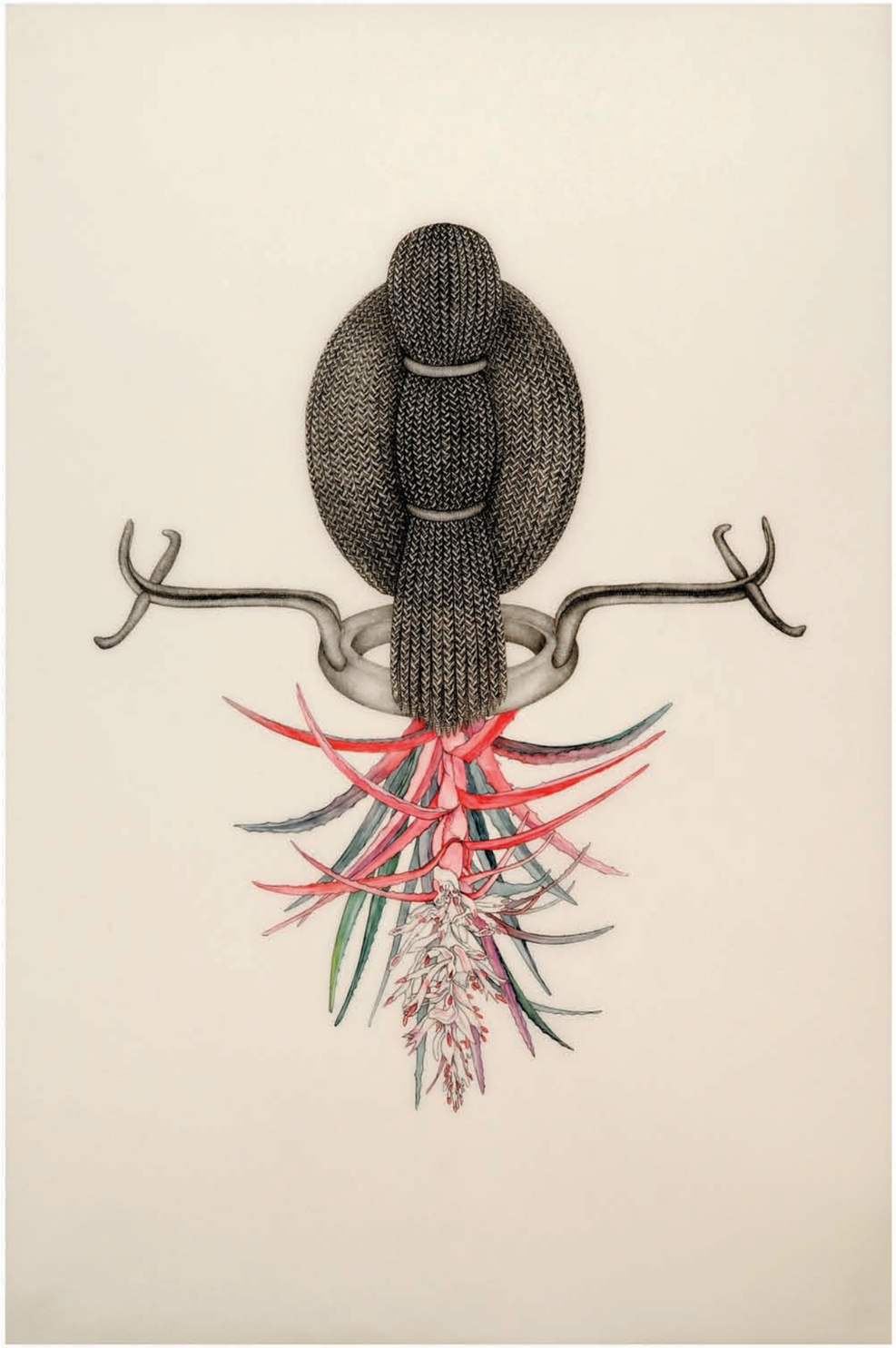
CREOLE PORTRAITS III

"bringing down the flowers"

Poinciana pulcherrima (Lilith) 2009
Hand-coloured lithograph on frosted mylar
50″ x 30″ (127cm x 76 cm)

Aristolochia bilobala (Nimine) 2010
Hand-coloured lithograph on frosted mylar
36″ x 24″ (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

