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### ***New Virtual Exhibition Explores the Impact of the Pandemic Through the Eyes of Caribbean Artists***

The COVID pandemic has created an unprecedented moment within our time and its impact has been felt throughout the world. Knowing that artwork can sometimes convey what words cannot, the Museums Association of the Caribbean (MAC) felt that a project allowing regional artists to express this moment through their creativity was essential.

As such, in October 2020, a “MAC Collecting COVID Committee” was formed, which launched a Call For Works in five of our regional languages, toward the creation of an exhibition.

The result is ‘COVID: Collecting Our Voices in the Caribbean and its Diaspora’, which will launch on Friday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021—in a virtual venue accessible via MAC’s website—and run for eight months through November 26<sup>th</sup> 2021. The new virtual art

show will feature work by artists from the English, French, Spanish and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, with representation from ten countries: The Bahamas, Cayman Islands, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Puerto Rico and Suriname. Responding to the pandemic and its impact on the creative sector, the project brings together voices from across the region to illuminate through creative expression how people in the Caribbean and its Diaspora are living and moving through this crisis.

Following a competitive juried review process, 27 artists from four linguistic regions of the Caribbean are featured in the exhibition: Elie Babel, Céline Bernabe, Errol Ross Brewster, Dede Brown, May Clemente, Francks Deceus, Megan Ehman, Eugene Elira, Kenneth Flijders, Teresa Grimes, David Gumbs, Shaundell Horton, Sri Irodikromo, Jemimah Johnson, Miguel Keerveld, Rinaldo Klas, Erick Ledesma, John Li A Foe, Bruno Métura, Kurt Nahar, Iria Prieto, Sunil Puljhun, Dhiradj Ramsamoedj, Ruddy Marc Roquelaure, Simon Tatum, Rene Tosari, and Wilgo Vijfhoven. The diverse range of artworks include painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, digital artwork, video and sound installations, and written word.

The project is part of MAC's wider response to the pandemic and its efforts to support the needs of the Caribbean museum sector during this unprecedented time. In April 2020, a MAC survey gauged the needs of Caribbean museums and the subsequently formed MAC COVID-19 Response Committee then developed a program that would address these needs, including short-term strategies (including advocacy, rephased reopening planning, and health and safety in the workplace workshops) and longer-term digital strategies for continued audience engagement and resources that would assist museum and cultural workers in the case of future events of this nature.

*Collecting Our Voices in the Caribbean and its Diaspora* is the final piece of the three-part program of workshops, online resources, and panel discussions, that were provided in three languages. All webinars, projects and resources can be viewed on MAC's newly redeveloped website, where the exhibition will reside in its virtual venue. The aim is for the show to also be projected as a digital experience at participating museums and public spaces across the Caribbean and South Florida over the course of the next few months, allowing persons with less digital access the possibility to experience it.

The project is made possible with support from the Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator, the National Art Gallery of the Bahamas (NAGB), the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands, and Memorial ACTe.

The core MAC Collecting Covid Committee is composed of artists, curators, and museum professionals including: Amanda Coulson, Tasha Dougé, Rosie Gordon Wallace, and Koren Martin, with great support from colleagues Kara Bledsoe, John Cox, Kassie Edwards, Joanne Hippolyte, Romel Shearer, and Natalie Urquhart.

Caption: *COVID: Collecting Our Voices in the Caribbean Diaspora*, artwork by John Cox (Bahamas)

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