



PRESS RELEASE

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Cayman Art Week Helps to Revitalise Cayman's Commercial Arts Sector

Cayman Art Week shone a light on Cayman's established commercial galleries, artist studios and pop-up exhibitions across all three islands and inspired hundreds to engage with the visual arts.

Based on a model that has been tried in cities around the world, the five-day event highlighted the local art sector in a refreshingly new way – hoping to help reactivate the art market post-pandemic. Simply put, each day focused on a particular area of Grand Cayman (Thursday was West, Friday was Central with 'Art in the City' in partnership with George Town Revitalisation, and Saturday was East) with several preview events, and daily receptions at venues in the Sister Islands. Contemporary art galleries and studios hosted after-hours openings to 8pm on their focus day, special exhibitions featuring both established names and emerging talents, alongside a public programme of discussions, studio visits, and performances.

Cayman Art Week sought to celebrate the diversity of Cayman's art sector and the role that galleries play in Cayman's creative economy – which has struggled with borders being closed. Says CAW founder/creative director Natalie Urquhart, "CAW's aim was two-fold: firstly, to offset the impact of the pandemic for commercial art galleries and studios by increasing visibility and cultivating local collectors and secondly, to create a community event through which a wide cross section of society could access unique art experiences in an inclusive and inspiring manner."

Initially designed as a two-day art tour the project grew rapidly during the four-month planning period to include 27 venues, each presenting their own special projects. Importantly for Urquhart, it garnered a spirit of collaboration and creative exchange that was much needed in these challenging times. "It was truly inspiring how collegiate and supportive all of our partners were, from our Lead Partners George Town Revitalisation, Provenance Properties Cayman Islands, the National Gallery and Patron Mrs. Susan A. Olde, OBE, to our entirely volunteer Cayman Art Week team, and all of the venues themselves who each created inspiring and welcoming receptions that were accessible to all." This was particularly evident during the 'Art in the City' event developed with George Town Revitalisation when hundreds took to the streets to participate in the 10-venue art tour.

Since the formal programme ended on July 10, CAW has been busy surveying venues and gathering data to assess the impact of the inaugural event. Based on feedback from venues and visitors they report that the week was an undoubted success and this is supported by the survey results. 100% of venues reported increased visitor traffic (above their average weekly visits) with over 60% reporting between 100 and 300+ additional visitors, with the busiest single event being Art in the City which was developed in partnership with George Town Revitalisation. All but one venue reported sales increases during Cayman Art Week in addition to seeing significant increases in the following areas: over 65% experienced a new visitor demographic; over 75% saw an increase in social media traffic and followers, with 30% also receiving additional commissions for future art sales.

Using survey data in addition to traffic counts at the separate events, CAW concludes that it welcomed over 1,600 visitors from a wide demographic across the five-day event and that estimated KYD\$180,000 in sales were generated by the venues collectively (with additional art commissions continuing to be received post event).

For Nasaria Suckoo Chollette, a participating artist, Cayman Art Week offered “a whirlwind of activities and amazing opportunities. As an exhibiting artist, I not only got to spend more time with fellow artists and got to know them better, I also was able to share my work with a lot more people than I have in the past. Cayman Art Week allowed space for new audiences to experience art in a less intimidating way.”

Gallery owner Debbie van de Bol of Pure Art Gallery and Gifts, who represent over 50 local artisans, said “We appreciated the new audiences of shoppers and lovers of local art who “discovered Pure Art”! I also loved attending several of the other art shows, events, and studio visits. It certainly helps to put our fine art in perspective of other artists which is always exciting and helpful. I do hope that future years will only grow and highlight Cayman art even more.”

Speaking about the financial benefits of CAW, artist and gallery owner Al Ebanks noted, “The best [thing] about Cayman Art Week from our perspective is the huge spotlight and excitement it literally drives to art spaces, facilitating discovery and increasing sales. The online portal further increases discovery from potential art buyers, that is truly valuable.”

CAW is now using survey and visitor feedback to begin developing next year’s event. The long-term aim for Cayman Art Week is to develop into a significant cultural tourism product that can attract international collectors as well as cultivating local collectors and supporting the arts community through online programming. “We’ve been overwhelmed by support for the inaugural Cayman Art Week and are committed to growing it as an annual event,” says Urquhart. “While we wait for borders to reopen we’re also developing other ways to support the art community throughout the year. For example, the new Cayman Art Week website (www.caymanartweek.com) provides a singular platform through which to learn about the Cayman art market – at home or abroad – and to discover venues where you can buy art and which artists these venues represent.” In addition, their social media programme (@caymanartweek #caymanartweek) will continue to profile artists and venues, and to promote art events and exhibitions throughout the year in an effort to make access to Caymanian visual art as simple as possible.

If you missed Cayman Art Week you can access highlights and footage of the event via their website’s press section and continue to engage with the arts by visiting the galleries and studio which are open all year round.

Cayman Art Week Venues and Partners

Cayman Art Week extends a sincere thank you to all participating galleries and studios: The Gallery at the Ritz Carlton-Grand Cayman, Kennedy Gallery, Sandon Feat Gallery, The Art Collective, Parcel 110, Guy Harvey Gallery, Pure Art Gallery, Carlos V. Garcia Gallery, Artisan Metal Works Gallery, Simone Scott Gallery, Gordon J. Solomon Fine Art, John Reno Jackson Studio, David Bridgeman, Al Ebanks, Kay Smith, Charles Long, White Dog Art (Ren Seffer) and Scott Swing; in addition to all the venues who hosted pop-up exhibitions: Notable Island Gallery (Kaitlyn Elphinstone) and Award Art Gallery (Avril Ward) at Monaco Towers, Whitehall Chambers, Palm Heights, IDG Cayman, Calypso Grill, The Lobster Pot, Crucial Ink, Silverside, The Bird, Central Terrace and the Little Cayman Museum. Sincere thank you to CAW partners and supporters Patron Mrs. Susan A. Olde, OBE, Lead Partners Provenance Properties Cayman Islands, George Town Revitalisation, and the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands; the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism, Monaco Towers, Frank Shilling, Real Life Magazine, Cayman Sun Tours, Majestic Tours, Not Your Standard Agency, Cayman CrossTalk, Cayman Life TV and CAW volunteers Pam Brown, Meegan Ebanks, Caroline Schroder, Katie O'Neil, Ashanti Reid, Laura Ribbins, Maia Muttoo, Ellie Nickason, Sawyer Clements, Sarah Needham, and Isy Walton.

About Cayman Art Week

CAW is an independent art project that was created by Natalie Urquhart and executed by the Cayman Art Week volunteer team of Urquhart, Caroline Schroder, Pam Brown and Meegan Ebanks with support from Isy Walton and Melanie Cumber. The team works in an entirely voluntary capacity to support the work of the commercial gallery sector and artist-led spaces. CAW is designed as a framework through which to align the creative community to ensure the widest possible visibility and impact, it does not create exhibitions or engage in art sales of any kind.