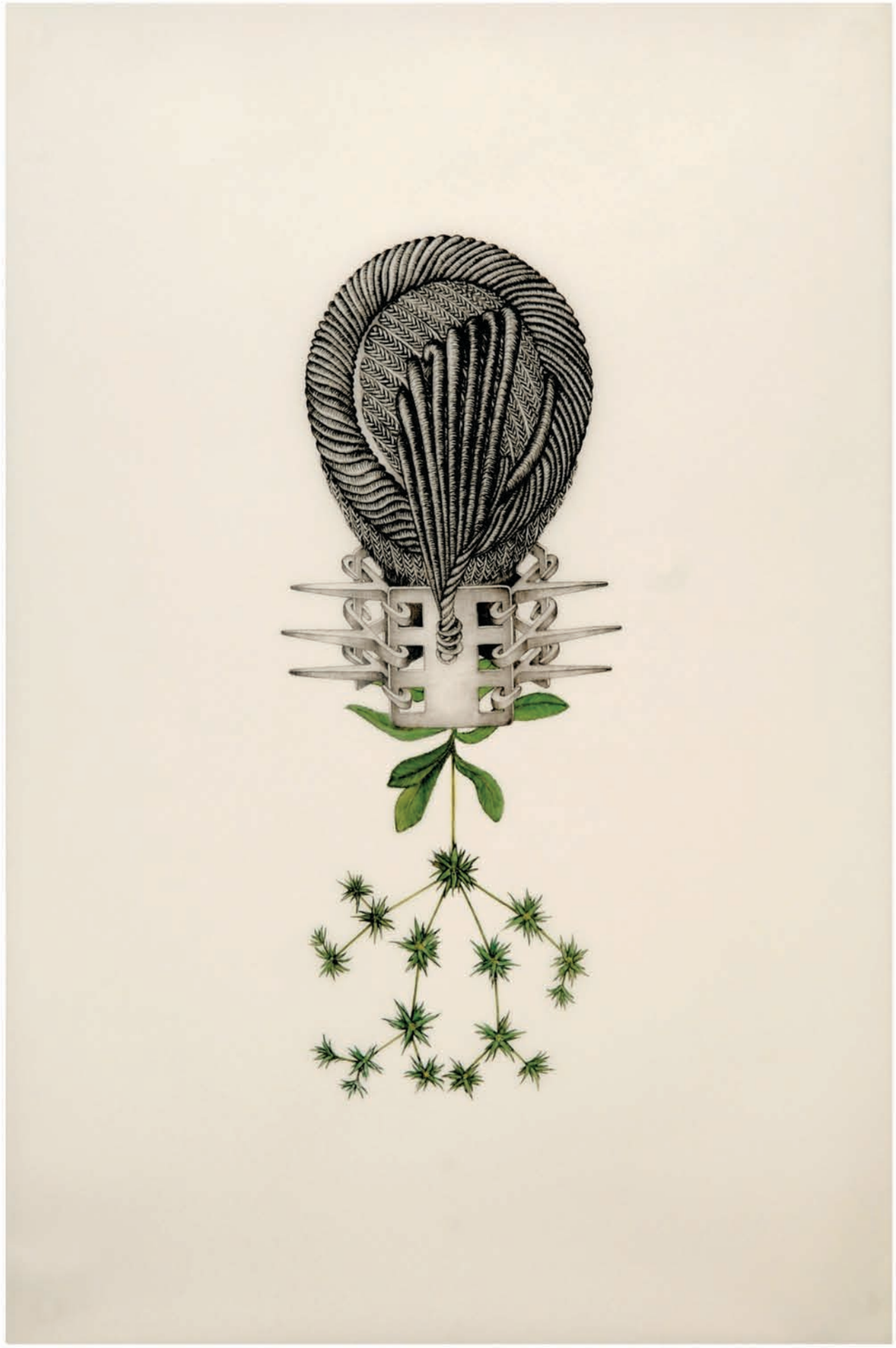


Bromeliad penguin (Abba) 2011
Hand-coloured lithograph on frosted mylar
36″ x 24″ (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Trichilia trifoliate (Quamina) 2011
Hand-coloured lithograph on frosted mylar
36″ x 24″ (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Veronica frutescens (Mazerine) 2009
Hand-coloured lithograph on frosted mylar
36″ x 24″ (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Mimosa pudica (Yabba) 2009
Hand-coloured lithograph on frosted mylar
36″ x 24″ (91.5 cm x 61 cm)



Eryngium foetidum (Prue) 2009
Hand-coloured lithograph on frosted mylar
36″ x 24″ (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Cinchona pubescens (Nago Hanah) 2011
Hand-coloured lithograph on frosted mylar
36″ x 24″ (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Hibiscus esculentus (Sibyl) 2009
Hand-coloured lithograph on frosted mylar
36″ x 24″ (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Manihot flabellifolia (Old Catalina) 2011
Hand-coloured lithograph on frosted mylar
36″ x 24″ (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Convolvulus jalapa (Yara) 2010
Hand-coloured lithograph on frosted mylar
36″ x 24″ (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Petiveria aliacea (Mirtilla) 2011
Hand-coloured lithograph on frosted mylar
36″ x 24″ (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Coffea Arabica (Clarissa) 2011
Hand-coloured lithograph on frosted mylar
36″ x 24″ (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Alison Donnell, PhD

Contesting Thistlewood: Slavery, Agency and the Limits of Representation

For many Jamaicans, neither the history of slavery – and in particular, the experiences of embodied terror – nor the history of resistance to slavery is part of everyday acts of memory and identity formation [1]

Joscelyn Gardner's *Creole Portraits II* (2007) and *Creole Portraits III* (2009–11) issue a provocative and carefully crafted contestation to the journals of the slave-owner and amateur botanist Thomas Thistlewood. In so doing, they bring several troubling but necessary questions into view. How do we represent the violence and violation of slavery without repeating its spectacular effect? How do we speak about subjects lost to history and yet not entirely unknown? How can we make visible the systems of representation that support an unequal distribution of authority, knowledge and power?

The writings of Thomas Thistlewood, from Lincolnshire, England, who settled in Westmoreland Parish, Jamaica in 1750, and worked as an overseer before buying his own land and slaves, have been the subject of much historical interest.[2] Thistlewood's diaries and papers from 1750 to 1786 amount to almost two million words and provide a remarkably full account, unrivalled in its detail, of the everyday occurrences that underpinned plantation slavery in the West Indies. His description of the climate and environment, as well as of labour, financial and social transactions, have generated scholarly work on various topics from planter networks and scientific knowledge in the colonies to hurricane cycles. More problematic, however, are interpretations of the violent and sexual human transactions that Thistlewood records with meticulous but astringent detail. Thistlewood kept an inventory of his sexual events in schoolboy Latin. Consistently recording person, place and time, when relevant he would also make mention of any payment or witnesses and occasionally reference sexual position and his sexual pleasure (or lack of it). Historical studies often give prominence to the legendary sexual licentiousness involved in Thistlewood's mastery, and most commentators on his journals are compelled to register both the disturbing content of this record of human encounters and exchanges and its formal leanness. The often cited quantitative analysis of Thistlewood's 3,852 acts of intercourse with 138 women extracts the raw data from his thin yet seemingly faithful record of sexual acts and points purposefully towards the transactional nature of such encounters.

