Beyond the Frame:

Culture, Identity, and the Caribbean Sea Diaspora in Canada

by
Ricardo Espinoza

A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Architecture

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2025
© Ricardo Espinoza 2025

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The Caribbean Sea is a complex landscape that holds a storied past and a palimpsest of identities. Indigenous, colonial, and modern traditions shift like tides, and their relationships shape the collective identity of the Caribbean Sea's inhabitants. Migration from European settlers, the colonial slave trade, and modern refugee crises have created a creolization of cultures and customs. Flows of migration by members of these communities have thus created a global archipelago for the Caribbean Sea diaspora who are in constant dialogue and in search for community and representation in their respective exclaves.

These migratory flows have allowed Canada and the Greater Toronto Area to become a region which welcomed this diaspora, establishing culture and community. Globalization and the internet have connected us, but in many ways also divided this diaspora from traditional cultural and artistic community activities that must be experienced physically. "Beyond The Frame: Community, Identity, and the Caribbean Sea Diaspora in Canada" attempts to restore the flows of these connections by means of artistic expression by establishing a central place of community for the Caribbean Sea diaspora in Canada.

Approaching culture and identity from a relational sense, the design for an arts-based centre for immigrants of the Caribbean Sea in Toronto that is rooted in the typologies surrounding the Caribbean Sea takes shape. Cultural institutions are typologies where new relationships are constantly forged between artifacts, people, and space, creating new meanings based on past experiences. This thesis argues that architecture is a tool that helps establish and democratize these connections, exploring firsthand accounts from immigrants and their views on identity and culture, leaders from organizations within the Greater Toronto Area, and responsive design concepts in order to produce a representative architectural snapshot of the Caribbean Sea diaspora today.

Acknowledgments

To my thesis committee:

Adrian Blackwell, my supervisor, for your patience and knowledge throughout this whole process, and for making sure I never lost sight of the threads that held this research together.

David Fortin, my committee member, for your invaluable insights to Indigeneity and what it means to be a mindful outsider in Canada: you've helped me greatly in reframing my own relationship to this country, taking the good with the bad, and at the same time looking forward.

To the thesis contributors:

Josephine, Carlos, Tamara, and Rodrigo, for graciously giving your time to help me understand how you do the very important work you do, and for allowing me to ask questions, no matter how small or silly they might be.

To all of the anonymous **survey and interview participants** who gave their time and experiences as individuals navigating what it means to be an immigrant in Canada, this work would not have been possible without your time and contribution.

To my friends:

Nadine, Catherine, Anita, Sofia, and Giulia, for your friendship, coffee breaks, and unrelenting support and belief in my work, even when I didn't believe in it myself.

Thank you all.

Territorial Acknowledgment(s)

[English]

Throughout the course of the research and writing of this thesis, I have been very aware and further exposed to the layers of complexity and nuance required to navigate themes of culture and identity. The layering of cultures is a topic which is central to this work, yet one which is difficult to fully define due to its ever-changing quality. I am a guest in these lands, as many people are, who was thrusted into systems much larger and greater than myself.

It is not a secret that migration has historically been a complex, unfair, and messy ordeal. This thesis also does not have all the answers for the questions it asks. However, this project was crafted with the mindfulness and intention to incorporate as many diverse ideas as possible about what community and identity are, and where they might be headed. Indigenous teachings and knowledge have a place in this conversation.

[Español]

A lo largo del proceso de investigación y redacción de esta tesis, he sido muy consciente y además he estado expuesto a las capas de complejidad y matices que implica navegar los temas de la cultura y la identidad. La superposición de culturas es un tema central en este trabajo, aunque difícil de definir plenamente debido a su cualidad cambiante y en constante evolución. Soy un invitado en estas tierras, como muchas otras personas, que fui impulsado a formar parte de sistemas mucho más grandes y poderosos que yo.

No es un secreto que la migración ha sido históricamente un proceso complejo, injusto y desordenado. Esta tesis tampoco tiene todas las respuestas a las preguntas que plantea. Sin embargo, este proyecto fue concebido con atención y con la intención de incorporar la mayor diversidad posible de ideas sobre lo que son la comunidad y la identidad, y hacia dónde podrían dirigirse. Las enseñanzas y conocimientos de los pueblos indígenas tienen un lugar en esta conversación.

I would first like to acknowledge that the University of Waterloo, where I am grateful to live and work, is located on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. The School of Architecture is situated on Block One of the Haldimand Tract, the land granted to the Six Nations, which includes six miles on either side of the Grand River. I consider myself privileged to be able to exist on this land, as it has come at the expense of countless others that I cannot know or thank.

I take these Indigenous themes of coexistence with the land and with each other on this journey of culture and identity, in the hopes that I can be a considerate guest that offers productive solutions to rekindle previously extinguished connections, wherever they may spark.

