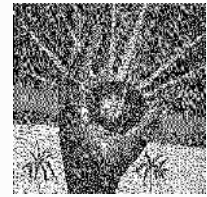


Carifesta Geographies: Mapping Colonial Afterlives and the Caribbean Festival of Arts’ “Phenomenal Dreaming”, 1966–1976

Article by **Adrienne Rooney**



Abstract

From its early official sparks in the late 1960s, the Caribbean Festival of Arts (Carifesta) has taken shape as a profoundly geographic meditation on how the region had been and could be imagined, lived in, and seen. It materialized a vast cultural expression of dreams of sovereignty and of uniting a region fragmented by Danish, Dutch, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish colonial empires. This article examines its geographic imagination at its founding and in its two earliest iterations, in Guyana and Jamaica, alongside colonial conceptions of the region, arguing that the juxtaposition accentuates the stakes, dreams, and revolutionary nature of the Carifesta project from its early days. Further, through an interactive, diachronic map of the two iterations of the festival, it visualizes their spatial relations with colonial histories via three case studies, analyzing colonial legacies that haunted the festival.

This article is part of the series “Atlantic Worlds: Visual Cultures of Colonialism, Slavery, and Racism” in British Art Studies, which is funded by the Terra Foundation for American Art. Projects in the series consider the dispersed and difficult histories of Atlantic worlds, focusing on any aspect of visual and material culture that intersects broadly with the United Kingdom and the United States. The aim is to encourage transhistorical thinking by posing questions about histories and legacies of empire, networks of trade, transatlantic slavery, and creolisation. “Atlantic Worlds” initiated a virtual residency programme at the journal that ran from 2021 to 2022, where awardees shared ideas with each other and were supported by expert interlocutors. Awardees were Adrian Anagnost, Anna Arabindan-Kesson, Mia L. Bagneris, Ananda Cohen-Aponte, Christopher Maxwell, and Adrienne Rooney. Invited

interlocutors were Gaiutra Bahadur, Pamela Fletcher, Aaron Kamugisha, Catherine Molineux, José Lingna Nafafé, and Kerry Sinanan.

As it turned out [with Carifesta 1972], Guyana calmly redefined the Caribbean to include not only the francophone and Hispanic territories, but also Suriname, Belize, the Bahamas, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, Peru and Chile. Nowhere else in the Caribbean has such phenomenal dreaming ever been manifest.¹

Introduction

From its early official sparks in the late sixties, the Caribbean Festival of Arts (Carifesta) has taken shape as a profoundly geographic meditation on how the region *had been* and *could be* imagined, lived in, and seen. A map on a brochure for Carifesta's second iteration, held in Jamaica in 1976, is a telling record of that process. It reaches from northwestern Mexico to South Carolina, from Colombia's western coast to French Guiana, and skims Brazil's northernmost tip (fig. 1).² The aquamarine of the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and Atlantic and Pacific Oceans covers most of the page. The waters' vibrant color heightens the acid-green tone marking countries that were invited to send artworks, musicians, dancers, poets, playwrights, actors, artists, intellectuals—the list goes on—to take part in the festival that year. A vivid lime unifies the multilingual Caribbean islands, countries in the Americas lining the Caribbean Sea, the Guianas, and Brazil, washing across their political borders. It also envelopes the state of Louisiana in an otherwise unmarked continental United States. Jamaica pulses red, orange, and yellow, like the Carifesta '76 logo hovering over the Pacific Ocean, hinting to viewers exactly what the map means.



Figure 1

Brochure for Carifesta '76 (verso). Personal papers of John La Rose, JRL/2/5/10. Digital image courtesy of the George Padmore Institute, London.

Over its fifty-plus-year story, the still semiregularly recurring state-sponsored Carifesta has been a locus for artists, intellectuals, and audiences to revel in, debate, and dream alongside cultural production from the Caribbean islands, mainland countries touched by the Caribbean Sea, and beyond. Yet, while that may seem intuitive in hindsight, it was far from a given that such an event would exist, even though it built on a deeply rooted vision for regional unity.³ Carifesta surfaced at a time when the colonial cartographies that had for centuries defined the region, and indeed much of the earth, further buckled. As the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the independence of seventeen African countries sent shockwaves across the Cold War world, parts of the region that remained under colonial control that then gained independence did so in quick succession, particularly from the waning British Empire. It was at this moment that the idea of holding a festival such as Carifesta—a festival of arts *for* and *by* people in the region—began to ferment and take shape officially.

Perhaps nothing symbolizes Carifesta's place in what the political scientist Adom Getachew has characterized as an age of “worldmaking after empire” more than the map with which I began.⁴ Entwined with regional decolonizing and unification efforts, as well as regionally inflected movements such as Caribbean Black Power, Carifesta swept onto the Caribbean's shores the spirit of gatherings from the 1955 Bandung Conference to the First World Festival of Negro Arts, held in Dakar in 1966.⁵ It materialized a widespread cultural expression of dreams of sovereignty and of uniting a region fragmented by Danish, Dutch, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish colonial empires.⁶

This article examines Carifesta's early geographies alongside colonial conceptions of the region, and argues that the juxtaposition accentuates the stakes, dreams, and revolutionary nature of the project from its early days, even while it sheds light on colonial legacies that haunted it.

When artists and writers largely from the anglophone Caribbean and its diaspora gathered to envision what was to become Carifesta (a meeting of minds, to which we shall soon turn), the term "Caribbean" itself was not stable and the geographical parameters used held different implications, in no small part as a result of colonial fragmentation.⁷ A festival of Caribbean arts, which they had been called on to imagine, meant defining the region and its arts for the purposes of the event. As with any collectively envisioned and constituted (mass) event, there were a plurality of hopes behind the festival—from the leftist to the neocolonial and tinted by internationalist, nationalist, and pan-Caribbean visions. Carifesta's early architects mobilized multiple geographies of solidarity, from principles of anticolonialism, pan-Africanism, and Third Worldism to economic nationalization and regionalism to craft the festival's capacious map—an emblem of its "phenomenal dreaming". However, as will soon become clear, a core element invoked by those who were shaping Carifesta's map from the beginning was the kinship of intergenerational trauma, creativity, and resistance shaped by the plantation system. Therefore cutting across colonially rooted divisions, Carifesta marked the fundamental possibility of a pan-Caribbean order that confronted colonialism's balkanizing, "world constituting" scale and its central ideology of white supremacy.⁸ At the most formative level, then, Carifesta geographies were neither incidental nor preordained: they were revolutionary.

Following the work of Katherine McKittrick, a leading scholar of Black geographies, I use "geography" to mean "space, place, and location in their physical materiality and imaginative configurations" or, put another way, "three dimensional spaces and places, the physical landscape and infrastructures, geographic imaginations, the practice of mapping, exploring, and seeing, and social relations in and across space".⁹ Thus, Carifesta geographies encompass much more than the map with which I began. As the festival has evolved, it has come to create its own geographic pattern. Inaugurated in 1972 in Guyana, Carifesta was then staged in Jamaica in 1976, Cuba in 1979, and Barbados in

1981. After a decade-long hibernation, the festival was held in Trinidad and Tobago in 1992; to date, it has taken place there four times (also in 1995, 2006, and 2019), as well as in St. Kitts and Nevis (2000), Suriname (2003 and 2013), Haiti (2015), and again in Guyana (2008) and Barbados (2017 and 2025).¹⁰ In each host location, it impacts local geographies: infrastructures are built, adapted, or repurposed to house artists of all sorts and to showcase their work to local and visiting audiences of varying sizes. Through the labor required to refashion these spaces and to pull off the festival, it influences daily routines, relations in space, and the creative futures of people who may continue to build an artistic life there or elsewhere. At festival time, Carifesta brings together artists, cultural policymakers, politicians, and other visitors from across the multilingual region, gathering and showcasing its creative plurality, and transforming the festival grounds into social spaces for regional exchange. As the historian Amanda Reid argues, artists and audiences alike have “performed regional solidarity through embodiments of Caribbean cultural continuities” at Carifesta, thereby validating, reinforcing, and vitalizing the festival’s map.¹¹ Artists and attendees, whether charged with inspiration or frustration, have taken influences from Carifesta back to their hometowns and countries, forming networks across the region and its diaspora. In other words, Carifesta is not only a geographic meditation but also a profoundly geographic practice.

This article’s geographic focus is primarily top-down, scaled globally and locally, to offer an engagement with the built environment and conceptions of place. By “top-down” I mean that it takes an overview of Carifesta rather than focusing on the relations formed at the festivals—the sparks, performative and visual explosions and revelations, heated debates, communions— that is, here I do not focus on the vibrations of the region’s cultural life, thick and capable of moving mind, body, and spirit. At the same time, I also mean, in a way, topsoil down—expressed not geologically but through layers of colonial maps. I look to the grounds, though I should also make clear, not at what the art historian Rachel Grace Newman calls “buried beings” beneath the ground’s surface, arguably a geography within Carifesta’s early visual orbit embodied not by the map with which I began but by the emblem of the inaugural festival (fig. 2).¹² Vitally, ancestral life and spiritual presences across, within, and beyond these grounds were *at the very least* creatively present at Carifesta, disrupting notions

of linear time and epistemic control that these maps claim and entrench. In this article, however, I mobilize colonial maps, and for a specific purpose—to emphasize what is, of course, evident: that the geographies Carifesta formed played out on geographies transformed by the colonial project. Europe’s colonial empires fundamentally reconfigured the region: through the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, through the appropriation and transformation of (their ancestral) land(s) into tightly carved properties for extraction and European economic gain, and through the forcible or less than free transplantation of millions of adults and children from (especially) West and Central Africa, India, China, Java, and elsewhere to work as enslaved or indentured laborers—with culturcide or cultural oppression marking each stage.¹³ I engage colonial maps to press for recognition of the staggering scale of colonial transformation; that is, to acknowledge the geographies Carifesta was up against and to make more palpable the revolutionary nature of the early Carifesta project.



Figure 2

Poster for Carifesta '72, Guyana, 25 August–15 September 1972. Artwork by Billy Ryan Enterprises Ltd.

This article is divided into two sections. The first turns to the formation of the regional Carifesta map with which I began, positioning it as an imagined geography informed by oceanic, cultural, historical, and political forces. As I

have done elsewhere, I briefly situate it historically and discursively to show that, from the moment Carifesta started taking shape, its conceptual architects deliberated about the stakes and meanings of the geographic scope it would represent.¹⁴ Grounding the foundation of the map in contemporaneous thought regarding the plantation system, and tracing its revision on Carifesta's institutionalization, I argue that the map was deeply decolonizing by design.

However, the second part of the article grapples with the multiple, and at times conflicting, visions regarding what decolonization looked like on the ground during the independence and postindependence era of the anglophone Caribbean, where the festival first got its conceptual momentum and state backing and where its first two iterations, with which this article engages, took place. Decolonizing did not by default mean dismantling hierarchies, cultural standards, or ways of living that had been imposed during the colonial era.