Trevor Burnard regards the disinterested ledger of events as that which "seemed especially unusual about Thistlewood," describing how "he detailed in a matter-of-fact, scientifically dispassionate way his numerous sexual encounters with black women and described equally numerous examples of brutality towards his slave charges."[3] Yet for others, more interested in the acts than the man, Thistlewood's mode of representation, which operates to make the violation and suffering of the enslaved appear an almost mundane happening, is all too intelligible within wider regimes of colonial power. In *Exceptional Violence: Embodied Citizenship in Transnational Jamaica*, Deborah A. Thomas cites Thistlewood's register as evidence of the way in which sexual crimes formed part of an established and legalized repertoire of 'modes of terror': "one need only read the Jamaican planter Thomas Thistlewood's dry recounting of when, how, and with whom he had intercourse to realize the extent to which sexual violence was expected and worked into the fabric of ordinary occurrences."[4]

The excessive materiality and factual surplus of Thistlewood's diaries and inventories have inevitably given prominence to his deeds and perspectives and while the absence of record regarding the interior lives of those he enslaved is frequently invoked, the asymmetry of representation remains. For Burnard, "Thistlewood was on the wrong side of history – he was a brutal slave-owner, an occasional rapist and torturer, and a believer in the inherent inferiority of Africans."[5] In fact, of course, Thistlewood's diaries, and the many critical responses to these, have crafted and secured his historical subjectivity, whatever human wrongs it constituted itself upon. Those more accurately on the wrong

Missionary Position, 2008
Black ink, vinyl, red sealing wax on frosted mylar
38" x 70" x 2" (96.5 cm x 177 cm x 5 cm)

side of history are those whose subjectivities found no substantial or self-made record – his enslaved subjects. In particular, it is his incomplete and partial imprint of the enslaved women that is contested by Gardner's *Creole Portraits.*

While Thistlewood's journals make raced and gendered bodies seemingly available to knowledge, incorporating them within the colonial archive as signs of subjection, Gardner's portraits disrupt these acts of history and knowledge. Her artistic response marks a radical departure from the significant body of scholarship that has drawn on the Thistlewood journals to date. Creatively contesting his narratives' dispossession of Creole female subjects and yet aware of the problems of innocent recovery, her works style representations that retain the consciousness and effect of historical erasure. Through an oxymoronic aesthetic that assembles a highly crafted verisimilitude alongside the condition of invisibility and brings atrocity into the orbit of the aesthetic, these portraits force us to question what stakes are involved in bringing the lives of the enslaved and violated back into regimes of representation.

This is a dilemma that has persistently engaged and challenged both creative and critical discourses concerned with global justice and the question of human subjection. In her 1987 novel *Beloved*, the much-acclaimed African American writer Toni Morrison ponders the predicament of representing slavery without allowing its trauma to be accessed and neutralized simply as historical knowledge. Her technique, like Gardner's, is to allow multiple modes of representation to collide, revealing the contested nature of memory, history, knowledge and experience. This same question about the limits of representation informs one of the most influential essays of post-colonial studies, Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?," published a year later in 1988. Although, the theoretical intricacies and interlocutors of Spivak's argument are beyond the scope of this piece, the broad cautions that her essay issues remain relevant. The analytical force of Spivak's argument rests in her differentiation between "two senses of representation… representation as 'speaking for', as in politics, and representation as 're-presentation,' as in art or philosophy"[6] that are too often unconsciously conflated. Her work frames the recovery of lost voices as a dangerous and ethically suspect project because "The assumption and construction of a consciousness or subject sustains such work and will, in the long run, cohere with the work of imperialist subject-constitution, mingling epistemic violence with the advancement of learning and civilization. And the subaltern woman will be mute as ever."[7] In Gardner's work, however, the foregrounding of a stylized, decidedly illustrated and unknowable subject becomes a way to refuse the pitfalls of this streaming of the separate acts of representation that can lead to a naïve recovery. It also provides a means to stage the knowledge of her loss that lies beyond artistic or epistemic recuperation.

While the naming of each portrait endows these Creole subjects with individual presence, the fact that even these names may have been invented or imposed by the slave-owner, and thereby signify possession rather than self or familial identity, already frames the limits of representation in a culture of injury. In contrast to the tradition of eighteenth-century portraiture, and by implication Western art, with its reification and legitimation of significant individual lives, the compositional nature of the portraiture offered here clearly refuses any romantic or unproblematic recovery of these female subjects, rather compelling the viewer to confront the disordered and disturbing remnants through which their lives may be glimpsed. Given that portraits are commonly known to us as works of art that represent the likeness and features of a human subject, even Gardner's title for this work is a provocation. While it is not an uncommon strategy for portraits to reference inanimate objects that suggest the occupation or character of their human subjects, Gardner's compositional style repudiates the very possibility of recovering full human likeness by summoning an intricate and turbulent assemblage of artifice through which the enslaved body is indexed and implied but never fully represented.

The exquisitely precise drawing of the braided hair invokes a palimpsest of eighteenth-century portraiture in which the obsessions with appearance, control, beauty and social status, as expressed through excessively ornate wigs and prostheses, are written over by the body of the enslaved woman who looks away to refuse the gaze of imperial history. Likewise, the implements of torture issue a reminder of the visual dimension of power and the way in which the spectacle of punishment was itself a technology of regulation. Through a repertoire of violence that was highly visible, both in the forced wearing of shackles, collars and bridles and in public floggings, decapitations and acts of dismemberment, slave-owners and overseers asserted their power on the basis of visual warning. Bodies were disciplined in order to prevent, rather than directly to punish, insurrection.

