

## From Spanish Town to Swift River

### *Artists' Profiles*

The work of all the artists has been exhibited in the National Gallery of Jamaica's biennales. Kingsley Thomas, Leonard Daley, Evadney Cruickshank and Birth 'Ras Dizzy' Livingstone are represented in the Gallery's permanent collection.

#### **Kingsley Thomas**

1951

Born in Swift River, Portland, Kingsley Thomas worked in Kingston as a journalist. His close neighbour was Jamaica's now most famous Intuitive artist, the late Mallica 'Kapo' Reynolds, who inspired Kingsley to paint and carve.

When political violence escalated in Kingston in the 1980s, Kingsley moved back to Swift River to devote himself to art. There are lyrical depictions of love and relationships and, echoing his earlier writing career, narrative paintings about the country's political and social history, current social problems, and the arts.

Kingsley was represented in Redemption Songs, held at Salem State University, America, in 1997, and touring. His paintings and carvings have been shown regularly at Kunsthaeuschen-Herrliberg, Switzerland and his work was represented in Spiritual Yards, selections from the Wayne & Myrene Cox Collection, at the National Gallery of Jamaica, 2016/7.

#### **Ervin Nichol**

1949

Trained as an electrician Ervin Nichol was inspired to start carving by his friend the late 'Woody' Joseph, one of Jamaica's finest Intuitive sculptors. Ervin, a Rastafarian, lives in a small community on the outskirts of Kingston.

Many of his sculptures are about about the slave trade, depicting the Middle Passage, with boats packed full with people facing out into the sea. These works were poignantly described by John Maizels, founder of Raw Vision magazine (the international journal of outsider art) as 'ships of souls'.

#### **Birth 'Ras Dizzy' Livingstone**

1932-2008

Ras Dizzy first came to public attention in the 1960s as a Rastafarian poet, selling his verses on the campus of the University of the West Indies. Painting and poetry became integrated, with images on one side of the sheet, and explanatory prose on the reverse.

Much of his life was spent on the road, traveling between Kingston and Ocho Rios on the north coast. Dizzy's paintings and writings allude to a parallel existence as a cowboy, a champion boxer, a judge. His work speaks of slavery, emancipation, black power and Rastafarianism. There are also paintings expressing his love of nature and the sea.

Ras Dizzy's paintings were included in the first Intuitive Eye exhibition at the National Gallery of Jamaica in 1979 and he went on to be shown in major national and international exhibitions, including New World Imagery at the Hayward Gallery, London and Jamaican Pulse at the Royal

West of England Academy, Bristol, UK in 2016.

### **Christopher Harris**

1974

Born near Spanish Town, St Catherine, Christopher was taught to draw by his father, himself a portraitist. His father's side of the family were Maroons, descendants of escaped slaves who set up independent colonies in the mountains of Jamaica. This connection is integral to his paintings. He is guided in his work by his ancestors, including his beloved late father, whose presence he feels, hears and sees around him.

The ZOSO series was started in 2018 soon after Jamaica's security forces had been given powers to set up Zones of Special Operations around 'troubled' areas in response to violence and criminality.\* His own parish, St Catherine, is one of the areas most effected with ongoing curfews and military roadblocks.

Christopher was one of the 14 artists selected for the Young Talent V exhibition at the National Gallery of Jamaica in 2010. He took part in Jamaican Intuitives at Kunsthaeuschen-Herrliberg, Switzerland in 2012/3, followed by a solo show at the gallery in 2015. His work was shown in Visions of Africa at Orleans House Gallery, London in 2016 and in Open Up Your Eyes & Look Within, works from the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Jamaica, hosted by the Jamaican High Commission in London, in 2018.

### **Evadney Cruickshank**

1950

Evadney learned how to paint by secretly watching her then partner, the late Sylvester Woods (a well-known Intuitive artist) painting, while she pretended to be asleep. He told her that he did not want two artists in their relationship.

Her work observes life in rural St Mary with a sharp humour. There are scenes of dances, of beauty contests, disputes and of Pocomania, a popular African based Revivalist religion.

Her work has been widely exhibited nationally and internationally. She was featured in Redemption Songs and was part of Spiritual Yards at the National Gallery of Jamaica in 2016/17. Her work was also shown at the Jamaican High Commission in London in 2018.

### **Leonard Daley**

c1930 - 2006

Born in Point Hill, St Catherine, Leonard Daley started painting in the 1960s but no works before 1979 have survived. Produced on old pieces of recycled board he would hang them in the trees around his home as a spiritual protection, and with no thought of selling them.

Daley's paintings are expressions of his inner worlds. As a single parent to a large family after his wife died of cancer his life was, undoubtedly, pressurised. In an interview with Dr David Boxer of the National Gallery of Jamaica he said that his works came to him 'automatically'. 'I close my eyes and I pray a lot. Sometimes tears fall down.... I look at the sunset and I look at the moon and sometimes, when I am concerned about a certain situation, I meditate.'

Daley has been exhibited in numerous national and international exhibitions including Redemption Songs, New World Imagery at the Hayward Gallery, London, in 1999 and Jamaican Pulse at the

Royal West of England Academy, Bristol, UK, in 2016. He was awarded the Institute of Jamaica Bronze Musgrave Medal in 2002.

Note:

\*\* A 2017/18 report on Jamaican policing by Amnesty International states that ‘unlawful killing - some of which may amount to extra judicial execution - continues to be carried out with impunity.’