While during this period there were significant pockets of revolutionary thinkers, including many of Carifesta's architects, there was also a steady, influential group within the elite and middle classes who wanted more or less to maintain the status quo and simply change the guard.¹⁵

The second part of the article attends to some of these intricacies through its own geographic practice. Catalyzed by early Carifesta organizers' own propensity for mapping, it launches a pilot digital map spatializing the first two Carifestas where they actually took place (see fig. 7). Through the addition of diachronic layers, it also visualizes the spatial relations between these early Carifestas and colonial histories, helping to bring into focus persistent colonial legacies within the festivals and the colossal scale of decolonizing. I home in on just three case studies that the map discloses, aiming to wrestle with only some of the complexities of the festival's material geography during its postindependence era. For while the festivals' imagined geography necessarily and forcefully ruptured the colonial geographic imagination of the region for global and local audiences, zooming in to selected sites of the festivals themselves shows that legacies of colonialism lingered and gave rise to profound contradictions. The article thus expands on tensions that the historian Ramaesh J. Bhagirat-Rivera and the literary scholar René Kooiker have also identified, specifically in the context of Carifesta '72: while the festival was framed by a "utopian vision" and considered by some to be a historical

“rupture”, the reality was more complicated.¹⁶ Embracing as a method of looking what McKittrick characterizes as a “spatial continuity”—that is, how a location “opens up” moments of resonance “between the living and the dead, between science and storytelling, and between past and present”—I turn to case studies on grounds that reveal how the festivals themselves became geographies of ambivalence, (imperfect) redress, and silence in the thick of a decolonizing era.¹⁷

Carifesta’s Geographic Imagination

The Seed

When some of the most esteemed artists and writers from the anglophone Caribbean and its diaspora came together in Guyana in 1970 for a Caribbean Writers and Artists Convention, they had a clear agenda: to envision a Caribbean arts festival. The convention followed an earlier Caribbean Writers and Artists Conference in 1966 called by the country’s prime minister, Forbes Burnham, after conversations with the writers George Lamming of Barbados and Martin Carter of Guyana.¹⁸ In 1966 the conference’s attendees had asked Burnham if, “‘by virtue of his love for the arts’, he could undertake to stage an arts festival on a Caribbean-wide basis”, and some attendees immediately began crafting plans to make it happen.¹⁹ Burnham’s answer in the affirmative demonstrates what the writer Petamber Persaud notes of him and his colleague-turned-political-opponent Cheddi Jagan, that Guyana’s independence era and postcolonial “leaders were always cognizant of the value of culture, making efforts for its promotion and preservation”.²⁰

The 1966 conference coincided with celebrations of Guyana’s independence from over 300 years of colonial rule—at various points, the Dutch, French, and British all brutally staked a claim—and the 1970 convention was part of an eleven-day celebration surrounding the start of Guyana’s transition from a monarchy to a cooperative republic. Despite the deliberate overlap of the cultural conventions with carefully staged events of postcolonial nation-building, there was often friction between politicians, state bureaucrats, cultural policymakers, and artists in Carifesta’s emergence and inauguration. Indeed, to prepare for the 1970 convention—where festival planning resumed—many of the delegates and others came together informally at Guyana’s Theatre Guild at

the invitation of architects of the Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM), Edward (later Kamau) Brathwaite, Doris Brathwaite, John La Rose, and Andrew Salkey.²¹ The meeting helped prepare them to voice their opinion at the convention about “the scope and importance” of the festival to the “authorities”.²² In particular, the writer Jan Carew, who did not attend the convention itself that year even though he had been actively engaged during and after 1966, expressed the necessity of focusing on the wants of the artists and writers gathered, rather than those in positions of state power.²³ This unofficial gathering and the official 1966 conference and 1970 convention gathered together in total over fifty artists and intellectuals, from the visual artist Aubrey Williams and the dancer Beryl McBurnie to the intellectual giant C.L.R. James.²⁴

While it may not sound surprising for such a concern to be articulated by artists tasked with envisioning a state-sponsored event, Guyana’s political landscape was marked by a particular tension, stemming from a traumatic constitutional decolonization process. The most comprehensive account of the 1970 convention, Salkey’s *Georgetown Journal*, reflects lingering uncertainty within the relatively new nation.²⁵ It had been marked by Cold War interventionism, with the United Kingdom and the United States favoring Burnham, and by a political division “exacerbating the racial fault lines that existed” between the country’s majority Afro- and Indo-Guyanese populations—the descendants of those who had come to the region via enslavement or indentureship respectively — that corresponded to the two chief political personalities of the era, Burnham and Jagan.²⁶

Among the appendices to *Georgetown Journal* is Burnham’s address to the convention, which set out the task before the delegates of determining who and what a Caribbean arts festival should include. It might have prompted a feeling of unease when he casually broached the issue of race: “In the Caribbean, we are predominantly Black, but are we exclusively Black? Which group, if any, has made the major contribution to what we may call the culture or sub-culture of the Caribbean?”²⁷ Likely attempting to quash a subsumption of the budding festival—to be held in Guyana—by local ethnonationalism, the convention delegates suggested in their ultimate recommendations that the makeup of a

proposed local festival steering committee bridge racialized divisions, as well as class, institutional, and ideological ones.²⁸

Burnham's question directly preceded one concerning the scale and geographic scope of the region, and there seems to have been a consensus to define the Caribbean capaciously. "Are we going to accept, from our erstwhile masters, a definition of this area in terms only of territories formerly owned by them?" he asked the Anglo-Caribbean group, with the exception of R. Dobru, a Surinamese poet who had arrived at the meeting somewhat by luck.²⁹ This question was circling at the time and was answered with a resounding "no" by the artists and intellectuals in the room that day, as well as by many in their networks. Salkey's version of the recommendations published in the *Journal* proposed that "the Caribbean Arts Festival should be representative of our multi-lingual Caribbean plantation culture".³⁰ To remove any doubt as to what was meant, he stated that the scope implied "the varied cultural contributions from Cuba in the north to Guyana in the south", as well as "Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Surinam, French Guiana and the other non-English speaking countries".³¹ This definition of the region was inspired by the economists Lloyd Best of Trinidad and George Beckford of Jamaica and their New World collaborators, who are credited with, as Sylvia Wynter put it, "conceptualizing the plantation as the starting point" of not only the modern Caribbean but "the modern world".³² The phrasing echoes Best's 1967 definition of the region, cutting across colonial and resulting language divides and including the Greater and Lesser Antilles and the Guianas. However, Best's definition, like the eventual Carifesta map, was even more expansive. Given his hope to "encompass ... the cultural, social, political and economic foundations of the 'sugar plantation' variant of the colonial mind", it included such locales as the Carolinas (United States), Caracas (Venezuela), and Recife (Brazil).³³ As he explained, these spaces and societies of the plantation (albeit not only sugar) were marked by shrinking incomes, growing unemployment, increasing inequality and dissatisfaction, and division—realities informed, on a global scale, by what Saidiya Hartman has characterized as "a racial calculus and a political arithmetic" and largely constitutive of what she has famously deemed the "afterlife of slavery".³⁴

The nations, territories, overseas departments, and so on eventually invited to participate in the inaugural festival in Guyana in 1972 did not extend as far north as the Carolinas, and included countries with a history of enslavement beyond Best's definition, such as Peru and Chile, which were arguably tapped because of their politics and push for nationalization (fig. 3).³⁵ Indeed the expanded geography was to break out of preexisting frames, leading cultural policy officer A.J. Seymour, one of the festival's originators, organizers, and most steadfast proponents, to reference Beckford's new book *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World* as a helpful frame for understanding Carifesta's map but ultimately to deem it a space to craft another set of relations—what I have elsewhere called “cartographies of kinship”.³⁶ This geographic capaciousness led a scholar of Caribbean culture, Gordon Rohlehr, to state that with Carifesta '72 Guyana pushed the boundaries of regional unity further than ever: “Nowhere else in the Caribbean has such phenomenal dreaming ever been manifest”.³⁷ And baked into, though not containing, this dreaming was a theory grappling with the ongoing legacies of the plantation system—a “geography of domination”—on contemporary life in a multifarious region it molded.³⁸ Further and crucially, as conversations Salkey had around the 1970 convention make clear, discourse surrounding “plantation culture” linked the term with the histories and afterlives of not only enslavement but also indentureship.³⁹ In other words, the convention's recommendation cut across the very borders—from linguistic to racial—established by the colonial plantation system, not to mention the conflicting political ideologies heating the contemporary region.

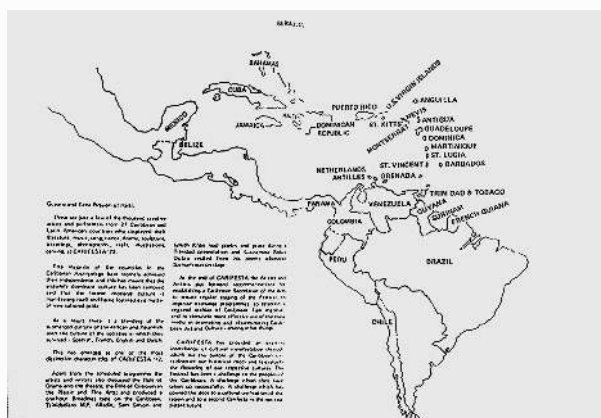


Figure 3

Map in souvenir program of Carifesta '72 showing countries invited to participate (not all invited countries took part). Digital image courtesy of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Katharine Cornell–Gunthrie McClintic Special Collections Reading Room (MGZB Carifesta–Souvenir Program 1972).

The Revision

On the tailwinds of the inaugural festival, the Heads of Government of Commonwealth Caribbean Countries devoted part of a monumental meeting in October 1972 to weighing “proposals from the Caribbean Writers and Creative and Performing Artists for the institutionalization of the Caribbean Festival of Creative Arts as the mechanism for developing closer cultural links throughout the Region”.⁴⁰ That the artists suggested considering a non-anglophone Caribbean host country for the second iteration—a responsibility that fell to Cuba for the third Carifesta—only underscores that Carifesta was an explicitly regional affair spanning language and imperial divides, even if an anglophone Caribbean organization was institutionalizing it.⁴¹ The hopes and stakes were bigger than any one political, ideological, or national project, and it was far from the only agenda item on the table concerning a push for regional integration that Carifesta embodied on a cultural front. Replying affirmatively, the heads of government institutionalized Carifesta, and Jamaica’s then new prime minister, Michael Manley, agreed to host a second iteration.⁴²

Before extending invitations to participate, Manley asked the second Carifesta’s organizers to hone and standardize its cartography, and one of his cabinet submissions outlines the eventual proposal arrived at after studying a map of the

Atlantic World (fig. 4). It advised regularly inviting “all countries washed by the waters of the Caribbean [Sea]”, clarifying that “these include all the countries of Central America with the exception of El Salvador which is on the Pacific Coast, and the northern littoral of South America as far east as Guyana”, by which it appears to mean the Guianas (Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana).⁴³ As they tightened the festival’s terms, the organizers also kept them open to what Carole Boyce Davies might characterize as “a larger imagined geographical Caribbean space, broadening its meanings at every turn”.⁴⁴ They extended its scope beyond the Caribbean Sea for the two exceptions of Brazil and Louisiana. Brazil, the submission emphasizes, had participated in Carifesta '72 and would do so again. Having seemed to consider inviting the United States at large, they recommended “limit[ing] continental participation to the City of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana”. The submission outlined their logic: it would boost tourism (though this could apply anywhere) but, more specifically, there were “important ethnic and other cultural considerations” to take into account.⁴⁵ Having already emphasized the Yoruba influence on Brazil’s Bahian region, from which Brazil’s Carifesta '72 participation came, the document stressed that the vibrant carnival traditions from Rio de Janeiro and New Orleans could enhance the second Carifesta’s finale, a carnival representing all participating nations. The Rio Carnival and New Orleans’s Mardi Gras—famous manifestations of colonially rooted festival arts shaped by Afrodiasporic life in the Americas—became as important as the waters of the Caribbean Sea in defining Carifesta’s Caribbean. As Carifesta moved across its first decade, its map continued to shift, embracing the diasporic hubs of Hackney (London) and Florida. Meanwhile, festival advertising and fundraising efforts ricocheted within and across diasporic centers from which many participants, and several of the festival’s early conceptual architects, also came.