En primer lugar, me gustaría reconocer que la Universidad de Waterloo, donde tengo el privilegio de vivir y trabajar, se encuentra en el territorio tradicional de los pueblos Neutral, Anishinaabeg y Haudenosaunee. La Escuela de Arquitectura está situada en el Bloque Uno de la Concesión Haldimand, la tierra otorgada a las Seis Naciones, que incluye seis millas a cada lado del río Grand. Me considero afortunado de poder existir en esta tierra, ya que ello ha sido posible a costa de innumerables personas a quienes no puedo conocer ni agradecer.

Tomo estos principios indígenas de coexistencia con la tierra y entre nosotros como guía en este recorrido por la cultura y la identidad, con la esperanza de poder ser un invitado considerado que ofrezca soluciones productivas para reavivar conexiones previamente extinguidas, dondequiera que puedan surgir.

Dedication

To my mom, dad, and sister, none of this would be possible without you.

Los amo.

Preface

A Panel of Experts

Art has an extraordinary ability to speak to you, almost in a divine sense.

In September of 2018, when I was in my first year of undergraduate studies at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture, the first semester's studio course brought us to Montréal for a 3-day field trip. There, on a visit to the Museum of Fine Arts, I encountered a painting titled *A Panel of Experts* by Jean-Michel Basquiat (fig. 1). At the time I didn't know much about Basquiat or contemporary art for that matter; all I knew was that I could not get enough of it. I spent as long as possible with my nose as close as I could get it to the canvas without being reprimanded by museum staff, trying to study every detail and understand every word. By examining each scraggly line and drawing painted over with swaths of black, I felt as though I could retrace the painting. I took multiple poorly framed and blurry iPhone images of the painting and its accompanying text, attempting to capture that feeling I felt as I looked at it. When it was time to move on, I kept looking back as the group left the room, just so I could see it one last time.

I didn't know it then, but this painting would leave a great impression on me for years to come. I poured over monographs and articles that outlined his life as a child of Puerto Rican and Haitian immigrants to the United States, his rise to stardom as a member of the avant-garde movement in New York, that he would hand-stretch canvases to paint with, his mixed-media techniques that at the same time seem like anyone could recreate them, yet when you try (and I have), they are impossible to emulate.

It is difficult for me to analyze why I connected with this painting, mainly because a big part of me is still unsure why. I suspect that part of it is that visually it completely shattered my pre-conceived notions about what art was, and it gave me the agency to believe in my own prowess as a student trying to learn from the world around him. But the most interesting thing about it is that the feeling I felt that day hasn't gone away. It is this very feeling of awe and wonder that I believe underlines the work I have undertaken, ultimately stemming from this event as well as my wish for others to be able to experience a moment just like it.



1. ***Jean-Michel Basquiat. A Panel of Experts (1982).*** Acrylic and oil paintstick and paper collage on canvas with exposed wood supports and twine. 152.4 × 152.4 cm. Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal. Image By Author.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 *Introduction*

Why this? 3
The Caribbean Sea 7
Object to Relationship 13
The Museum Is Not Enough 19
Structure and Methodology 25

Chapter 2 *The Immigrant Archipelago*

The Study 29
The Census 31
The Survey 37
The Interviews 47
Key Takeaways 65

Chapter 3 *Cultural Institutions*

Caribbean Institution index 69
Toronto Organization Index 75
Organization Interviews 91
Key Takeaways 117

Chapter 4 *Caribbean Culture Commons*

Site Selection and Analysis 121
Concept 131
Design 137

Chapter 5 *Conclusion*

General Thoughts 211
Agency (in) Expansion 213
Networks 215
Afterword 217

Bibliography 219

Appendix 225

Chapter 1

Introduction



Why This?

