



The Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts presents:

TRANSFΘR 2011

a collaborative installation by EDGAR ENDRESS, JANET COOK-RUTNIK & LORI LEE

Friday March 18 - April 30, 2011

Transfer 2011, put together by artists Edgar Endress, Janet Cook-Rutnik and anthropologist Lori Lee, is the fifth edition of the ongoing Transfer Project. The Transfer Project attempts to evoke critical thinking about the processes of migration in the islands and encourage people to explore the history and the present nature of migration in the Virgin Islands. A central focus of the project is the transfer of the islands from the Danish to the United States in 1917.

This year the project features several new pieces that examine migration and recontextualize history from multiple vantage points. A one-piece video projection of St. Thomas Eudora Kean High School's drill team called "Stomp" evokes the multi-layered history of the islands, particularly ritual, gender, and cultural continuity and transformation.

The installation in the center room of the gallery, upon first appearance, looks similar to a Danish West Indian parlor room in the era of Transfer. Upon closer inspection, the viewer will discover several transformations that emphasize the local history, migration, and lives of individuals who shaped this historical moment. Metaphors of migration are entangled in the details of the wallpaper. Passport images are also revealed there. Larger passport images engage the visitor from circular frames that recall ship portals, replacing the family portraits expected in a period parlor. Their placement emphasizes that they are family to many Virgin Islanders of the past and present.

A third piece "Red Birds" superimposes images of animals over historic photographs. The animals open a dialogue about biblical paradise and the fable of the Caribbean as a utopia, while at the same time representing migratory beings. The historic photographs represent realism. The banners beneath the photographs proclaim 'I maintain' which emphasizes the endurance of local culture despite the ruptures wrought by migration.

“Dream Journey” considers the juxtaposition of physical landscapes and mental landscapes, both real and imagined. Romance novels are found in abundance on the islands as a result of tourists bringing them, then leaving them behind when they return home. These romance novels are often set in the context of the islands with themes of pirates, sirens, and mermaids. For the tourist, the novel is a gateway to enter paradise. Although the mental landscape is not a reflection of the actual physical and cultural landscapes that exists in the islands, this utopian trope remains constant.

Deer/donkey explores the origins and distribution of a mythical creature—a hybrid of local deer and donkey populations. Both deer and donkeys were brought to the Virgin Islands as a result of colonization, to serve specific needs of colonists. The deer and donkeys serve as a metaphor for different groups of people who came to the islands historically and the unpredictable results of this cohabitation. The colonists are gone but the deer and donkey remain, surviving periodic attempts to eradicate them because of their impact on indigenous flora and fauna. Yet they remain because they belong.

We are interested in collecting the stories of individuals who received passports to travel around the time of the transfer of the islands from the Danish to the United States (see www.transferproject.vi). The main purpose is to return focus to the people, who they were, where they were going, where they were coming from, and why. We want to bring the focus back to the people of the Caribbean, their culture, and their heritage, which is interwoven with threads of migrations and away from the natural landscapes that many tourists seek. If you have information about these individuals, their ancestors, or their descendants, please contact us.



Members of the Ivanna Eudora Kean High School girls ROTC drill team prepare to execute their drill routines which were filmed and edited for the 2 channel video “Stomp”.



Victorian interpretation of the Transfer, created as wallpaper, with recycled images from various contemporary manuals which reference the journey and the fears and hopes these travelers faced.



Give us this day our daily bread

Daily Bread is comprised of images of USVI governors cut from paper plates with light projected through them. This piece considers power after the transfer of the islands.



Deer/donkey sculpture in wood with gold leaf. This piece considers migration, labor, hybridization, and race.



Rudolph Lanclos. One of six passport images printed on silk to create movement because movement and mobility are central to transfer.



Two channel video of IEKHS Drill teams.



Entry view of main gallery with Dream Journey in the forefront.

special thanks to

SGT. MAJ. LEROY MARS AND CORP.
CHARLES OF EUDORA KEAN HIGH SCHOOL

THE GIRLS AND BOYS OF THE AWARD
WINNING ROTC DRILL TEAMS

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LANDMARKS SOCIETY

DAVID KNIGHT

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JANET COOK-RUTNIK is an internationally exhibited Virgin Islands artist whose current work deals with migrations and journeys in a personal and collective way and the impact of colonialism in the Caribbean.
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LORI LEE is an anthropological archaeologist specializing in the African diaspora in the Americas. Her research interests include memory, migration, identity, materiality, and consumerism.
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The Transfer Project has been funded by a University of the Virgin Islands Cultural Award grant - special thanks to Gov. John deJongh and the UVI Board. Transfer 2011 has also received support from the Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts. Thanks to founder, Candia Atwater and staff.