Yet if the harrowing assemblage of these stylised heads and torture implements require us to look again at the recognisable visual vocabulary that we attach to slavery, the delicate, almost ornamental botanical drawings that entwine themselves around the implements of torture and discipline are more arresting and dissonant still. Gardner's botanical imagery in each portrait may ostensibly be seen to reference the 'disciplinary' interest in plants as another tool of empire. This is not insignificant given that Thistlewood's journals provide abundant evidence of his dedication to horticulture, botany and meteorology. We know that by 1775 he had replanted "his half of the ruinate gardens and provisions grounds of Paradise Pen with over three hundred different species both "native' and exotic: 'mangoes, Bengal peaches, the local 'John Joes, a Species of Mushroom so called' […] 'Rose-apple, lately introduced from East India'; […] and 'Asparagus', 'Purple and White broccoli', and 'Ash', 'Elm' and four varieties of 'Apples' from England." In the negro provision ground there were "plantains (horse & maiden), bananas, maize [...], guinea corn, scratch toyer, coco roots, cassava, bitter & sweet, pindas, and sugar cane &c. &c."[8]

Yet the botanical specimens so superbly etched into these portraits do not represent Thistlewood's efforts at making his plantation more productive. Indeed, rather than giving visual recognition to Thistlewood's considerable and undisputed botanical interest and knowledge and thereby consolidating an image of his mastery over the ecology of the plantation, in which the successful cultivation of cash crops took precedence over the care for human life, these works signify the points of disruption to his knowledge and power. Each plant illustrated in the series has the effect of inducing abortion, a medicinal knowledge that has been documented, although not fully accounted for, among enslaved women.[9] By smuggling this culturally embedded knowledge into view, these portraits imply the unspoken rebellion of the enslaved woman to her always already object position within the epistemologies of art, science and colonial governance.

From his extensive historical research, Burnard argues that "In mid-eighteenth-century Jamaica, the vast asymmetry of power, especially physical power, that existed between slaves and masters and the regular exercise of violent power on slaves who transgressed made slave agency very difficult."[10] While these portraits acknowledge, in the stark materiality of the iron implements of discipline and torture, the constraints placed upon the bodily agency of the enslaved, they do not dismiss it. While many instances of miscarriage were due to malnutrition, poor maternal care and overwork, the representation of elected abortion, suggested through the framing of these specimens within the portrait frame, becomes a site at which to locate such agency. When the Scottish professor of philosophy, Adam Ferguson, proclaimed in 1769 that "No one is born a slave," he advocated an idea of inherent human rights from which abolition drew its power. Yet, while the ethical force of this pronouncement may hold, it did not correspond with historical realities and the children of enslaved women were born "a slave." We simply cannot know how many women used their medicinal knowledge to defy the imperatives of the plantation in this way, for as Karla Holloway reminds us, "Slavery itself defies traditional historiography. The victim's own chronicles of these events were systematically submerged, ignored, mistrusted, or superceded by 'histories' of the era."[11]

Acknowledging this impossibility of knowing, we may usefully read the *Creole Portraits* as enacting a reverse and consciously obtuse *ekphrasis*. The textual silence of the enslaved women named in Thistlewood's journals is illustrated by a symbolic repertoire of colliding and entangled artistic gestures that refuse to speak in the place of loss but rather mark the limits of their representational power. By representing the entangled grammars of art, botany, torture, spectacle and slavery, Gardner rehearses and undoes the learned habits and embedded patterns of colonial modes of representation, exposing their histories and biases to inspection and scrutiny. The violence necessary to enslave these women cannot be forgotten or erased; neither does it exist only outside the frame. By making the privilege and violence associated with acts of representation – both historical and creative – a subject of her work, Gardner may be seen to enact Spivak's call for the "careful project of un-learning our privilege as our loss."[12]

[1] Thomas, Deborah A. *Exceptional Violence: Embodied Citizenship in Transnational Jamaica* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011), 112.
[2] Thistlewood, Thomas. The Jamaican Journal was kept annually between 1748 and 1786. It was archived in the Lincolnshire County Archives, Lincoln, but has recently been acquired by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University.
[3] Burnard, Trevor. Review of Chenoweth, Michael, *The Eighteenth-Century Climate of Jamaica Derived from the Journals of Thomas Thistlewood, 1750-1786*. H-Environment, H-Net Reviews. August, 2005. URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=10808
[4] Hall, Douglas. *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750- 1786*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1989), as quoted in Thomas,107.
[5] Burnard, Trevor, Mastery. *Tyranny and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his slaves in the Anglo-Jamaica world* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 7.
[6] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 275.
[7] Ibid., 295.
[8] Hall, Douglas. as quoted in Tiffin, Helen, "'Replanted in this Arboreal Place:' Gardens and Flowers in Contemporary Caribbean Writing". Heinz Antor and Klaus Stierstorfer. eds. *English Literatures in International Contexts* (Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 2000), 150.
[9] Schiebinger, Londa. *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 11.
[10] Burnard, 212.
[11] Holloway, Karla. "Beloved: A Spiritual". *Andrews and McKay in Toni Morrison's Beloved: A Casebook* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), 68.
[12] Spivak, 287.

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Janice Cheddie, PhD

Ritual and Reciprocity within the work of Joscelyn Gardner

One of the many threads weaving through Joscelyn Gardner's visual practice is the use of ritual and reciprocity. This limited intervention into Gardner's work focuses on how these elements emerge within the works *Creole Portraits III* (2009-2011) and *"behind closed doors..."* (2009-2010). In these works, the artist has used images of the flora of the Caribbean as invitational devices by which to engage the viewer whilst encouraging them to ponder upon her artistic concerns. Her use of the visual everyday beauty and pleasure of the Caribbean has a double purpose. It directly comments upon the contemporary tourist industry's imagining of the Caribbean as a rich person's paradise of unhindered visual and sensual pleasures, whilst seeking to insert into this aesthetic experience a moment of reflection on the history of these 'infinite islands.'[1]

Utilising the work of Elaine Scarry, specifically *On Beauty and Being Just* (1999), I am seeking to explore Gardner's employment of visual pleasure, ritual and reciprocity. Scarry's text examines the historical banishing of beauty from Euro-American aesthetic debates. In her discussion of the evolution of the concept of beauty in the arts and humanities, Scarry alerts us to the philosopher Kant's eighteenth-century subdivision of the aesthetic realm into gendered divisions of beauty (female) and the sublime (male).[2] This subdivision of the aesthetic realm and the more recent Anti Aesthetic[3] tendency, Scarry claims, banished 'beauty from the humanities' based on the accusation that beauty damaged our ability to attend to the problems of injustice.[4]

Scarry argues for a role for beauty in art by asserting a relationship between beauty and concepts of justice. She posits that our experience of beauty and the concept of justice are experienced through the reciprocal nature of beauty.[5] This relationship consists of the shared relationships between the object, the perceiver and the creative act, prompted by being in the presence of what is beautiful, which engenders in the viewer an urge to protect, manifested through the mimetic qualities of beauty. Scarry's dialogue with the manifestations of justice within the experience of beauty allows us to examine how Gardner's art explores the question 'Can art address the unsayable, the unrepresentable?' In Gardner's case, the unspeakable horror is the horror of transatlantic African enslavement and the plantation system.