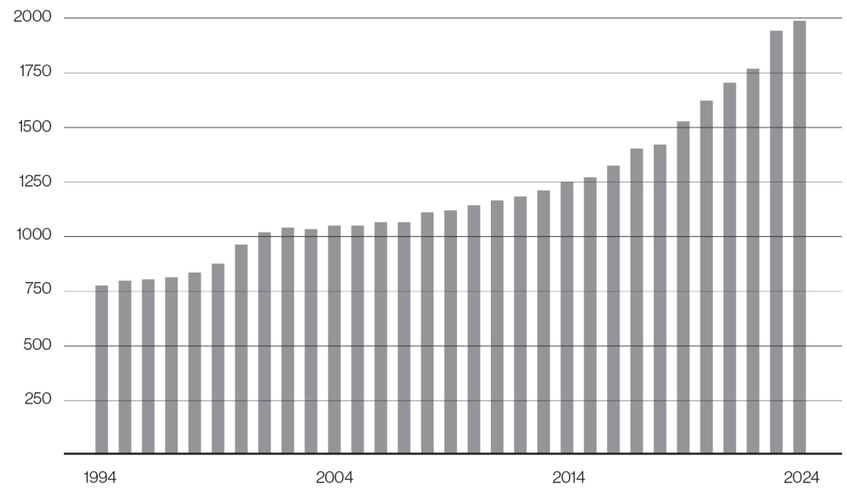
The topics of this thesis started materializing somewhat with the disconnection I myself felt with my home country of Venezuela. After engaging in various conversations with family and friends, there seemed to be a general feeling of stagnation with regards to culture and representation in Canada. Globalization, in conjunction with capitalist systems, has hyper-commodified cultures distant from one's own, making them a collector's item for a well-traveled individual, rather than a mode of self-expression and tradition for people of those cultures. This apparatus is what has disconnected people from their culture, as capitalism has alienated cultural artifacts and traditions from their traditional contexts, making them objects of status instead. In his book Ghosts of My Life, Mark Fisher outlines a possible explanation for this disconnect from culture:

> *"The other explanation for the link between late capitalism and retrospection centres on production. Despite all its rhetoric of novelty and innovation, neoliberal capitalism has gradually but systematically deprived artists of the resources necessary to produce the new…. If there's one factor above all else which contributes to cultural conservatism, it is the vast inflation in the cost of rent and mortgages. It's no accident that the efflorescence of cultural invention in London and New York in the late 1970s and early 80s (in the punk and postpunk scenes) coincided with the availability of squatted and cheap property in those cities. Since then, the decline of social housing, the attacks on squatting, and the delirious rise in property prices have meant that the amount of time and energy available for cultural production has massively diminished."* [1]

This lack of production can thus be directly tied to architecture. Toronto's real estate landscape is no different: median rent prices in the Greater Toronto Area are some of the highest in the country and in the world[2] (fig. 2), which directly stifles the creation of art and furthering of culture. Individuals lack both the time and the place required to express themselves in a way that feels fulfilling and is of substance to their respective culture and identity. Fisher continues:

[1] Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology, and Lost Futures* (Zero Books, 2014)

[2] "Housing Market Information Portal," CMHC, accessed October 20, 2025, https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en me=Toronto#October.



2. ***Graph of average 2-bedroom rental prices from 1994 to 2024; Historical Average Rents by Bedroom Type.*** By Author. Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

> *"But perhaps it was only with the arrival of digital communicative capitalism that this reached terminal crisis point.… Producing the new depends upon certain kinds of withdrawal—from, for instance, sociality as much as from pre-existing cultural forms—but the currently dominant form of socially networked cyberspace, with its endless opportunities for micro-contact and its deluge of YouTube links, has made withdrawal more difficult than ever before. Or, as Simon Reynolds so pithily put it, in recent years, everyday life has sped up, but culture has slowed down."* [3]

The problem central to this thesis is at the crux of this argument: how can we slow down everyday life, but speed up culture and create more of the new? Seemingly, the answer lies in the need for a space which is not immediately concerned with the neoliberal obsession of the commodification of culture for monetary gain.

From an institutional standpoint, people of all cultures are also struggling with underrepresentation in cultural spaces within Canada as a whole. A study conducted by Reconsidering Museums, an initiative composed of a consortium of Canada-wide museums associations and other cultural institutions, reported that 52 percent of responding museumgoers in Canada feel that museums need to better represent all Canadians.[4]

There needs to be some compartmentalization or division of cultural material in order for museums and other cultural institutions to accurately and intentionally reflect the needs of the communities they are trying to serve. It would be a cumbersome and misguided task for an institution of this sort to be all-encompassing in a cultural sense; as cultures are widely varying and this endeavour can come at the risk of appropriation, whether intentional or otherwise. After all, no one is a better keeper of culture than a person of that culture. Due to the similarities in Indigenous customs in the region, shared historical events such as colonization, and modern geopolitical factors which have given way to waves of immigration to Canada, the idea of a cultural centre revolving around the Caribbean Sea is the subject of this thesis. The Caribbean Sea is the uniting tissue for this region and a central concept of this thesis. This connective aspect is explored more deeply in the following section.

At a time when people feel that institutions do not represent the needs of their own cultures, there is also a lack of centralization for the Caribbean Sea community in the Greater Toronto Area. From firsthand experience, it can be a difficult task to find restaurants, events, or performances which are tailored or in any way engage with the Caribbean and Latin American communities in the GTA, especially ones which have a lesser immigrant presence in Canada as a whole, such as my home country of Venezuela. This issue is linked to the concept of network building in Canada, which is also something that is lacking in many immigrant communities.