Figure 4

“Map to assist discussion of Carifesta Countries”, attachment to “Cabinet Submission No 286 OPM 10/75: Countries to Be Invited to Participate in CARIFESTA 1976 (Second Caribbean Festival of Creative Arts) to Be Held in Jamaica 2nd to 22nd August 1976”, 5 June 1975. Jamaica Archives & Records Department (1B.31.286-1975).

“World-Constituting” and World-Making Maps and Exhibitions

If kinships central to Carifesta’s foundational map were rooted in the colonial plantation economy that remade the region, its logic counters the “colonial geographic imagination”.⁴⁶ As Reuben Rose-Redwood et al. write in their introduction to a special issue of the journal *Cartographica* on decolonizing the map, “mapping has long played a key role in the world-making practices of colonialism through the appropriation, demarcation, naming, and partitioning of territory” and claiming “rule over people and places”: mapping “plays an important ontological role in the making, unmaking, and remaking of ‘worlds’”.⁴⁷ By Carifesta’s birth, the world order of colonial cartography was under challenge. Wresting the region’s geographic imagination from colonially imposed frameworks served as a means of further undermining that order.

Of course, Carifesta did so not only via a graphic representation but also as a festival that featured performances, exhibitions, and discourse aplenty. Carifesta geographies, however imperfect, thus counteracted not only mapping but also exhibition-making practices that reflected and maintained a colonial world order: world’s fairs and colonial exhibitions. Colonial cartography reached

another level entirely when it was combined with exhibitionary practices that made plain the constituent evolutions of conceptions of land as capital and racialized people as labor, a worldview that was central to the economic system colonial Europe imposed on the world it reshaped.

For instance, visitors entering the central annex of London's Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 from the southern entrance were primed for its imaginary by a "colossal coloured map of the two hemispheres, on which the various countries which make up the British Empire are prominently marked", as described by Frank Cundall, a British art historian and the exhibition commissioner, who was soon to be appointed secretary of Kingston's Institute of Jamaica.⁴⁸ "Surmounted by a series of five clock faces, which simultaneously proclaim[ed] the time at Greenwich, Calcutta, Ottawa, Sydney and Cape Town —over-topped by a colossal figure of Britannia", the colossal map emphasized that the empire endeavored to control not only space, peoples, and markets, but also time. Visitors had only to tilt their gaze downward to read "statistics of the area, population and trade of the British colonies" before entering the expanded showcase displaying the proverbial fruits of colonialism and imperialism for England. A *Map of the World Shewing the Extent of the British Empire in 1886*, a linen souvenir from the exhibition, not only reinforced this worldview graphically but also allowed them to showcase it at home (fig. 5).

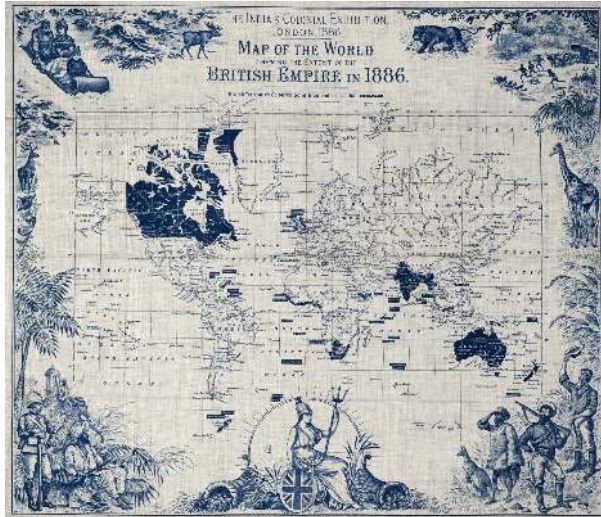


Figure 5

Map of the world showing the extent of the British Empire in 1886, produced for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, 1886. Digital image courtesy of Wikimedia.

The exhibition's West Indies Court featured “commercial exhibits of the islands”, including “sugar-canes and sugars of all kinds” (a plantation crop under threat at the time), “coffees and cocoas; dried fruits and honey; rums and liqueurs; pink pearls, corals, shells, sponges and minerals”. Visitors could also view a display “fully illustrat[ing] the early history of the West Indies”.⁴⁹ The first item within it that Cundall named was a collection of maps lent by “the Pope and the Congregation of the Propaganda”, that is, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, an organization established in the early 1600s to spread Catholicism “throughout the whole world” and to oversee missionary efforts.⁵⁰ Cundall wrote most lengthily about “the famous second Borgia map”, a document “commenced in 1494 and finished in 1529, across which a line is drawn dividing the world, for the purposes of colonisation, between Portugal and Spain” (“a repetition of the famous divisional line traced by Alexander VI. in 1494”) (fig. 6). It hung near a “miniature picture gallery” with more maps, images of Christopher Columbus, and cityscape and seascape paintings, as well as material cultural belongings of Indigenous peoples—items that Cundall called “relics”, perpetuating the idea that the descendants of those living in the region before the symbolic date of 1492 were *of the past* and “disappearing”.⁵¹



Figure 6

Diego Ribero, *Carta universal en que se contiene todo lo que del mundo se ha descubierto fasta agora*. Reproduced from the original in the Museum of "Propaganda" in Rome, Lent by His Holiness Pope Leo XIII, London, 1529, 1 map, 2 sheets 61 × 79 cm and 61 × 66 cm, published by W. Griggs, London, 1887. Digital image courtesy of The Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Washington, DC (G3200 1529.R5 1887 MLC).

While the colossal, souvenir, or second Borgia maps function independently, seen together in the exhibition they help propagate an idea to viewers about the places ostensibly represented: lands rendered part of a world for colonial conquest and economic gain. Indeed, as the anthropologist Burton Benedict writes, such exhibitions were “not only selling goods, they were selling *ideas*”, and the Caribbean held a particular place within the “ordered world” they presented.⁵² As the cultural studies scholar, curator, and museum director Wayne Modest argues, the objects from the Caribbean sent to these exhibitions “were overwhelmingly natural objects”, as opposed to objects deemed “cultural”: agricultural specimens such as fruits, minerals, and wood.⁵³ The Caribbean was thus presented as “a controlled and productive space of nature”.⁵⁴ In exploring the implications of that curatorial decision, Modest engages with the sociologist Tony Bennett’s foundational concept of the “exhibitionary complex”, based on his study of early public museums and international exhibitions such as world’s fairs. Bennett argues that these constitute “a complex distinguished by a particular set of knowledge/power” that “organize a voluntarily self-regulating citizenry”.⁵⁵ Crucially, as the exhibitionary complex congealed in the mid- to late nineteenth century, an ideology of ordering people according to racialized, classed, and gendered hierarchies became integral to its foundation.⁵⁶

Within the exhibitionary complex, “a progressivist taxonomy for the classification of goods and manufacturing processes was laminated on to a crudely racist teleological conception of the relations between peoples and races which culminated in the achievements of the metropolitans powers”, as Bennett outlines, and colonized peoples were “represented as occupying the lowest level of manufacturing civilisation” with “displays of ‘primitive’ handicrafts”.⁵⁷ Yet, as Modest’s study reveals, notably lacking in the exhibitionary complex as it emerged and evolved at the time were objects created by and for the African diaspora in the Caribbean—those who arrived and lived largely enslaved in the region and were thus “secured ... at the bottom of the human world”, as characterized by the anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot, and their descendants postemancipation, who faced the anti-Black racism entrenched by slavery.⁵⁸ Modest describes such exhibitions as forming “imaginative geographies that position the Caribbean as a space of nature rather than culture”.⁵⁹ They also positioned the Caribbean as a space of economic production and extraction with an unindividuated labor source producing commodities, not culture.

If the colossal or souvenir maps are a synecdoche for the world’s fair’s imaginative geography, Carifesta’s, in contrast, rendered its Caribbean as a space flush with cultural producers and culture, with artists and the arts. The Carifesta layer on the pilot map shows just the tip of the iceberg (fig. 7). The scale and ideology of Carifesta’s own imaginative geography reflects the broader project of “worldmaking after empire”, a project corresponding to the demise of the world’s fairs that “required a similarly global anticolonial counterpoint” to “undo the hierarchies that facilitated domination”.⁶⁰ Carifesta is one such counterpoint.

Festival Grounds

Carifesta's Material and Social Geographies

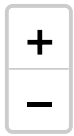


Figure 7

Carifesta '72 and '76 pilot interactive map, 2025. Digital resource courtesy of Adrienne Rooney and *British Art Studies*.

If Carifesta's imagined regional geography holds global implications, what additional insights might arise if we turn to the physical ground on which the festival actually took place? To begin thinking through this question, and taking a lead from the early Carifesta organizers' own cartographic methods, in the summer of 2021 I proposed making an interactive map of particular Carifesta iterations; one that could be activated and contributed to by others (fig. 7). This article features only a pilot of the project, but this remains the goal. Inspired by ongoing work with the art and architectural historian Fabiola López-Durán, and

guided by the scholar and designer Farès el-Dahdah, I conceived of geolocating Carifesta events on contemporaneous maps, while layering underneath them maps that show a colonial vision of the plantation histories addressed by Carifesta's early architects.⁶¹ From its start, the diachronic element of the digital map was envisioned to open up possibilities for seeing relations between the locations at which the earliest Carifestas took place and the legacies with which they and many participating artists actively tussled, and at times to help see beyond political rhetoric.

Taking place on grounds transformed by the “world-constituting” colonial empires that had remade the region, from its built environment (via the plantation and extractive economies) to its population (via colonialism, enslavement, and indentureship), Carifesta's roving and tentacular scope allowed for profound “spatial continuities”. But what, I wondered, would recognizing and studying some of them open up? What would happen if we took the envisioned potential of Carifesta's imaginative geography—wrestling with the legacies of the plantation system and embracing cultural kinships and decolonization—as a prompt to ask where its promises were met and where they fell short? I pictured the map as a project to recognize and contemplate such moments and to collaborate with others, and it brought to the fore spatial continuities that, in concert with conversations with interlocutors on the “Atlantic Worlds” project at *British Art Studies*, affected my way of seeing Carifesta's material and social geographies.

Of course, the pilot map also has limitations. Most notably, in the context of this article, the layered colonial maps are often misaligned with those of the circa 1970s and the contemporary map, reflecting differences in mapping methods and technologies, as well as changes to the landscape over time. The spatial continuities referenced in the article are thus not always actually reflected in the pilot map. The Carifesta pinpoints will appear only on the (contemporary) base map and layered circa 1970s maps roughly corresponding to the festival years. All of the layered maps require patience as they load. Significantly, the latter maps capture an era of transition, at times including colonial-era place names that were soon updated—for instance, in the cases of Georgetown's National Park and Kingston's National Heroes Park. The Carifesta pinpoints largely correspond to events that were planned for or took place during the festival: the

descriptions clarify what each point designates, including whether an event was provisionally planned rather than confirmed as having occurred. Given the evolving nature of Carifesta and the dynamism of participation and engagement with it, some events (ranging from formal to fringe) may have been inadvertently omitted. Further, several of the pinpoints reflect approximated locations, especially when primary sources list a town rather than a specific venue. Community members may recognize many of these sites, and it is hoped that ongoing collaborations will help refine the map, incorporate local knowledge more fully, and produce a more accurate representation of these spaces where the pilot map falls short. For this pilot map, Carifesta event and location information was aggregated from newspapers, flyers, pamphlets, and booklets amassed during archival research.

