

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

Artsy

12 Artists of the Caribbean and Its Diaspora Who Are Shaping Contemporary Art

Julián Sánchez González

25 July 2019



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Contemporary artists from the Caribbean are pursuing practices that are kaleidoscopic in range and diverse in scope. Their work reflects the multitude of experiences of the region's 26 countries as well as its many diasporic cultures in metropolitan centres.

Over the past 15 years, numerous exhibitions have contributed distinct readings of the work of artists of the Caribbean. Highlights include "Infinite Islands" at the Brooklyn Museum in New York (2007–08); "Caribbean: Crossroads of the World" at the Museo del Barrio in New York (2012); and "Relational Undercurrents: Contemporary Art from the Caribbean Archipelago" at the Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach, California (2018). In turn, discussions have grown around Caribbean artists and the relationship between the continent and the islands; the configurations of race and the rights to representation; the use of disposable materials; the persistence of colonialism; the recovery of ancestral knowledge and spiritualities; and the connection to the environment.

Most recently, a new exhibition at the Pérez Art Museum in Miami, "The Other Side of Now: Foresight in Contemporary Caribbean Art," curated by María Elena Ortiz and Marsha Pearce, is showcasing the work of emerging artists from the Caribbean. On the occasion, we share below a selection of influential artists from the region at large. This list is by no means exhaustive, but rather, representative of a variety of artistic processes. It features both emerging and established artists, hailing from the islands, the continent, and the diaspora. They explore subjects as diverse as oil extraction, rural soundscapes, and the queering of history and the body.

Overall, Caribbean artists are gaining traction for their innovative, research-based, and culturally hybrid approaches. More broadly, the unearthing of new histories and denouncing of current power structures is contributing to amend the fraught effects of such artists' underrepresentation.

Hulda Guzmán

B. 1984, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Lives and works in Santo Domingo.



Image: Hulda Guzmán, *Be Kind to Your Demons (Istanbul Cats)*, 2018, Dio Horia.

Hulda Guzmán stands out as one of the most distinctive and strongest painters within the Caribbean region.

Her work is candid and challenging as it combines various styles and art historical references. *A Little Innocence* (2013) and *Dynamic Relaxation* (2015) exemplify her interest in Japanese woodblock prints from the Edo period and Persian Safavid illustrated manuscripts from the 16th century. Other works, such as *Some Are Born to Sweet Delight* (2010), *They Do, We Celebrate* (2011), and *Untitled* (2011), show the inspiration she gleans from early Netherlandish Renaissance paintings—namely the work of Hieronymus Bosch.

Guzmán's work seeks to blur the lines between the private and public spheres, be that in her portraiture or her depictions of lush interior spaces; erotic and orgiastic scenes in tropical landscapes; and casual hang outs with inner demons. These thematic explorations not only confront the viewer, but also pose hyperbolic and satirical references to life in the Dominican Republic.

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Guzmán's work has been promoted and supported by the Lyle O. Reitzel Gallery and the Museo de Arte Moderno in Santo Domingo. Her paintings are currently featured in "The Other Side of Now: Foresight in Contemporary Caribbean Art."