



black banana
exhibitions of absence

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Proposal

black banana: exhibitions of absence

Focus

Identifying the gaps in representation of Black Latino art and it's artists, as well as exposing racist curatorial practices of the region of Guatemala and greater Latin America.

The impact of colonization, and later; the economic influence of companies like: The United Fruit Company play a major factor in race relations within Latin America, which ultimately impact its curation of art. With research, reflection and communication the hope is to confront and eradicate the erasure of Black Latino culture and artistic expression.

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History

In the early twentieth century the banana was a favored commercial commodity in Latin America particularly in places like Costa Rica. Racial tensions between those who immigrated from the West Indies to work the plantations and the existing Hispanic population already existed through the effects of colonialism. We can speculate that the presence of the United Fruit Company and its monopoly of production and exportation of banana had a large play in this scenario. This was largely due to expansion in the Atlantic Coast regions and the need to grow the labor force to meet demands. This encouraged the import of foreign workers most of which were black. The UFC were said to have given no preference to West Indian workers over the Hispanic however having had experience with the commodity and with a better grasp of English the West Indians had a clear advantage. This stoked the embers of racial tension and discrimination that was passed off as nationalism.

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United Fruit properties (1951)



Issue

Afro Latinos are underrepresented or absent from the world of Latin American curation and what is contextualized as contemporary art. But to get to the truth we need to ask a few questions:

1. What is considered contemporary art?
2. Why would Afro Latin work be excluded from what is currently curated?
3. How can we further this conversation? Who already is?

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Guatemala → Belize connection → afro art community

Our recent findings have led us to the works of Belizean artists, a part of a community we plan to learn more about through black banana.

- **Originally part of the British Empire**, it shares a common colonial history with other Anglophone Caribbean countries. Belize has a **diverse society**, with many cultures and languages.
- Approximately **50% of Belizeans self-identify as Mestizo, Latino, or Hispanic** and 30% speak Spanish as a native language. When Belize was a British colony, **Spanish was banned** in schools but today it is widely taught as a second language.
- **The Garinagu (singular Garifuna), at around 4.5% of the population**, are a mix of West/Central African, Arawak, and Island Carib ancestry.
- In the early 19th century, the British sought greater control over the settlers, threatening to suspend the Public Meeting unless it observed the **government's instructions to eliminate slavery in whole**.
- **Slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1838, but this did little to change** working conditions for labourers in the Belize settlement.
- Slaves of the colony were valued for their potentially superior abilities in the work of mahogany extraction.
- Progress toward independence, however, was hampered by a **Guatemalan** claim to sovereignty over the territory of Belize. While **Belize finally attained independence on 21 September 1981**, about 1,500 British troops remained in Belize, the declared purpose being to provide protection from a Guatemalan threat.
- **Guatemala's president formally recognised Belize's independence in 1992.**

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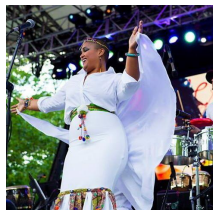
Collaborators



The Afro Latino Project

Facilitating awareness about and promoting the digital curation of the Afrolatin@/Afrodescendant experience.

Amilcar Maceo Priestley - on the board of ALP.



Mai-Elka Prado Gil

Afropanamanian lead singer of Delsonido as well as the co-founder of the Afrolatino Festival of New York



Jamaul Roots

Owner of “Roots, Wraps & Smoothies” in San Ignacio, Belize.



Katie Numi Usher

Contemporary Belizean artist



Yasser Musa

Belizean visual artist, teacher, poet and publisher.

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Find out more about these artists' work on the following sites:

- **AfroLatino Project:** <http://afrolatinoproject.org/>
- **Mai-Elka Prado Gil:** <http://www.maielkaprado.com/>
- **(Artist) Franco Arocha:** <http://www.saatchiart.com/francoarocha>
- **Yasser Musa:** <http://www.yassermusa.com/>
- **Katie Numi:** <http://www.katienumi.com>

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ck



abs



black room

2 black benches

a black platform for our bag of call to action 3 D printed bananas

pamphlets and printed materials

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Tracking our current project: <http://blackbananaproject.tumblr.com/>

Phallic-symbol |

any object, as a cigar or skyscraper, that may broadly resemble or represent the penis.

Picture of black penis next to picture of black banana

Fear of mixing of races

=

Fear of the big black banana
or

Cultural Insertion

Now we've dealt with that part.