Moreover, the pilot map no doubt covers more ground, figuratively and literally, than an article can. This is yet another reason that I hope the map will evolve collaboratively and spark different forms of engagement. There are countless paths this could take: diachronic or synchronic, national or regional, networked or relational, in person or digitally, etc. For instance, the pilot map makes clear the importance of a geographic element in the early Carifesta sphere with which I do not engage here: though largely centralized in their host country's capital cities, the mapped festival iterations also emphasize Carifesta's reach in (more) rural and "hinterland" locations. For example, efforts to organize transportation "in and out of Georgetown" to facilitate "rural participation" were underway as Carifesta '72 approached.⁶² The map underscores this impetus, yet it can come to life only through the interpretive work of those who engage with it and whose perspectives and knowledge give it meaning. For instance, it does not show, as the scholar of mass communication and culture Vibert C. Cambridge has observed, that rural performers performed in Georgetown during Carifesta, or that some could not make it there as planned because of logistical hurdles.⁶³ Or that, despite such reach there was criticism of what rural participation actually looked like or included. The Guyanese politician Eusi Kwayana, then leader of the African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA), reportedly found fault with "an almost deliberate attempt on the part of the organizers to exclude genuine folk representation, at the grass-root level of the rural communities"; he considered the participation of Indigenous

(“Amerindian”) artists, who represented a significant rural population, tokenistic.⁶⁴ The pilot map also makes clear that, four years later, the second Carifesta expanded its embrace of rural participation. It does not, however, show that the Jamaica Festival Commission worked with parish councils, youth councils, and other groups to form parish Carifesta festival committees to stage events featuring local acts and visiting Carifesta artists; an effort intended to also help establish long-lasting performance infrastructure in more rural areas.⁶⁵ The (more) rural reach of Carifesta within these host countries broadened its audience, which would otherwise have been limited to those living in or near the capitals, those who could afford to travel, and those attending via diplomatic or artistic channels. It also introduced some visiting artists to local artists not featured in the capital shows, at least to an extent—after Carifesta '72, the novelist Earl Lovelace longed for greater engagement with local people and suggested that artists self-organize such exchanges at future festivals.⁶⁶

Again, there are plentiful ways to think with the map. For now, however, I share three diachronic case studies from the first and second Carifestas that bring to the surface tensions that become clear when we look to the ground via colonial maps.

Geographies of Ambivalence

Zooming in on the pilot map, let us turn to Jamaica, host of the second Carifesta, to examine not its organizers’ ideas this time but the ground on which it took place, or rather the *original* intended location for the festival’s centerpiece, marked on the map by two pins: its Grand Market, a gathering place to watch performances of all sorts, learn about or purchase “art and craftwork”, and taste foods from across the multilingual region.⁶⁷ Planned to take place at the recently anointed National Heroes Park—a park integral to Jamaica’s nation-building project postindependence—it was ultimately held at the National Arena because of economic constraints.⁶⁸ However, the hoped-for location sheds light on the second Carifesta moment, informed by the cultures, cultural infrastructure, and politics of Jamaica in the 1970s.⁶⁹ It also invokes the ghost of another exhibition, one that had endeavored to maintain colonial white supremacy and its hold on the geographical imagination of the world.

The hoped-for location for the centerpiece of Carifesta '76 brings us directly into “spatial continuity” with the world’s fair phenomenon, which arrived in full force on the Caribbean’s shores in 1891 via the Jamaica International Exhibition. Click on the 1891 map layer, and you will find “Exhibition” written at the racecourse toward the edge of Kingston; this corresponds to National Heroes Park, recently renamed from King George VI Memorial Park (the name visible in the layered map that is more contemporaneous with Carifesta). Springing from the “success” of Jamaica’s contribution to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition’s West Indies Court in 1886, the Jamaica Exhibition functioned to highlight and stimulate economic productivity and local “social uplift”, guided by racialized Victorian-era principles and industrial education.⁷⁰ It was a far cry from Carifesta '76. However, both were rare moments when Caribbean countries gathered together for sweeping international exhibitionary showcases on the island: among the Caribbean exhibitors in 1891 were the Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Grand Cayman, Grenada, Guyana (billed as Demerara), Haiti, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Thomas, St. Vincent, Suriname, Trinidad, and the Turks and Caicos.⁷¹ In 1891 they sent “exhibits ... mostly of sugar and rum”, while “six Carib Indians” from St. Vincent exhibited basket weaving within an “industrial village”, likely in the tradition of “living ethnological exhibits” or “human zoos”.⁷² Where the 1891 exhibition brought the world’s fair phenomenon to the island itself, Carifesta, proclaiming itself “a vehicle for the expression of regional identity, ethnic heritage, and native aspirations”, refashioned its form while working to undo its racial logics.⁷³

Nonetheless, these racial logics echoed at Carifesta. The British high commissioner, John Drinkall, watched Carifesta '76 closely, sending a five-page dispatch devoted entirely to the festival to his counterparts across the region and the secretary of state for foreign and commonwealth affairs in Britain.⁷⁴ The existence of the report and its contents are telling because Jamaica had by then been independent from Britain for well over a decade. What I want to highlight here is that, while Drinkall wrote that, “within Jamaica, the impact has on the whole been favourable”, he also noted that “many of the more conservative upper classes boycotted the whole affair”.⁷⁵ He explains that they did so for three reasons; reasons that take us to the heart of Jamaican politics at the time. First, as supporters of the political opposition, the “more conservative upper

classes” simply avoided patronizing an event that might make Manley look good. Second, they were therefore privy to (if not directly part of) antisocialist politics within the country and were concerned that “anti-Cuban exiles might let off a few bombs” at the festival. For Carifesta '76 took place during not only a tense Cold War moment in Jamaica but also a local state of emergency called to quell escalating political violence, including violence that was allegedly planned to overlap with Carifesta.⁷⁶ Third, Drinkall reported that the more conservative upper classes avoided the event because they felt that its “emphasis was too ‘black’”.⁷⁷

His last point inarguably underscores that colonial legacies—white supremacy among them—circled and impacted on Carifesta even as it countered the colonial world order. At the Grand Market, the carnival finale, and elsewhere, Carifesta '76 foregrounded Afrodiasporic religio-culture, which informed countless contributions to the festival. Scholarship emerging around it even provided historical context for the explosion of Afrodiasporic culture unfolding before visitors’ eyes. For instance, the choreographer, scholar, and critic Rex Nettleford wrote in his foreword to a *Caribbean Quarterly* special issue on slavery put together for the occasion of Carifesta '76, that “the artistic expressions of the Caribbean people”, taken together, conveyed “the common legacy of slavery, colonialism, and the plantation”.⁷⁸ These common legacies echoed across the festival in music, dance, spoken word, visual art, literature—the list continues.

The near “spatial continuity” of the Jamaica Exhibition of 1891 with Carifesta '76’s centerpiece amplifies the echoes between those avoiding the Blackness of the latter and the former’s “encourage[ment of] progressive uplift and social control over” the island’s majority Black population.⁷⁹ It also underscores the urgency, historical depth, and revolutionary spirit of celebrating Blackness officially, on such a scale, and at this time.⁸⁰ Further, if we step back from the context of Jamaican partisan politics to consider the tangle of race and class within a world-making context, Carifesta’s embrace of Blackness and the cultures of those dispossessed by the colonial project—even as particular nations faltered—gave it revolutionary impetus on a global scale. As Carifesta participant, writer and theorist Édouard Glissant, put it, from 1972 to 1981 Carifesta was “the greatest cultural spectacle in the Caribbean ... Disturbs the

powers that be”.⁸¹ It makes sense that the festival disturbed those who were comfortable with the existing world order: it refused to center colonially rooted models of cultural orientation, geopolitical allegiance, and identity, but it was not free from them.

Geographies of (Imperfect) Redress

Let us move to Georgetown, Guyana, in the pilot map to locate the pins at Festival City (in North Ruimveldt), where the 1,000-plus artists traveling for the inaugural Carifesta were to stay together. On arriving from across the Caribbean islands, Central and South America, and beyond they settled into four different types of newly built three-bedroom wooden houses on stilts. They would sit on reed chairs produced by Indigenous artisans from the coast and the interior, surrounded by decorations made from local materials.⁸² Built as part of a broader government housing scheme, the development was selected by Carifesta’s organizers to accommodate Carifesta artists and visitors, who were taken into account in the planning.⁸³ There were to be “no fences for this Festival City cultural community—just hedges, shrubbery and landscaping” (the latter by the curator of Guyana’s Botanic Gardens), creating a “homey garden-suburb atmosphere”. The aesthetic and ambiance were key. The houses were built in a “typically Guyanese” style to facilitate a feeling of “grassroot folk that artists love”. The *Carifesta '72 Newsletter*, which provided updates and information on the approaching festival and its living quarters, states that “this setting is deliberate”: “for it is important that the artists communicate with the folk, a source of inspiration during his three-week sojourn”.⁸⁴

The development was to have ample conveniences: a twenty-four-hour canteen, a communal dining hall, a bank and post office, a shopping center, a transportation hub, and a resident doctor.⁸⁵ (The writer Austin Clarke reported, however, that it was not necessarily all that it had promised to be, for infrastructural shortcomings contributed to a bad smell and uncomfortable noise levels during his stay.⁸⁶) It was here that both well-known and lesser-known artists, musicians, writers, and dancers from across the multilingual region could burn the midnight oil preparing, collaborating, connecting, and swapping stories. Footage in *A World of the Caribbean*, a feature-length film focusing on Carifesta '72, shows the development’s temporary residents talking, dancing,

making music, and masquerading, as Amanda Reid also observes, during a time of witnessing, making, and celebrating regional cultures the like of which most had never seen together.⁸⁷ Later, they would find their way to bed, up the stairs of the houses built on stilts—a “typically Guyanese” feature to protect them from flooding.⁸⁸ A photograph shows Festival City’s Nutmeg Street lined with them: about fifteen matching stilt houses dot each side (fig. 8). If they did not already do so, the houses would soon sit on streets with names recalling countries participating in the event, signifying a space grounded in pan-Caribbean togetherness.⁸⁹



Figure 8

Festival City, North Ruimveldt, Georgetown, Guyana, 1972. Digital image courtesy of the National Archives of Guyana.