This question comes to the fore in *Creole Portraits* through the tension that exists between the overt, stated intention of the work and the underlying visual pleasure one encounters when viewing these lithographs. Gardner's creative practice renders the instruments of torture and death used within the plantation systems of the Caribbean upon the body of the enslaved into fragile, exquisite objects for aesthetic contemplation, a tension that makes the work both urgent and engaging.

Gardner's research enunciates the enslaved woman documented within the narratives of the slave-owner, as a named physical presence, thus allowing her to enter into cultural and historical memory. In a dialogue with Gardner's process of creative inscription, evident in her printmaking techniques, Scarry's text provides us with a means to enter into meditation on the relationship between beauty and justice. Gardner's dialogue with the nature of the object of beauty within contemporary practice takes place on a number of levels: firstly, through the material and production processes of her printmaking techniques; and secondly, through the concept of reciprocity articulated within her work. Thus, her work can be located within recently re-emerged critical discussions on the role of beauty in contemporary visual practices.[6]

Braiding, Mark-making, Reciprocity and the Creative Act

In the production of the *Creole Portraits* series, Gardner identifies the importance of hair and braiding in the exploration of colonial history.

> Simultaneously attractive and repugnant, these ambiguous portrait heads allude to the performance of identity that was central to eighteenth-century portraiture. Here the head becomes a field of inscription on which narratives of power (or emasculation) can be read. The symbolism of the wig, as visible index of (male) authority and status in colonial portraiture, is subverted through its association with the implements of torture commonly used to control and punish slave bodies on the colonial Caribbean plantation. The strict regulation of the hair into Afrocentric styles ironically conflates eighteenth-century European fixations on hair / wigs (worn by men) as signifying social order, with the (female) Creole's ability to empower herself by expressing her (non-European) post-colonial cultural identity through hair design. The fact that several of these implements also recall a history of subjugation of the female body in seventeenth-century Britain where the bridle / branks (a metal head cage with a built-in gag) was used to publicly humiliate women who "talked too much", further underscores their importance as visual symbols of both patriarchal and colonial dominance.[7]

Within the materiality and production of the series *Creole Portraits* emerges the citation of a number of social and cultural formations. It is within the material processes of production that we witness Gardner crafting and refining the vocabulary of the Caribbean visual imaginary, in the words of Derek Walcott,"phrase by phrase."[8] Gardner's mark-making materialises the physical intertwining of white and black Creole subjects, an issue Gardner has previously referenced in her intervention/installation *White Skin, Black Kin: Speaking the Unspeakable* (Barbados Museum, 2004) – an installation that explores the kinship relationships within plantation households.

Central to Gardner's printmaking process in *Creole Portraits* is the referencing of black Creole women's hair braiding techniques.

> The ritualistic approach to the production of my images (the process of slowly engraving on the stone, drawing into the image with litho crayons, processing it, and transferring it to the skin-like mylar surface) echoes the careful, laborious, and sisterly act of braiding hair.[9]

The inscription – engraving, drawing, transferring – processes employed within Gardner's work are a physical and discursive rewriting of the historical, kinship and cultural entanglements between black and white Creole subjects. Thus, Gardner challenges the status of the material object as object for visual and aesthetic consumption. Gardner's 'ritualistic' procedures, manifested within her technique, are a series of artistic and material interventions into the status and production of the object.

In Gardner's working *modus operandi*, we can observe a number of transformations. Firstly, Gardner, the white Creole woman, performs or re-inscribes the intricate braiding practices of the black Creole woman, and the transmission of knowledge between women. Secondly, through these performative gestures, Gardner produces an act of self-creation of herself as white Creole woman artist outside the confines of patriarchal colonial production. Lastly, this act of self-creation makes visible, both the white Creole woman artist, and the image of the black Creole woman: figures that have been marginalised within the narratives of colonial history. Thus, the printmaking techniques and use of ritual employed within the material production of the work can be read as part of the artist's process of self-making.

Through this creative production process Gardner in *Creole Portraits* transforms the African hairstyle, not into an exotic image, but into an image of aesthetic pleasure and contemplation. Disrupting the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy present in the history of European portraiture, Gardner opens a breach to consider the context in which braiding expressed itself and flourished. Furthermore, by placing the woman's head within the milieu of the torture implement, Gardner disrupts the nature/culture dualism. In Gardner's lithographs, the plants and the women are bought from the place of nature into the scene of culture. This placing has a double register – the island of Barbados prior to the development of the plantation system was a densely forested landscape. The flat, manicured landscape we witness today is as a result of the impact of enslavement, colonialism and increasing global tourism. Thus, the beauty present in the island has, for 500 years, been marked by the physical transformations of the landscape, which, like many islands throughout the globe, are increasingly under threat. Both the woman and the plant present within the portraits therefore reflect the transmigrations concealed within the landscape.

The reciprocal process of braiding and oral knowledge is made present when Gardner brings into being the understanding that this act of intricate braiding is a social and female-centred act that cannot be completed by an individual. Gardner turns this reciprocal relationship between Caribbean women into part of her creative process and the terrain for aesthetic investigation.

