

# Modern Jamaican Art

**David Boxer**  
**Veerle Poupeye**

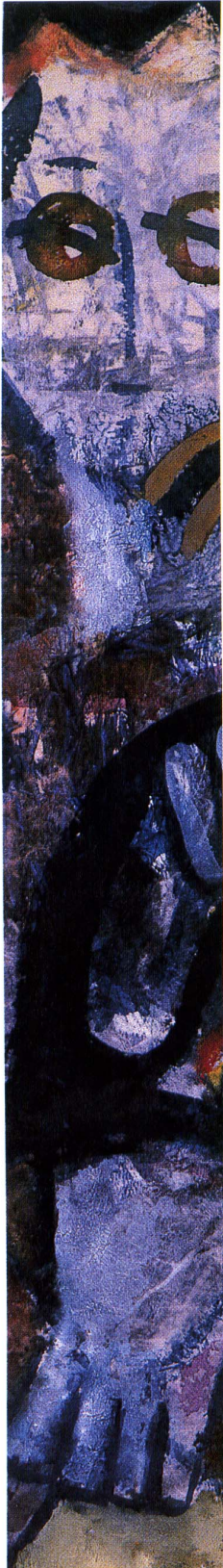


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Title Page Plate: John Dunkley, *Jerboa*, 1939. Mixed media on plywood, 71 x 35.5cm  
National Gallery of Jamaica

Although it may be too early to make such assessments, explorations of personal identity seem to have replaced the more direct socio-political concerns of earlier decades as the primary concern of Jamaican artists of the nineties. Anna Henriques' work, for instance, is in essence an exploration of her personal history and her Jewish-Portuguese Jamaican heritage, which she has described as a 'ritual of remembrance'.<sup>9</sup> Part of this 'ritual' is her identification with the aboriginal Taino population. Many of her works include references to Taino art combined with Judaic and Christian symbols. While her paintings use a more personal idiom, her intricate assemblages and installations often remind of David Boxer's boxes and cabinets of the mid-eighties, a good illustration of his influence on the younger generation.

Anna Henriques started exhibiting in Jamaica in the late eighties but has lived outside the country for most of the time since then, most recently in Japan. Conversely, several younger artists have recently returned after living abroad for extended periods, a reflection of the increased mobility of Jamaican artists. Among these are Nicholas Morris, Charles Campbell and Roberta Stoddart, three of the most noted young painters of the nineties. Nicholas Morris uses fragmentation, symbolic substitution, obliteration and repetition to encode text and image in paintings that revolve around the issues of personal identity and communication. The almost ethereal minimalism of his paintings is unusual in Jamaican art with its persistent emphasis on the material.

This shift towards the conceptual can also be seen in the work of Charles Campbell, who frequently juxtaposes academically painted image fragments with text and open areas of canvas. Although Campbell's recent work suggests a growing emphasis on the personal and the autobiographical, his references to social and historical issues place him closer to the generation of the eighties. Roberta Stoddart's work, also, combines autobiographical and social concerns on which she elaborates with puns and metaphors inspired by Jamaican history and the actual now. Although they are painted in a seductive, quasi-realist style, Stoddart's images are often troubling and remind of the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo, who has been a pervasive influence on younger female artists in the Caribbean and Latin America.





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Marguerite Stanigar  
The Shell, 1991

Oil on canvas, 123 x 109 cm  
Private Collection



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Anna Henriques  
Porthole Series – Blue, 1993

Mixed media on canvas and wood  
Diameter: 81 cm  
Collection: Mechala Group Limited