However, thinking of the ground beneath the named streets, beneath the “typically Guyanese” stilts, beneath the reed chairs and local decorations, beneath the infrastructural innovations and mishaps, beneath the friendly sign marking the development, raises a question that Boyce Davies has asked of vistas and paintings of the region: “But what if that same beautiful landscape hides centuries of pain?”⁹⁰ As the *Carifesta Newsletter* observed, the development’s location “takes us back to the days when Demerara was a Dutch colony and Ruimveldt a plantation”.⁹¹ Before that, though, the grounds were perhaps home to the Lokono (Arawaks), Indigenous peoples who, along with the Warau and Caribs (Karina), lived along the coastal rivers and creeks of what later became Guyana.⁹² As the scholar Shona Jackson writes, after “the expropriation of their lands, Indigenous Peoples largely retreated and were forced from the Atlantic coast”, which meant that they were “essentially outside

of the plantation economy and its regimes of coercive labour, though their existence continued to be profoundly shaped by it”.⁹³ By the time of Carifesta '72, they were described as “a minority group in a multi-ethnic society” and, as Jackson argues, were discursively “collapsed with the lands they inhabit in the development plan for the country’s interior”.⁹⁴ Thus while it was artists from the interior who made the furniture, Jackson might characterize the inclusion of their craft as a “rescript[ing of] the culture of Indigenous Peoples as a precolonial origin for [a Guyanese] national culture”.⁹⁵ Within this interplay between Indigenous and “grassroot folk” cultures and so-called development was a perpetuation of their dispossession, recalling Kwayana’s critique (mentioned earlier). To be clear, the cultural production and belongings of Indigenous peoples were shown at the collectively constituted Carifesta '72, yet, as critics noted, not as comprehensively or holistically as they could or should have been. The festival commissioner, Frank Pilgrim, acknowledged this reality in a way that revealed the depths of the critique: “There could certainly have [been] more Amerindian participation in our shows—but even the quantum that did appear was more than has ever been presented in Georgetown before”.⁹⁶ He also noted that the expected Indigenous representation from other countries had fallen through for logistical reasons such as Mexico’s last-minute withdrawal and prohibitive transportation costs that limited Belize’s participation.⁹⁷

Indigenous life in what is now Guyana was transformed as the Dutch and British “converted” the coast “into plantations worked by enslaved labor from Africa and indentured labor, the bulk of which came from India”, to cite Jackson again.⁹⁸ Click on the late eighteenth century Demerara layers on the map, and you will see that Festival City’s grounds sat within what was then Demerara, a recently developed territory of the Dutch Empire. The earlier of these two Dutch colonial maps makes clear that the same tract of land (albeit a smaller portion) had been named “Ruymveld” by 1770-80 (as a result of the aforementioned spatial misalignment, this map does not quite line up visually in the pilot map). The boundaries of Ruimveldt plantation expanded eastward over time and soon covered the region that was to bear its name in the twentieth century. By 1818–19, according to an inventory of mortgage holders and plantation owners in Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo (which later constituted

1,050 acres.⁹⁹ Profits from the sales of copious raw goods and rum produced by the forced labor of enslaved people lined the pockets of the plantation's Dutch beneficiaries, who filed a compensation claim when the British Parliament abolished slavery. They received compensation for the emancipation of 501 enslaved people, the result of one of the larger settlement claims in British Guiana.¹⁰⁰ (The 1804 map of Jamaica in the pilot map is the same used by the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery's database, which links the plantations on the map to such claims; the database also provides information on Ruimveldt.¹⁰¹)

Ruimveldt plantation did not end there. Indeed, according to the historian Lommarsh Roopnarine's account, "in direct response to a so-called labor shortage" after emancipation, "western European governments allowed" those who had benefited from the system of slavery in the Caribbean "to import an estimated 500,000 Indian indentured servants from India to work on their plantations" through a scheme that has been characterized as "a new system of slavery".¹⁰² Such was the case in British Guiana, where indenture contracts were officially cancelled as 1919 ended.¹⁰³ Ruimveldt was one of several sites of well-known labor uprisings in 1905 and 1924, both of which turned deadly. The 1905 uprising is often called the Ruimveldt Riots because "several workers from Plantation Ruimveldt were among the first to lose their lives in the violence", as the seminal Guyanese historian and political organizer Walter Rodney writes.¹⁰⁴ It ended with over 100 convictions for rioting.¹⁰⁵ The 1924 uprising, prompted by worker exploitation, including inadequate wages, poor housing infrastructure, and dire working conditions, became "a signpost of multiracial protest and a unity of working class interests and desire for organization", according to the scholar Nigel Westmaas.¹⁰⁶ Click the 1940s–1950s layers on the map, and you will see colonial-era maps made around twenty-five years before the ribbon was cut at Festival City that show that Ruimveldt remained a sugar estate "under present cultivation" within the British Empire.

The reconfigurations of parts of the grounds of Ruimveldt from a "geography of domination" to something else entirely is simply one example of geographic redress performed by Carifesta, even if imperfect and incomplete.¹⁰⁷ Festival City provided a space for recognizing connections between people with a shared

cultural heritage who had been scattered across the region by the plantation system. Like many other spaces across Carifesta, this space with its long lineage of dispossession and of life and culture in captivity from which people sought freedom was transformed into something wholly otherwise. Such transformations rippled through the festival's geographies, deepening as Caribbean culture coursed through them. With this in mind, it becomes all the more clear why Kamau Brathwaite considered the first Carifesta to have been one of the most significant events in the region since emancipation.¹⁰⁸

And yet criticisms of an overemphasis on Afrodiasporic representation and the dearth of Indigenous and Indian representation emphasize that this redress was partial.¹⁰⁹ One critic even suggested that it would be wise for attempts to realize a national culture and a regional Caribbean culture to learn from the errors of Carifesta '72.¹¹⁰ For, while the festival created spaces for recognizing kinships rooted in—and on the ground where—racial capitalism had once thrived, “spatial continuities” help underscore that its logics also continued.

Geographies of Silence

As you can see on the pilot map, exhibitions at Carifesta '72 ranged from a regional art exhibition displaying over five hundred artworks to solo shows by Aubrey Williams, Stanley Greaves, and Philip Moore.¹¹¹ About a fifteen-minute drive from Festival City, visitors would have found one of these exhibitions at St. George's School in central Georgetown—marked by a pin on the digital map—titled *The Land and Its People*.¹¹² An international photographic exhibition, it was a regional geographic meditation in its own right, made up of presentations from Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Martinique, the Netherlands Antilles, St. Kitts–Nevis–Anguilla, St. Lucia, Trinidad, the US Virgin Islands, and Venezuela.¹¹³ For the purposes of this article, I focus on one of Guyana's own contributions: a special section devoted to Guybau, the recently formed Guyana Bauxite Company, which assumed facilities freshly taken over during the Burnham administration's nationalization campaign.¹¹⁴ Revisit the *Map of British Guiana* from the 1940s–1950s on the pilot map to get a glimpse of the prevalence of bauxite mining and other extractive industries in the country before independence. With twenty-six photographs, the Guybau section was about half the size of Guyana's

The Land and Its People contribution, which the catalog (pictured in the map pin) suggests included prizewinning entries and additional shots of landscapes, architecture, artworks, and people, with descriptions such as “Amerindians show prowess with bow and arrow”, “A typical Guyanese smile”, and “Guyana’s future lies in such hands”.¹¹⁵ In the photographic exhibition Guyana was not alone in its self-styled nationalist promotion or its anonymization and at times typologizing descriptions of the people represented, thus occasionally mirroring colonial ethnographic practices, but it seems unique in its sizable company display.

Somewhat pedantic but fairly accessible descriptions in the photographic exhibition’s catalog—for instance, “Calcined Alumina from Guybau being loaded into a large ocean going vessel at the Alumina Plant dock, Mackenzie”—suggest that the Guybau section contained images that were similar to a feature on the company in the local *Sunday Chronicle* a few months earlier (figs. 9–12).¹¹⁶ “Relatively radical” for the time, Guyana’s nationalization efforts were displayed proudly, and the *Chronicle* reported that, on Guybau’s invitation, “25 leading writers, artists and sculptors” who were in town for Carifesta even traveled “up to Linden” to view the facilities.¹¹⁷ Hosted by Guybau, they toured Dorabece mine and the bauxite plant and had lunch at the Mackenzie Hotel, followed by a discussion at Watooka House.¹¹⁸ On the map follow the Demerara River south to find the pin at Linden, which also had a local Carifesta committee and hosted several touring and local performances during Carifesta '72.¹¹⁹



Figure 9

Photograph from a *Sunday Chronicle* article on Guybau, 20 February 1972, showing bauxite being loaded into ore cars. Digital image courtesy of the *Sunday Chronicle*.

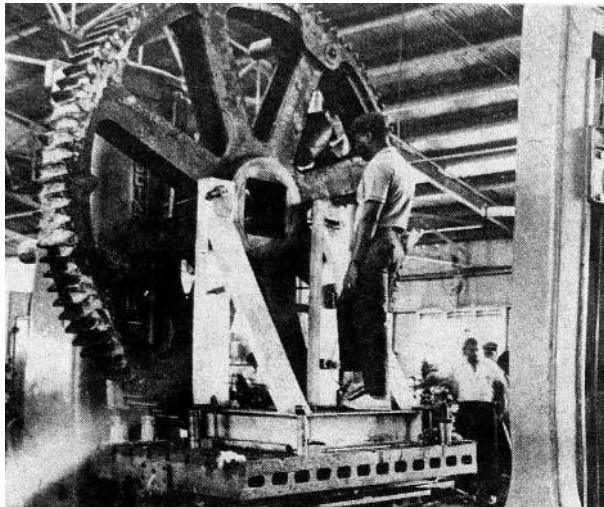


Figure 10

Photograph from a *Sunday Chronicle* article on Guybau, 20 February 1972, showing an inspector at a gear wheel from Guybau's draglines. Digital image courtesy of the *Sunday Chronicle*.

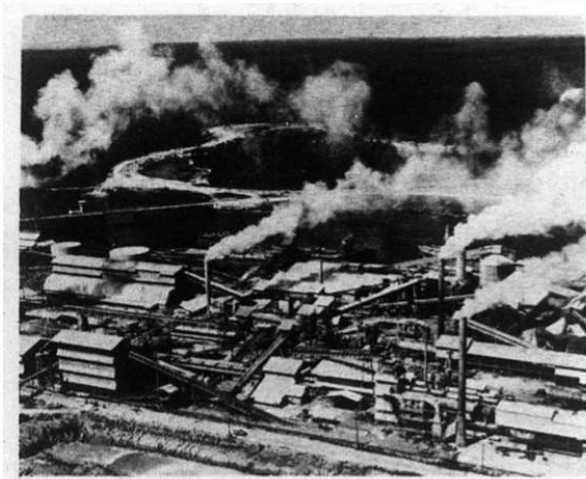


Figure 11

Photograph from a *Sunday Chronicle* article on Guybau, 20 February 1972, showing the bauxite plant at Linden. Digital image courtesy of the *Sunday Chronicle*.



Figure 12

Photograph from a *Sunday Chronicle* article on Guybau, 20 February 1972, showing the Mackenzie Hospital. Digital image courtesy of the *Sunday Chronicle*.

If the Guybau photographs and visits openly showcased what Burnham called “the first major and concrete act of economic independence”, they also glossed over the recent trauma of the area, which was central to the ethnonationalist violence plaguing Guyana’s constitutional decolonization process in the previous decade.¹²⁰ As Bhagirat-Rivera wrote in his analysis of Carifesta '72 in relation to Guyanese nation building, the festival was not removed from racialized realities in Guyana, as evidenced in particular by the unapproved reallocation of money from the Indian Immigration Fund to build a venue for

the festival, the National Cultural Centre, and the resulting boycott.¹²¹ If the rhetoric surrounding the festival created an expectation that it would forge national unity despite the volatile partisan, racialized divisions in the country, the reality was different.¹²² The focus on Guybau showcased what some deemed “easily the most significant consequence to date of the pressure for economic decolonization being exerted on Caribbean Governments by the population of the region”.¹²³ But the showcase was also a profound expression —albeit a hushed one—of another colonial technology, the minimization and erasure of racialized violence.

