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'Relational Undercurrents' bubbles up Exhibit reveals the intersection of ideas in Caribbean art

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Relational Undercurrents: Contemporary Art of the Caribbean Archipelago.

What is the Caribbean? According to the exhibition “Relational Undercurrents: Contemporary Art of the Caribbean Archipelago,” it is much more than the remnants of Colonialism.

As its title suggests, the exhibit—a rangy group show, including works by 67 contemporary artists with roots in 14 Caribbean countries—acknowledges that although the Caribbean became a space fragmented as a result of colonial history, there are ties that bind the region's artistic traditions, which transcend language, politics, culture and borderlines.

The show was curated by Tatiana Flores, associate professor of art history and Latino and Caribbean studies at Rutgers University and debuted at the Museum of Latin

American Art in Long Beach, California as part of the Getty Foundation's Pacific Standard Time LA/LA initiative. It congregates a sample of paintings, installations, sculpture, photography, video and multi-disciplinary presentations, into a display of four thematic groupings that address race and ethnicity, history, sovereignty, migration and sustainability.

"Because of Miami's geographic proximity to the Caribbean nations, as well as our cultural mosaic which Caribbean cultures have shaped, it was important for us to bring this exhibition to Miami during Art Basel season," said Jordana Pomeroy, the director for Florida International University's Frost Art Museum, which is hosting the exhibit locally. "Our new season opens up a dialogue about global commonalities rather than differences, from ecological changes to societal values around the world."

The show is also far-reaching in the scope of artists who are showcased, said Amy Galpin, chief curator for the museum. "We are bringing works by artists that represent the Bahamas, Guadalupe, Aruba and Sint Maarten, places we don't hear much from in terms of Caribbean art."

The inclusion of Miami-based artists in the show, like Edouard Duval-Carrie, Antonia Wright, Deborah Jack, Didier Williams and Angel Otero, contributes to expanding the view of how the Caribbean is experienced and perceived.

One of the most striking components of the section entitled, "Representational Acts," is the performance piece "All Tied Up" by Miami-based artist Charo Oquet. The artist, who's Dominican, was tied to a Haitian street vendor in the plaza of the Museo de Arte Moderno in Santo Domingo, with the intent of suggesting cooperation to repair the broken relations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In 2013, the country revoked the citizenship of all Haitians born there after 1929, leaving more than 200,000 people effectively stateless.

Adler Guerrier, whose installations are part of "Conceptual Mappings," that South Florida and the Caribbean share a really interesting place within the history of humanity, "which contributes to something about South Florida that is truly special."

"There are difficulties, inequalities and injustice, but nevertheless we can shape and garden our world to make everyday experiences better. Colonialism is a force. Bad governance is a force, but life is still worth living; and one of the strategies that can be implemented is by reshaping our landscape versus what's imposed by those forces. We inherit what's there before, but a lot can be improved upon," Guerrier said.

"Relational Undercurrents: Contemporary Art of the Caribbean Archipelago" is on view through Jan. 13 at the Frost Art Museum, 10975 SW 17 St. Open Tuesday-Saturday 10 a.m.- 5 p.m. and Sunday noon-5 p.m. More information at frost.fiu.edu or 305-348-2890.