Drawing upon Scarry's insistence on the reciprocal acts that are present within the experience of beauty, Gardner's production process leads us to an examination of reciprocity present within her work. Through this reciprocity, Gardner invests her work with an ethical relationship between the maker, the viewer and the object. Taking an everyday production of beauty – the grooming and styling of African hair, something that Gardner would have witnessed at close hand throughout her childhood and adult life spent in Barbados. This ethical relationship is present within her process of inscribing new historical narratives into the iconography of slavery. Gardner's workings on the development of a visual vocabulary are articulated through subtle investigations into how the Caribbean plantation system impacted all women. Her stated desire is to:

> […] acknowledge the tangled historical relationship between black and white women in the post-colonial English-speaking Caribbean by recognizing that under patriarchy and colonialism the lives of all Caribbean women have been shaped by "mastership".[10]

Through her act of creation, Gardner seeks to engage with the urgent questions concerning the relationship between representation, in the form of figurative representation, and the inhumanity of enslavement. The fragile and delicate beauty of the *Creole Portraits*, which both invite and repel the gaze, enters the viewer in a moment of contemplation on the at times impossible beauty of the Caribbean that has concealed within its depths unspeakable scenes of horror and suffering. Gardner's strategy of dual invitation/discomfort evokes theorist's Roland Barthes's concept of punctum[11] – a surprise element that catches the viewer unaware – whilst leading them to a new levels of understanding and possibility within the visual image.

Gardner's process of mark-making, physically transferring and referencing the African hair designs whilst also inserting herself into the process through the act of creative production as a means in which to bring the enslaved African woman into visibility, speaks to Scarry's assertion of the distributive nature of beauty:

> Through its beauty, the world continually recommits us to a rigorous standard of perceptual care: if we do not search it out, it comes and finds us.[12]

Blood Rites – Ritual and Blood Signifiers

This thread of 'ritual' also forms one of the terrains of exploration within Gardner's installation *"behind closed doors..."* through her exploration of the use of the Peacock flower (Poinciana pulcherrima). The plant is also known as the "Pride of Barbados" the island's national flower, and appears on the Barbados coat of arms. The flower was chosen to visually reflect the beauty and qualities of the Barbadian landscape and its people. Gardner's installation highlights the clandestine use of this flower by enslaved women for its abortion inducing properties. Thus, Gardner comments on the varying forms of ritual associated with the plant – a common sight within Barbados: firstly, as a construction of national post-independence pride and ritual enacted within the coat of arms, often articulated within a patriarchal framework that seeks to confine women to a subservient role; and secondly, on the hidden history of this plant within the rituals of exchange and solidarity amongst enslaved women, still largely invisible from the physical landscape and sites of memory on the island.

Through the physical flora, Gardner therefore invites us to meditate on the secret rituals and acts of reciprocity between enslaved women who conveyed via oral transmission the means to identify the plant and knowledge of how to use the Peacock flower's medicinal properties. In the transatlantic slave trade, enslaved women were prized as producers and reproducers of labour – 'breeders'. By actively choosing to seek out and transmit the knowledge of abortion-inducing plants the enslaved women chose a path that refutes her role as 'breeder'.

The pride of Barbados provides a gap between that which is visible and that which is hidden and allows Gardner to draw the viewer into a dialogue with the reciprocal tradition of women, choosing to share knowledge and empower each other. Gardner's highlighting of shared female traditions echoes the braiding customs that inform the mark-making of *Creole Portraits*.

The installation also employs braided hair and red cloth as hanging decorations to surround the circular projection

screen, which gradually fills with blood. The installation supplements its material processes by introducing via the installation's soundtrack a multiplicity of eighteenth-century black and white Creole women's voices – both real and imagined. From above, the installation gives an appearance of a large white eye or singular cell surrounded by black and red fluid, drawing the viewer into the projection space to think about the nature of life itself through the metaphor of blood.

The author bell hooks reminds us in her essay "The Radiance of Red: Blood Works," that "[m]en usurped the power of blood and claimed it as masculine. Women's blood became a sign of death and danger."[13] hooks asserts that the reclaiming of the power of blood has emerged within feminism as a 'central metaphor' aimed at retrieving the full humanity of women lives.

"behind closed doors..." explores the symbolic significance of blood as a threshold between the borders of life and death, enslavement and death, pure and impure, cleansing and defiling. By making visible the menstrual and fetal blood, Gardner explores a strong taboo concerning the nature and role of female enslaved resistance. The female enslaved have often been re-imagined within contemporary literature as the homemaker, runaway, organiser and transmitter of cultural traditions. The self-induced act of abortion refutes this notion of self-less sacrifice on behalf of the black race and puts forward the image of the enslaved women seeking to preserve a notion of selfless-determination and autonomy.

Focusing on ritual, Gardner's installation also reminds us that the appearance of menstrual blood is also a liminal space – the crossing of the border between childhood and adulthood. For young enslaved women, its appearance also marked the entrance into the sexual economy of the plantation. Gardner's installation reclaims the female blood not as symbol of taboo but as a signifier of life, death, and kinship ties. The importance of blood within the colonial order can be witnessed in the multitude of names in the New World for mixtures between black and white, white and Native American et cetera, and the importance of the infamous 'one drop' rule in the Southern states of the United States.[14] The video suggests the ways that blood preserved the enslaved population, but also ensured racial hierarchy by maintaining the notion of 'pure' white family lineages. Thus within the Colonial regime, 'blood' emerged as a commodity to be valued and exchanged for the black enslaved but also for upper-class white colonial women through the marriage market.[15]

Gardner's use of the Caribbean's fragile and beautiful flora opens a dialogue with Scarry's notions of justice because it instills within us an understanding of the concept and the experience of beauty as an equitable value which, Scarry asserts, encourages in the viewer a shared sense of responsibility to protect the object. Beauty's existence in the world encourages in us a heightened attention to beauty, makes us more alert to its wonders and possibilities and therefore promotes a custodianship. Gardner's production and reproduction of seemingly delicate objects provides a lacuna to contemplate the role of beauty. In bringing forth a new syntax of visual pleasure and reciprocity, it invites us to meditate on beauty's role in the world, crafted out of messy and braided histories.

1 See Benitez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Post Modern Perspective* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1992); and the exhibition catalogue for Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art, Brooklyn Museum 2007. Mosako, Tumelo, *"Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art"*, in Mosako, Tumelo, ed. Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art (Brooklyn, NY: Brooklyn Museum in Association with Phillip Wilson Publishing, 2007).