For in this bauxite belt—which by the time of Carifesta had been collectively renamed Linden from Mackenzie, Wismar, and Christianburg in honor of the prime minister (whose first name was Linden)—tragic acts of racialized violence had occurred that became what the Red Thread Women’s NGO called “a symbol of the terrible racial violence of the 1960s”.¹²⁴ In their “notes on the Guyana Indian/African race divide, and on organizing within and against it”, the organizer Andaiye and the scholar Alissa Trotz write that, “between 1961 and 1964, Guyana experienced a period of violence between African- and Indian-Guyanese of which one researcher has written that its size, unexpectedness and brutality marked it as ‘the introduction of something indelible ... in its imagery and in its consequential impact’”.¹²⁵ From this period, “the violence which is perhaps most etched in the separate collective memories of Indian- and African-Guyanese was perpetrated in the bauxite belt on May 25 and July 6, 1964”, they write.¹²⁶ Telling, with care, the story of strikes, clashes, fear, rape, and death they also emphasize how subsequent discourse on the violence, while endeavoring to heal the scars left in its wake, entrenched racialized division. In his recent biography of Burnham, the sociologist Linden Lewis, perhaps with the aim of shifting the discourse, describes how, “on May 25, 1964, Wismar ... was the site of intense racial conflict resulting in a massacre mainly of Indian Guianese, with reports of rape, beatings, murder, and house burning”, elaborating on the staggering number of people killed, injured, and arrested.¹²⁷ He goes on to describe: “On July 6, 1964, the *Son Chapman*, a vessel owned by Norman Chapman that ferried people from Georgetown to Wismar, sunk as a result of an explosion ... [which] killed forty-three people, all African

Guianese”. For Lewis, “these two tragedies represented the bookends of the racial strife that was taking place in British Guiana at the time”.¹²⁸

In Andaiye and Trotz’s extended, polyvocal, and fairly recent narrative, it becomes clear that an afterimage of the violence remains; far from forgotten, the tragedies continue to haunt the eye and mind and perhaps, for many viewers, they colored the photographs of the bauxite belt so proudly hung at Carifesta. In my research on the festival, I have not come across evidence suggesting that this national tragedy and its lasting effects were officially present at the pan-Caribbean Carifesta. It likely came up between participants and may even have been informally referred to at the Watooka House discussion, but the catalog descriptions of the Guybau display were certainly, and predictably, silent on the subject.¹²⁹ The show featured the Mackenzie Hospital, where injured people from both tragedies were treated.¹³⁰ The catalog description emphasizes its “modern operating theatre and highly qualified staff” who “looks after the sick and injured, ensuring a healthy workforce”.¹³¹ Descriptions of the hospital and the town, and its extractive economy buried the recent trauma. Indeed, the display of Guybau at the festival is a profound instance of the confluence of political exhibition, ethnonationalism, and the fraught relationship between racialization and redress in the region’s (post)independence era manifesting as a grave silence, as “development” marched on.

Racial Geographies

“The ideology of racism”, George Lamming acknowledged in 1980, was “a cultural force that would influence all our lives”. Speaking at a university graduation ceremony in Barbados of his own family’s “inheritan[ce of] a region which was not designed for social living” but “exclusively for production”, Lamming gestured toward the possibility of a self-determined pan-Caribbean future for, despite postindependence “modifications [...] we have never, never been truly liberated from the persistent legacy of this system”.¹³² His words resonate with McKittrick as she thinks with George Beckford, whose work (as mentioned earlier) also impacted Carifesta’s conceptual architects. McKittrick observes that his “research on the plantation sheds light on the ways painful racial histories hold in them the possibility to organize our collective futures”.¹³³

Carifesta was haunted by the ongoing politics of “racial difference”, a constitutive logic of the colonial project that the festival’s imagined (and very often social) geography confronted—even as, by the independence and postindependence era, that politics had morphed beyond imperial and colonial policy into statecraft, ethnonationalism, and garrison politics.¹³⁴ Thus, while the festival’s imagined geography motioned toward an anticolonial future built on radically different geopolitical, creative, and interpersonal relationships, the “painful racial histories” established by colonialism continued to radiate and impact on the present. As the force of Caribbean creativity and artistic imagination surged across Carifesta’s geographies, it could not unravel the coil of racial logics and their presence in postcolonial politics, even as it unsettled (racialized) conceptions of taste and ways of moving, thinking, knowing, relating, and seeing.

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About the author

Adrienne Rooney is Assistant Professor of Visual and Material Culture at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. She obtained her PhD in Art History at Rice University and was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Frederick Douglass Institute and Department of Black Studies at the University of Rochester. Her work foregrounds emancipatory artistic practices, counter-geographies, and intellectual traditions in the Caribbean and US South while wrestling with the centuries-long story of cultural violence and defiance in contact zones established by colonization and the plantation system's labor regimes of slavery and indentureship. She is working on her first book project, based on her award-winning PhD dissertation, "A Worldbuilding Moment: Aesthetics and Economics in the Caribbean Festival of Arts' (Carifesta) Revolutionary Era, 1966–1981". In addition to her written scholarship, criticism, and public talks, she centers collaborative public history projects.

Footnotes

1. Gordon Rohlehr, "A Scuffling of Islands: The Dream and Reality of Caribbean Unity in Poetry and Song", in *The Caribbean Integration Process: A People Centred Approach*, ed. Kenneth Hall and Myrtle Chuck-A-Sang (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2007), 74.
2. This map clearly situates us in Carifesta's geographic vision, and I have engaged it similarly in Adrienne Rooney, "Cartographies of Kinship in the Caribbean Festival of Arts", in *The Routledge Companion to African Diaspora Art History*, ed. Eddie Chambers (London: Routledge, 2025), 307–21.
3. For an entry point into regional precedents, see Rooney, "Cartographies of Kinship". For a more extended story of efforts at regional unity, see Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel and Katerina Gonzalez Seligmann, "Confederating the Archipelago: Introduction", *Small Axe* 24, no. 1 (61) (March 2020): 37–43.
4. Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

5. This era corresponds with what David Scott has theorized in the Caribbean context, with reference to the economist Samir Amin, as the “Bandung era”, which has contributed to discourse on the Bandung Conference’s pivotal consequence to a decolonizing world. David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). For one of the earliest theorizations of the conference, see Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference* (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing, 1956).
6. There are ample reflections about this in the Carifesta orbit. See, for instance, Pearl Eintou Springer, ed., *The New Aesthetic and the Meaning of Culture in the Caribbean: “The Dream Coming in with the Rain”: Proceedings of the Carifesta V Symposia, August 1992* (Port of Spain: National Carnival Commission, Carifesta VI Secretariat, 1995).
7. Antonio Gaztambide-Géigel, “The Invention of the Caribbean in the 20th Century (The Definitions of the Caribbean as a Historical and Methodological Problem)”, *Social and Economic Studies* 53, no. 3 (September 2004): 127–57.
8. Adrienne A. Rooney, “A Worldbuilding Moment: Aesthetics and Economics in the Caribbean Festival of Arts’ (Carifesta) Revolutionary Era, 1966–1981” (PhD diss., Rice University, 2023), <https://hdl.handle.net/1911/115260>; Percy C. Hintzen, “Afro-Creole Nationalism as Elite Domination: The English-Speaking West Indies”, in *Foreign Policy and the Black (Inter)national Interest*, ed. Charles P. Henry (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 185–215. I borrow the term “world constituting” from Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*, 2.
9. Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), x, xiii.
10. “Carifesta: An Embodiment of Caribbean Integration—through the Years”, CARICOM: Caribbean Community, <https://caricom.org/carifesta-through-the-years/>; Kendol Morgan, “Flashback to CARIFESTA XXI—Haiti, 2015”, *Caricom Today*, 17 August 2017.

11. Amanda Michelle Reid, “To Own Ourselves: Dancing Caribbean Radicalism in Post-Independence Jamaica” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2020), 246.
12. Rachel Grace Newman, “The Boundary of Light: Buried Beings and Black Sacred Geographies”, *Small Axe* 28, no. 1 (73) (March 2024): 44.
13. The CARICOM Reparations Commission states that “over 10 million Africans were stolen from their homes and forcefully transported to the Caribbean as the enslaved chattel and property of Europeans”, while SlaveVoyages estimates well over 4.5 million people disembarked in the region. “CARICOM Ten Point Plan for Reparatory Justice”, <https://caricom.org/caricom-ten-point-plan-for-reparatory-justice/>; “Estimates: Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade”, SlaveVoyages, <https://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates>. CARICOM notes that “nearly half a million” people from India alone were brought to the region as indentured laborers. “Our People”, CARICOM, <https://caricom.org/our-community/who-we-are/our-people/>.
14. Rooney, “Cartographies of Kinship”, 308–11.
15. For an extensive analysis of these dynamics, see Aaron Kamugisha, *Beyond Coloniality: Citizenship and Freedom in the Caribbean Intellectual Tradition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019).
16. Focusing on Guyana, Bhagirat-Rivera contrasts the “utopian representation of the Caribbean as a culturally unified Afro-diasporic space” with the “on the ground politics and realities” of the multiracial region, especially “racial divisions” in Guyana. Ramaesh Joseph Bhagirat-Rivera, “Between Pan-Africanism and a Multiracial Nation: Race, Regionalism, and Guyanese Nation-Building through the Caribbean Festival of Creative Arts (CARIFESTA), 1972”, *Interventions* 20, no. 7 (2018): 1023, 1035. In a similar vein, and using terms with which I also engage, Kooiker considers Carifesta as Guyana’s fraught “attempt to make ‘material reality’ out of the ‘imagined ideal’ of a Pan-Caribbean, or regional, public sphere”. René Johannes Kooiker, “Edward Kamau Brathwaite at Carifesta '72: The Occasion for Caribbean Criticism”, *archipelagos* 6 (May 2022): 8.

17. McKittrick employs this phrase in relation to a particular case, the contestation in the 1990s of the treatment of 10,000–20,000 enslaved people buried in Manhattan, New York, in a cemetery (with interments from the late 1600s to the late 1700s) that we now know as the African Burial Ground National Monument. While the Black community wished to, as McKittrick puts it, “ethically memorializ[e] this history of death”, members of the scientific community, initially with the contributions of just a “few black scholars”, wanted to analyze the bodies and their surroundings. McKittrick thus writes of the living and the dead, science and storytelling, past and present, not in abstract but in concrete and material terms that also signify an all-encompassing fact: “the legacy of slavery and the labor of the unfree both shape and are part of the environment we presently inhabit”. Katherine McKittrick, “Plantation Futures”, *Small Axe* 17, no. 3 (42) (November 2013): 1–2.
18. A.J. Seymour, “Reflections on the Conference”, *Kaie*, December 1966, 7–10.
19. Michael Anthony, “Writers Spell Out Way to Go”, *Sunday Guardian*, 24 September 1972, Add MS 89377/10/17, Andrew Salkey Papers, British Library, London; Letters from Jan Carew to Andrew Salkey, August 1966–May 1967, Add MS 89377/7/10, Andrew Salkey Papers, British Library; Proposal from Donald Locke to Prime Minister, “Caribbean Festival of the Arts—February, 1967”, A.J. Seymour Papers, Caribbean Research Library, University of Guyana, Georgetown.
20. Petamber Persaud, “Carifesta Then and Carifesta 10. Part VII”, *Sunday Chronicle*, 24 August 2008, 8, Carifesta Collection, Digital Library of the Caribbean, <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/ca00100607/00001>.
21. Andrew Salkey, *Georgetown Journal: A Caribbean Writer’s Journey from London via Port of Spain to Georgetown, Guyana 1970* (London: New Beacon Books, 1972), 227.
22. Salkey, *Georgetown Journal*, 232.
23. Salkey, *Georgetown Journal*, 235, 279.
24. For Williams and McBurnie, see Salkey, *Georgetown Journal*. For James, see “Report on the Caribbean Writers & Artists Conference”,

