

LET  
ME  
TELL  
YOU  
SOME  
THING

BERMUDA  
NATIONAL  
GALLERY  
2020 BERMUDA BIENNIAL

## JURORS' STATEMENT

The act of telling a story, especially one's own, is not something to be taken lightly. It is a place of vulnerability and introspection. It gives people knowledge of you, exposes you in a way that can evoke fear; but, it can also be incredibly freeing. For the 2020 Bermuda Biennial the theme *Let Me Tell You Something* invited artists to tell a story, offer history and wisdom through the visual form. In asking artists to tell us — jurors, other artists, and the community at large — something, we are asking for knowledge, we are asking to learn. And learn we do.

A group of over 50 artists submitted and 21 artists were chosen to participate. The works span the spectrum of media, including video, installation, works on paper, collage, painting, photography, sculpture, and performance. To locate such a wide variety within responses to a specific theme once again demonstrates the range of artistic practices thriving in Bermuda.

In this diverse range of works, overlapping threads became evident, which allow the exhibition to be grouped in related sections. Not surprisingly, the human body is prominently depicted. In Naimah Frith's, Emma Steele's, and Gherdai Hassell's imagery, the artists focus on the power of a woman's presence and self-representation, a reclamation of her body and how she chooses to use it. Jayde Gibbons' photography highlights black men and their collective force as fathers, brothers, husbands, and teachers. The mystery of interpersonal relationships — between man and woman, husband and wife, or father and daughter — is presented in the elusive photograph of Catherine White. Edwin Smith's installation shows familial and communal relationships as they relate to humble moments and intimate gestures.

How the human mind collects and analyzes information and systems is another clear inspiration for Bermudian artists. Arié Haziza's triptych of untitled graphs demonstrates how the elements of a person's life, for better or worse, can be charted by computer analytics. Katie Ewles' interactive installation examines how individual choices can affect the whole. Christina Hutchings' piece abstracts the concept of weather mapping with frenetic lines reading as energy flow. Cynthia Kirkwood's and Jon Legere's images both mine the mystery of language: what happens when we can decipher it and when we cannot. Bryan Ritchie's triptych is a satire on daily life, the process of getting up each day despite the possibility of mundane repetition.

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Additionally, notions of home and place, where we engage our minds and bodies, became another prominent theme for this year's biennial. Antoine Hunt's mixed media painting depicts Bermudian architecture, its weathered environment questioning the safety and preservation of space. NOBODY calls attention to the use of public and private buildings as spaces of protest. Andrea Sundt's intimate drawings, which nod to notions of femininity and the fluidity of life, reflect on the fragile environments we all negotiate. Centipede Art Movement's performance and resulting re-assembled log harken to notions of labor, environmental protection, and the tree rings as the ultimate recorders of time.

Throughout the exhibition, the need for personal introspection abounds. In Flurina Sokoll's sculptures, found objects hold the stories embedded within them. Sidney Mello's and Michael Walsh's individual installations speak of the ways in which the journey to overcome demons and addictions can shape personal development. In Dianni Culltar's relief sculpture, personal trauma is internalized on the interior panel while a bold face presents outwardly. And Charlie Godet Thomas's photograph of a blotted-out "lost and found" street sign offers humorous philosophical questioning of how we find the answers to knowing ourselves, one another, and the world around us.

Answers surely find themselves in our ability to communicate our inner and outer selves, our stories, and our histories, to one another through art. We have been mythmaking, storytelling beings since the beginning of civilization; and, it is reassuring that we continue to use art — in all its forms — to make sense of our time and place in the world.

— **Kimberli Gant and Melissa Messina**