2 In the newly subdivided aesthetic realm, the sublime is male and the beautiful is female. The sublime is English, Spanish and German; the beautiful is French and Italian. See Scarry, Elaine, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1999), 83.

3 Foster, Hal. ed., *Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post Modern Culture* (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1983).

4 Scarry op. cit, 57.

5 Scarry op. cit., 90.

6 For further discussion of the 'Return to Beauty' in critical theoretical discussions see Costello, Diarmuid, and Dominic Willsdon, eds. "Introduction", *The Life and Death of Images: Ethics and Aesthetics* (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 7- 36.

7 Gardner, Joscelyn."Subverting Colonial Portraiture: a Memorial to the Women of Egypt Estate" in *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism, No. 26* (New York: Indiana U P, 2008), 112 -118.

8 Walcott, Derek. *The Antilles: fragments of epic memory: the Nobel lecture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), 27.

9 Gardner (2008), op. cit.

10 Gardner (2008), op. cit. These processes of mastership and the figure of the white Creole woman are most famously associated with Jean Rhys' powerful novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), reprinted (Harmondsworth: Penguin Modern Classics, 1992).

11 Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).

12 Scarry op.cit, 81.

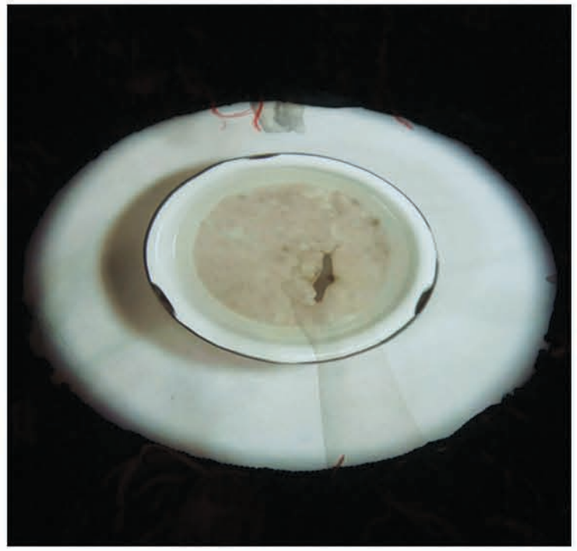
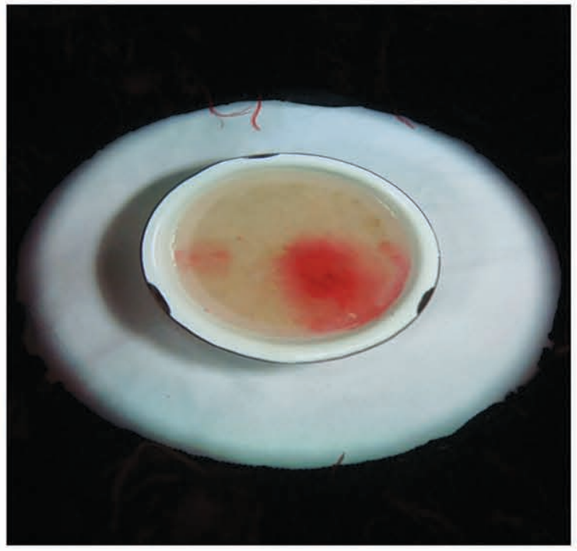
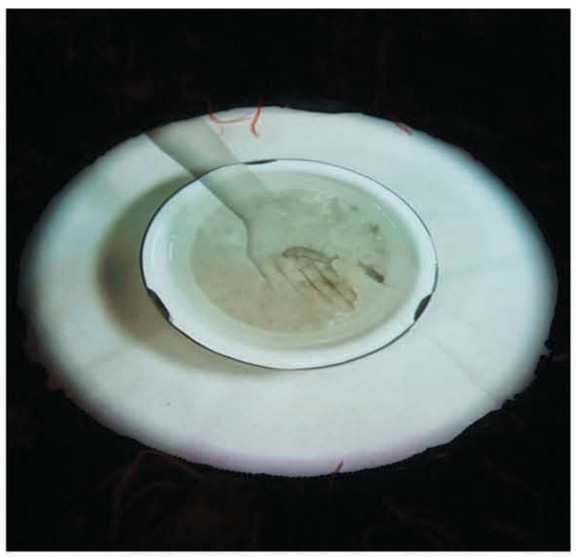
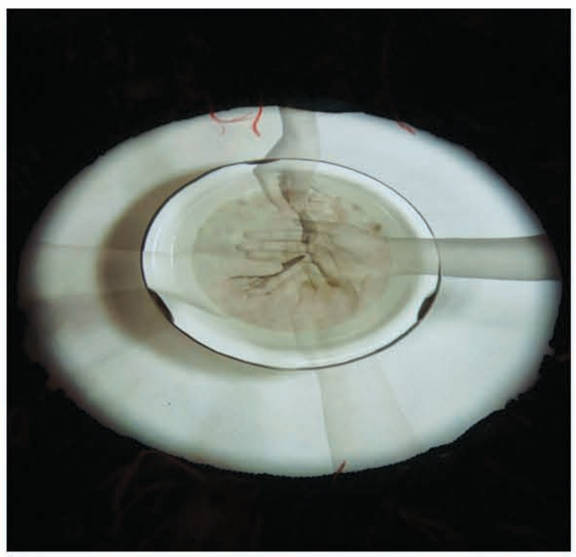
13 hooks, bell."The Radiance of Red: Blood Works", in *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 213.

14 The 'one drop rule' was a colloquial name for a set of rules in the USA that varied in their interpretation from state to state. The basis of the rules was that if an individual had one black ancestor - however distant - they would be considered within the state's legal frameworks as a 'black' subject regardless of their physical appearance, and thus subject to the same laws and sanctions that stopped black individuals from entering into full citizenship. This law was used to stop individuals with black ancestry 'passing for white'. This 'one drop rule' was recently evoked by the biracial US actress, Halle Berry in a custody lawsuit. During the course of the lawsuit it was stated that Ms. Berry's estranged white husband stated that their child was white, and Berry stated that she identified the child, aged 2 years old at the time, as black. See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/08/halle-berry-daughter-nahla-is-black-from-one-drop-rule_n_820071.html

15 Barbados had a working-class white population during enslavement, colonialism and into independence that were known locally as the 'red-legs'. This population remains on the island although very diminished in terms of visible numbers. This group was made up of the descendants of 50,000 Irish men and women who were sold into enslavement between 1652 and 1659.