- Kaie*, December 1966, 3–6. My archival research has yet to locate a roll call of 1970 convention delegates, but through *Georgetown Journal* and archival research I have identified several of them with (near) certainty and deduced which of the subcommittees they served on (a topic deserving of its own feature). Rooney, “A Worldbuilding Moment”, 131–33.
25. David Scott, “Preface”, *Small Axe* 8, no. 1 (15) (1 March 2004): v.
 26. Colin A. Palmer, *Cheddi Jagan and the Politics of Power: British Guiana’s Struggle for Independence* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 233. For an entry point into this history and a detailed account of ethnonationalist tensions in relation to Carifesta '72 see Bhagirat-Rivera, “Between Pan-Africanism and a Multiracial Nation”.
 27. Forbes Burnham, “Address delivered by the Prime Minister of Guyana, Forbes Burnham, at the Opening of the Writers’ and Artists’ Convention at Critchlow Labour College, Georgetown, Tuesday 24th, February, 1970”, in Salkey, *Georgetown Journal*, 377.
 28. They specified that it be composed of individuals from the nation’s government, arts council, education ministry, university, and also “the Trades’ Union Congress, ASCRIA [African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa], the Ratoon Group, the Amerindian Council, Indian Associations, CARIFTA, *et cetera*”. Salkey, *Georgetown Journal*, 277.
 29. Burnham, “Address”, 377; Cynthia Abrahams, *Robin “Dobru” Raveles: The Life of a Caribbean Poet and Politician, 1935–1983* ([Amsterdam?]: Abrahams Publishers, 2010), 130–32.
 30. Salkey, *Georgetown Journal*, 276.
 31. Salkey, *Georgetown Journal*, 277.
 32. David Scott, “The Re-enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter”, *Small Axe* 8 (September 2000): 146. See also Anne Walmsley, *The Caribbean Artists Movement, 1966–1972: A Literary & Cultural History* (London: New Beacon Books, 1992), 254–55.

33. Lloyd Best, "Independent Thought and Caribbean Freedom" (1967), in *Readings in the Political Economy of the Caribbean*, ed. Norman Girvan and Owen Jefferson (Kingston: New World Group, 1971), 7.
34. Best, "Independent Thought", 7; Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 6.
35. Though if, as the referenced economic theorists argued at the time, the plantation economy was upheld in the twentieth century by multinational corporations, inviting countries seizing their assets perfectly fit the frame. Rooney, "A Worldbuilding Moment", 177–80.
36. A.J. Seymour, "Mr. Arthur Seymour Addressing the Carifesta Secretariat Seminar", circa 1972, Julian Mayfield Papers, Sc MG 339, Box 34, Folder 11, "Carifesta", Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York; Elma Seymour, *A Goodly Heritage: The Autobiography of Elma E. Seymour* (Georgetown: E. Seymour, 1987); George L. Beckford, *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Rooney, "Cartographies of Kinship", 309.
37. Rohlehr, "A Scuffling of Islands", 74.
38. With "geography of domination" I reference McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, x–xxi.
39. See, for instance Andrew Salkey's interviews with Walter Rodney and Clive Thomas: "Interview with Dr. Walter Rodney", 4 June 1970, London, in Salkey, *Georgetown Journal*, 383–88; "Interview with Dr. Clive Thomas", 3 August 1970, London, in Salkey, *Georgetown Journal*, 389–98.
40. Heads of Government of Commonwealth Caribbean Countries, "Communiqué Issued at the Conclusion of the Seventh Heads of Government Conference of Commonwealth Caribbean Countries 9–14 October 1972, Chaguaramas, Trinidad and Tobago", 15 October 1972, <https://caricom.org/communique-issued-at-the-conclusion-of-the->

- seventh-heads-of-government-conference-of-commonwealth-caribbean-countries-9-14-october-1972-chaguaramas-trinidad-and-tobago/.
41. A.J. Seymour, Errol Hill, Michael Anthony, Robin Dobru, Lennox Brown (drafting committee), et al., “Statement of Caribbean Writers and Artists at Carifesta '72”, revised 9 September 1972, A.J. Seymour Papers, Caribbean Research Library, University of Guyana.
 42. Heads of Government of Commonwealth Caribbean Countries, “Communiqué”.
 43. Michael Manley, “Cabinet Submission No 286 OPM 10/75: Countries to Be Invited to Participate in CARIFESTA 1976 (Second Caribbean Festival of Creative Arts) to Be Held in Jamaica 2nd to 22nd August 1976”, 5 June 1975, Jamaica Archives & Records Department, Kingston.
 44. Carole Boyce Davies, *Caribbean Spaces: Escapes from Twilight Zones* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 6.
 45. Manley, “Cabinet Submission No 286 OPM 10/75”.
 46. Reuben Rose-Redwood et al., “Decolonizing the Map: Recentering Indigenous Mappings”, *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization* 55, no. 3 (Fall 2020): 153.
 47. Rose-Redwood et. al, “Decolonizing the Map”, 152.
 48. Frank Cundall, “Introduction”, in *Reminiscences of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition*, ed. Frank Cundall (London: William Clowes & Sons for Royal Commission, 1886), 6; Wayne Modest, ““A Period of Exhibitions’: World’s Fairs, Museums, and the Laboring Black Body in Jamaica”, in *Victorian Jamaica*, ed. Timothy Barringer and Wayne Modest (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 537.
 49. Frank Cundall, “Western Possessions”, in *Reminiscences*, ed. Cundall, 78.
 50. The Vatican, “The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples”, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cevang/documents/rc_con_cevang_2
 51. Cundall, “Western Possessions”, 78; Wayne Modest, “We Have Always Been Modern: Museums, Collections, and Modernity in the Caribbean”, *Museum Anthropology* 35, no. 1 (2012): 92.

52. Burton Benedict, "The Anthropology of World's Fairs", in *The Anthropology of World's Fairs: San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915*, ed. Burton Benedict (Berkeley, CA: Lowie Museum of Anthropology with Scholar Press, 1983), 2 (emphasis added).
53. Modest, "We Have Always Been Modern", 87.
54. Modest, "We Have Always Been Modern", 87.
55. Tony Bennett, *Museums, Power, Knowledge: Selected Essays* (London: Routledge, 2018), 19, 27.
56. Bennett, *Museums, Power, Knowledge*, 19.
57. Bennett, *Museums, Power, Knowledge*, 46; see also Modest, "We Have Always Been Modern", 92–93.
58. Modest, "We Have Always Been Modern", 90–91; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 77.
59. Modest, "We Have Always Been Modern", 93.
60. Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*, 2.
61. These maps are as follows, in reverse chronological order. *Map of Kingston*, 3rd ed., 1972, published for the Jamaica Government by the British Government's Overseas Development Administration (Directorate of Overseas Surveys), Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, ALMA: 990202512090107026. *Map of Guyana*, compiled, drawn, and prepared for publication in the Cartographic Division, Lands Department, Ministry of Agriculture, revised January 1971, Caribbean Research Library, University of Guyana. *City of Georgetown*, compiled and drawn in the Cartographic Section, Survey Department of Guyana, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, February 1969, National Library of Guyana, ref. 912.8815GGU. *Map of British Guiana, Compiled in Connection with the Report of the Legislative Council Development Committee of the Colony*, drawn by Directorate of Overseas Surveys from information from the Department of Lands and Mines, Georgetown, British Guiana, 1947, revised 1958, University of Texas Libraries, Perry-

Castañeda Library Map Collection. *Plan of Part of the Sea Coast of British Guiana Showing Sugar Estates under Present Cultivation*, [Teddington]: Directorate of Colonial Surveys, 1948, Digital Maps & Geospatial Data, Princeton University Library. *Rough Sketch of Country round Kingston, Jamaica, Compiled from Existing Maps and Corrected by Reference to the Admiralty Charts*, sketches by T. Harrison Esq.; Captain Woodford, York and Lancaster Regiment; Captain Thwaytes; Lieutenant Phillips and Lieutenant V. Climo, West India Regiment; and personal observation by Major C.E. de la Poer Beresford D.A.A.G., lithographed at the Intelligence Division, War Office, June 1891, published on behalf of the War Office by Edward Stanford, London, collection of the author. James Robertson, *To the King's Most Excellent Majesty, This Map of the Island of Jamaica, Constructed from Actual Surveys ...*, London: J. Robertson, 1804, National Library of Scotland EMAM.s.4; for a clear view of plantations on this map, see the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery's Jamaica map at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/maps/caribbean/jamaica>. Johan Christoph von Heneman, *Origineele kaart van de Colonie en riviere van Demerary. Als ook de Oostelycke en Westelycke zeekusten van dezelve met de plantagien en gronden en aanleggingen tot coultuure derzelve kusten*, 1795, Nationaal Archief, The Netherlands, NL-HaNA_4.VEL_1502. C. von Heneman, *Kaart van de Oostwal der rivier Demerary en de daaraan gelegene plantages*, circa 1770–80, Nationaal Archief, The Netherlands, NL-HaNA_4.VEL_1504.

62. “Notes of a Meeting Held with the Hon. Minister of Information, Culture and Youth at the Carifesta Secretariat on Thursday, 17 August 1972, at 10.00 am”, A.J. Seymour Papers, Caribbean Research Library, University of Guyana.
63. Vibert Cambridge, *Musical Life in Guyana: History and Politics of Controlling Creativity* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 199.
64. Rickey Singh, “The Rights and the Wrongs about Carifesta”, *Caribbean Contact*, 29 December 1972, Carifesta Collection, Digital Library of the

- Caribbean, <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/CA00199880/00001>.
65. “Assistance Needed by the Parishes to Fully Involve Rural Jamaica in Carifesta 76”, Attachment to Cabinet Submission No. 71 OPM 4/76, 29 April 1976, Jamaica Archives & Records Department.
 66. Singh, “The Rights and the Wrongs about Carifesta”.
 67. “Carifesta Grand Market Has New Venue”, *Daily Gleaner*, 15 March 1976, 18; “Trinidad Mas’ for Jamaica’s Carifesta”, *Trinidad Guardian*, 22 January 1976, Digital Library of Trinidad and Tobago. With “ambivalence”, I reference Sylvia Wynter’s use of the term to name a wavering between worldviews (plantation and provision ground) shaping Caribbean society. Sylvia Wynter, “Jonkonnu in Jamaica: Towards the Interpretation of Folk Dance as a Cultural Process”, *Jamaica Journal* 4, no. 2 (June 1970): 34–48.
 68. Petrina Dacres, “Modern Monuments: Fashioning History and Identity in Post-colonial Jamaica” (PhD diss., Emory University, 2008); “Carifesta Grand Market Has New Venue”, *Daily Gleaner*.
 69. As the art historian Veerle Poupeye writes, “The 1960s and '70s were a period of tremendous expansion in Jamaican cultural production” and “cultural infrastructure”. Veerle Poupeye, “What Times Are These? Visual Art and Social Crisis in Postcolonial Jamaica”, *Small Axe* 13, no. 2 (29) (July 2009): 169–70.
 70. Mark Nesbitt, “Botany in Victorian Jamaica”, in *Victorian Jamaica*, ed. Barringer and Modest, 230; Modest, ““A Period of Exhibitions””, 538–45.
 71. Karen Booth, “When Jamaica Welcomed the World: The Great Exhibition of 1891”, *Jamaica Journal* 18, no. 3 (August–October 1985): 47.
 72. Booth, “When Jamaica Welcomed the World”, 46–47. For more on this type of display see Saloni Mathur, “Living Ethnological Exhibits: The Case of 1886”, *Cultural Anthropology* 15, no. 4 (November 2000): 492–524; and Pascal Blanchard et al., eds., *Human Zoos: Science and*

- Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, trans. Teresa Bridgeman (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).
73. Office of the Prime Minister, “People of the Sun in All Their Glory: Carifesta 76 Jamaica”, 1976, JLR/2/5/10, Personal Papers of John La Rose, George Padmore Institute, London.
 74. John Drinkall, “Carifesta ‘76’ (The British High Commissioner at Kingston to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs)”, FCO 160/41/18, 5, Records of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Predecessors, The National Archives, Kew.
 75. Drinkall, “Carifesta ‘76’”, 4.
 76. Drinkall, “Carifesta ‘76’”, 4; see also Ralph Blumenthal, “Emergency Cuts Political Violence”, *Daily Gleaner*, 31 July 1976, 8, which had appeared earlier in *The New York Times* with the title “Jamaica’s Emergency Rule Reduces Political Violence” on 16 July 1976.
 77. Drinkall, “Carifesta ‘76’”, 4.
 78. Rex Nettleford, “Foreword”, in “Essays on Slavery”, special issue, *Caribbean Quarterly* 22, no. 2–3 (June–September 1976): 3.
 79. Modest, ““A Period of Exhibitions””, 544–45.
 80. For more, see, among others, Rachel L. Mordecai, *Citizenship under Pressure: The 1970s in Jamaican Literature and Culture* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2014); and Anita M. Waters, *Race, Class and Political Symbols: Rastafari and Reggae in Jamaican Politics*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 1985).
 81. Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash, 3rd ed. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 262.
 82. *Carifesta '72 Newsletter*, March 1972, Julian Mayfield Papers, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; “Festival City—a Creative Centre”, *Sunday Chronicle*, 30 April 1972, 13, Carifesta Collection, Digital Library of the Caribbean, <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/ca00100093/00001>.

83. *Carifesta '72 Newsletter*, January 1972, Julian Mayfield Papers, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.
84. *Carifesta '72 Newsletter*, June 1972, Personal Papers of John La Rose, 2/5/10, George Padmore Institute.
85. *Carifesta '72 Newsletter*, June 1972.
86. Letter from Austin Clarke to Andrew Salkey, 4 September 1972, Add MS 89377/7/14, Andrew Salkey Papers, British Library.
87. Reid, “To Own Ourselves”, 252–53.
88. *Carifesta '72 Newsletter*, June 1972.
89. Terrence Blackman, in conversation with Michele Luard-Charles and Carolyn Walcott, “Festival City and Carifesta '72: The People Who Came”, panel at symposium, “The Inaugural Caribbean Festival of Arts as Prism: 20th Century Festivals in the Multilingual Caribbean”, 5–7 August 2022.
90. Boyce Davies, *Caribbean Spaces*, 163.
91. *Carifesta '72 Newsletter*, June 1972.
92. Cambridge, *Musical Life in Guyana*, 15. Various sources cited in this article employ slightly different naming conventions to refer to Indigenous groups in Guyana. I have referred to those of the Amerindian Peoples Association (<https://apaguyana.com/>); for territories, I also consulted Native Land Digital (<https://native-land.ca>).
93. Shona N. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 2.
94. Andrew Sanders, “Amerindians in Guyana: A Minority Group in a Multi-ethnic Society”, *Caribbean Studies* 12, no. 2 (July 1972): 31–51; Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, 59.
95. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, 157.
96. Frank Pilgrim, “Five ‘Faults’ of Carifesta”, *Sunday Chronicle*, 24 September 1972, Carifesta Collection, Digital Library of the Caribbean, <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/CA00199628/00001>.

97. Pilgrim, “Five ‘Faults’ of Carifesta”. Peru, another invitee with a sizable Indigenous population, sent contributions to Carifesta '72's book exhibition, but I have not been able to confirm its participation more broadly. “Book Exhibition Starts Three-Week Festival”, unidentified news clipping, Carifesta '72 newspaper scrapbook, National Archives of Guyana, Georgetown.
98. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*, 2.
99. “Lijst van eigenaren van plantages, en houders van hypothecken op plantages in Berbice, Demerara en Essequibo, 1818–1819”, transcription by Paul Koulen, 2014, from “Lists of Dutch Proprietors of Plantations in Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice, 1818–19”, 28, The National Archives, Kew, CO 111/28, <https://cbg.nl/documents/55/Berbice-Demerara-Essequibo.pdf>.
100. “British Guiana 625 (Ruimveldt)”, 30 November 1835, Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/8043>; Dave Hollett. *Passage from India to El Dorado: Guyana and the Great Migration* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1999), 28.
101. Jamaica map, Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/maps/caribbean/jamaica>.
102. Lommarsh Roopnarine, “Indian Indentured Servitude in the Atlantic World”, in *Oxford Bibliographies in Atlantic History*, ed. Trevor Burnard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). DOI:10.1093/obo/9780199730414-0210.; Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830–1920* (London: Oxford University Press for Institute of Race Relations, 1974).
103. Roopnarine, “Indian Indentured Servitude in the Atlantic World”; Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 160.
104. Walter Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881–1905* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), 190.

105. Hollett, *Passage from India to El Dorado*, 244.
106. Nigel Westmaas, “Knowing Our Past: Current Demonstrations and Histories of Public Protest in Guyana”, *Stabroek News*, 19 December 2011, <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2011/12/19/features/in-the-diaspora/knowning-our-past-current-demonstrations-and-histories-of-public-protest-in-guyana/>; Silvius Egerton Wilson, “The 1924 Workers’ Incident at Ruimveldt British Guiana and the Development of Working People’s Organisation” (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1997).
107. Generally, Ruimveldt was becoming a different place by 1972. North Ruimveldt housed Festival City; the nearby South Ruimveldt Gardens housing development was or would soon be home to “a growing middle class, including many who had returned from study abroad”. Rupert Roopnaraine, untitled essay, in *Walter A. Rodney: A Promise of Revolution*, ed. Clairmont Chung (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012), 146n18.
108. Edward Kamau Brathwaite, “The Love Axe/l: Part Three—Developing a Caribbean Aesthetic 1962–1974”, *Bim* 16, no. 63 (June 1978), 190–91n57.
109. Pilgrim, “Five ‘Faults’ of Carifesta”; Singh, “The Rights and the Wrongs about Carifesta”.
110. “Carifesta—a Grand Experiment”, *Sunday Graphic*, 17 September 1972, Carifesta Collection, Digital Library of the Caribbean, <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/ca00199861/00001>.
111. The heading of this section refers to the epigraph to Bahadur, *Coolie Woman*.
112. “Highlights of Carifesta”, in *Carifesta '72, August 25–September 15, Guyana, South America* (National History and Arts Council, Guyana, circa 1972), Special Collections, *MGZB (Carifesta—Souvenir Program 1972), New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
113. *Carifesta '72 Photographic Exhibition* (Guyana, 1972), National Archives of Guyana.

114. Norman Girvan, “The Guyana–Alcan Conflict and the Nationalization of Demba” (1971), *New World Journal*, <https://newworldjournal.org/volumes/volume-v-no-4/the-guyana-alcan-conflict-and-the-nationalization-of-demba/>; Robert A. Whitman, “Guyana”, in *Minerals Yearbook 1971*, vol. 3, *Area Reports: International* (Washington, DC: United States Department of the Interior and Bureau of Mines, 1973), 973.
115. As I have located a catalog with textual descriptions but few visual records in the consulted archives, I cannot be completely certain about the exhibition’s final contents. The descriptions cited here come from the catalog *Carifesta '72 Photographic Exhibition*.
116. *Carifesta '72 Photographic Exhibition*, 18; [Untitled Guybau feature], *Sunday Chronicle*, circa 20 February 1972.
117. “Carifesta: Guybau to Host 25”, *Chronicle*, 29 August 1972, Carifesta '72 newspaper scrapbook, National Archives of Guyana; J. Edward Greene, “Cooperativism, Militarism, Party Politics, and Democracy in Guyana”, in *The Newer Caribbean: Decolonization, Democracy, and Development*, ed. Paget Henry and Carl Stone (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1983), 267–68. For more on tours of Guybau, see also “Carifesta: Cubans for Linden Show”, unidentified newspaper clipping, and “Cubans Make Hit at Linden”, *Guyana Graphic*, 2 September 1972, both in Carifesta '72 newspaper scrapbook, National Archives of Guyana. See also Salkey’s *Georgetown Journal*, which describes visits to the area during his trip to Guyana for the Caribbean Writers and Artists Conference in 1970.
118. “Writers Tour Dorabece mine”, *Guyana Graphic*, 1 September 1972, Carifesta '72 newspaper scrapbook, National Archives of Guyana.
119. Phillip Grimes, “Carifesta Shows Expose Linden Talent”, *Sunday Chronicle*, 3 September 1972, Carifesta '72 newspaper scrapbook, National Archives of Guyana.
120. Forbes Burnham, quoted in Linden F. Lewis, *Forbes Burnham: The Life and Times of the Comrade Leader* (Ithaca, NY: Rutgers University Press, 2024), 104.

121. Bhagirat-Rivera, “Between Pan-Africanism and a Multiracial Nation”, 1031–33.
122. Bhagirat-Rivera, “Between Pan-Africanism and a Multiracial Nation”.
123. Girvan, “The Guyana–Alcan Conflict and the Nationalization of Demba”.
124. D. Alissa Trotz, “Between Despair and Hope: Women and Violence in Contemporary Guyana”, *Small Axe* 8, no. 1 (15) (March 2004): 16.
125. Perry Mars, “The Significance of the Disturbances, 1962–1964”, *History Gazette* 70 (1994): 2, cited by Andaiye with D. Alissa Trotz, “Essay 5 1964: The Rupture of Neighborliness and Its Legacy for Indian/African Relations”, in *The Point is to Change the World: Selected Writings of Andaiye*, ed. D. Alissa Trotz (London: Pluto Press, 2020), 59.
126. Andaiye with Trotz, “Essay 5 1964”, 59.
127. Lewis, *Forbes Burnham*, 73.
128. Lewis, *Forbes Burnham*, 73. For another recent account, in a book on the political opposition, see Clem Seecharan, *Cheddi Jagan and the Cold War, 1946–1992* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2023), 397–98.
129. Those taking the Guybau tour—including Ismith Khan, who nearly boycotted the festival—could very well have discussed this history, particularly when they met local poets and journalists. “Writers Tour Dorabece Mine”, *Guyana Graphic*; Letters from Ismith Khan and Vera Reichler to Andrew Salkey, 10 February 1972, Add MS 89377/10/16, Andrew Salkey Papers, British Library.
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131. *Carifesta '72 Photographic Exhibition*, 17–18.
132. George Lamming, “Politics and Culture”, in *The George Lamming Reader: The Aesthetics of Decolonisation*, ed. Anthony Bogues (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2011), 56–57, 52.
133. McKittrick, “Plantation Futures”, 3.

134. Palmer, *Cheddi Jagan and the Politics of Power*, 233; Deborah Thomas, *Political Life in the Wake of the Plantation: Sovereignty, Witnessing, Repair* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 13.

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