Janice Cheddie is a researcher, writer and itinerant academic. Her work focuses on contemporary visual culture, difference, cultural democracy and cultural policy. She is a Visiting Research and Scholarship Lecturer at the Greenwich Business School, University of Greenwich and Research Affiliate at Institute of Converging Arts and Sciences (ICAS), University of Greenwich, (2010-). Her work has appeared in *Third Text*; *Curator: The Museum Journal*; *Journal of Visual Culture, Fashion Theory*; *Make: Magazine of Women's Art*; *Parallax*; http://independent.academia.edu/JaniceCheddie.



"behind closed doors…", 2009-10
Multimedia installation with video projection (4:05),
5-channel sound, fabric, feathers, synthetic hair, mahogany table
Dimensions variable

Biography

Joscelyn Gardner is a Caribbean/Canadian visual artist working primarily with printmaking and site-specific multimedia installation (video/sound). Her contemporary practice probes colonial material culture found in Caribbean archives in order to explore her (white) Creole identity from a postcolonial feminist perspective. Born in Barbados to a family that has resided on the island since the 17th century, she spent her early childhood in West Africa, South America, and the Caribbean, later receiving her secondary education at Queen's College in Barbados (1980 Barbados Scholar). She holds a B.F.A. (Printmaking) and a B.A. (Film) from Queen's University, Canada, and an M.F.A. from the University of Western Ontario. Since 2000, Gardner has been living in Canada where she teaches in the School of Contemporary Media at Fanshawe College, in London, Ontario. Her work has been exhibited in solo exhibitions in the USA, Canada, Barbados, Trinidad, Martinique, and Spain, and at several international exhibitions, including the Sao Paulo Biennials and printmaking biennials across Europe and Latin America. Her lithographs were recently awarded the Grand Prize at the 7th International Contemporary Printmaking Biennial in Trois-Rivières, Quebec. Recent group exhibitions have included XXXI Bienal Pontevedra – Utropicos, Spain; Global Caraibes which traveled from Art Basel Miami to museums in France and Puerto Rico; Infinite Island at the Brooklyn Museum, New York; International Print Center New York; Fondation Clement, Martinique; National Art Gallery, Barbados; Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT; TEOR/éTica, Costa Rica; Southwestern Academy of Fine Arts Museum, Chongqing, China; and Harrington Street Art Center, Kolkata, India. She currently works as an artist in Canada and the Caribbean. Her work can be viewed at www.joscelyngardner.com.

List of Exhibited Works

Gallery A (Coppa Gallery):
CREOLE PORTRAITS III: "bringing down the flowers"

Aristolochia bilobala (Nimine) 2010
Hand-coloured stone lithograph on frosted mylar
36" x 24" (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Bromeliad penguin (Abba) 2011
Hand-coloured stone lithograph on frosted mylar
36" x 24" (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Trichilia trifoliate (Quamina) 2011
Hand-coloured stone lithograph on frosted mylar
36" x 24" (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Veronica frutescens (Mazerine) 2009
Hand-coloured stone lithograph on frosted mylar
36" x 24" (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Mimosa pudica (Yabba) 2009
Hand-coloured stone lithograph on frosted mylar
36" x 24" (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Eryngium foetidum (Prue) 2009
Hand-coloured stone lithograph on frosted mylar
36" x 24" (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Cinchona pubescens (Nago Hanah) 2011
Hand-coloured stone lithograph on frosted mylar
36" x 24" (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Hibiscus esculentus (Sibyl) 2009
Hand-coloured stone lithograph on frosted mylar
36" x 24" (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Manihot flabellifolia (Old Catalina) 2011
Hand-coloured stone lithograph on frosted mylar
36" x 24" (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Convolvulus jalapa (Yara) 2010
Hand-coloured stone lithograph on frosted mylar
36" x 24" (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Petiveria aliacea (Mirtilla) 2011
Hand-coloured stone lithograph on frosted mylar
36" x 24" (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Coffea arabica (Clarissa) 2011
Hand-coloured stone lithograph on frosted mylar
36" x 24" (91.5 cm x 61 cm)

Poinciana pulcherrima (Lilith) 2009
Hand-coloured stone lithograph on frosted mylar
50" x 30" (127 cm x 76 cm)

Gallery B:

"behind closed doors…", 2009-10
Multimedia installation with video projection (4:05),
5-channel sound, fabric, feathers, synthetic hair, mahogany table
Dimensions variable

Video direction and production: Joscelyn Gardner
Camera, lighting, and video editing: Adam Alexander
Sound: Toby Armstrong
Voice actors: Laura Lin Hutchinson; Cathy Allman
Actors: Tafidzwa Maposa; Danielle Smith
Script: Joscelyn Gardner; text for "Blood Red" and "Lilith" quoted in part
from Marlon James's novel *The Book of Night Women* (2009)

Gallery C:

Missionary Position, 2008
Black ink, vinyl, red sealing wax on frosted mylar
38" x 70" x 2" (96.5 cm x 177 cm x 5 cm)

Plantation Poker: The Merkin Stories, 2004
Stone lithographs and vinyl on frosted mylar
Wall installation 3' 2" x 17' (16 panels at 18" x 18" each; 9 panels at 18" x 6" each)
96.5 cm x 518 cm (16 panels at 45.5 cm x 45.5 cm each; 9 panels at 45.5 cm x 15 cm each)

Credits

Joscelyn Gardner: Bleeding & Breeding

Exhibition Curator: Olexander Wlasenko

Contributors: Janice Cheddie, Alison Donnell, Jennifer Law, Olexander Wlasenko
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