[3] Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life.*

[4] "A New Vision for Museums: Anticipating and Activating Change in the Canadian Museum Sector," Reconsidering Museums, 2021.

Under the current framework, immigrants in Canada often accept that they must endure a lack of support and community to better assimilate into the culture which they are immigrating. However, this can further alienate immigrants who are already finding it difficult to adjust to their new environment. This is particularly troubling for people of Caribbean and Latin American descent, as a great part of culture and tradition in those countries revolves around hospitality and sharing with others.

Furthermore, in order for these cultures to become entrenched within the fabric of the city, there must be a reframing of the one-dimensional perception of these communities within the City of Toronto. In order to legitimize them, a reframing of what it is to be a member of this community must occur, not in a performative way, so as to signal "we're here!" but instead to let ourselves know where we are when we need each other. Going 'beyond the frame' thus allows us to explore connections with others more deeply and from multiple points of view, creating a tight-knit community within the fabric of the City of Toronto.

The sense of community between members of Latin America and the Caribbean is something that is so entrenched in the culture of being a person from this region, yet it's something quite difficult to explain to others outside of it. There is an unspoken sense of community that is immediately present between people of these communities, as there is a collective understanding of the processes and hardships required to adapt to a new lifestyle that people are unfamiliar with. To foster this community and rekindle networks, a central hub that offers all of the parameters for the proliferation of Caribbean Sea is needed. This thesis sets out to do just that.

The Caribbean Sea

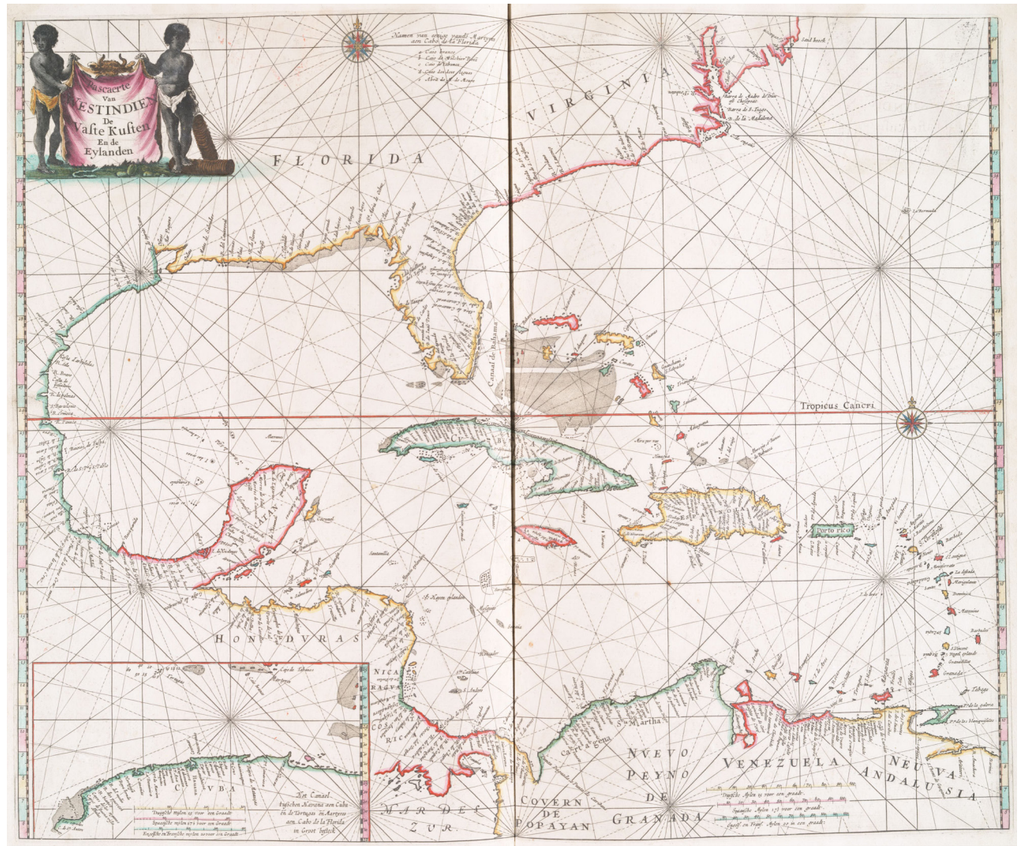
The Caribbean Sea is a region that is nuanced and varied, yet can often be misrecognized. The term 'Caribbean' is also often colloquially used simply to refer to the Antillean archipelago or the West Indies, stretching from the Bahamas in the north, down to the islands of Trinidad and Tobago which are adjacent to Venezuela in the south. This thesis endeavours to recenter the idea of the Caribbean as a region with edges on all sides, some more porous than others, including the Central American isthmus, as well as the northern coast of South America and the Yucatan peninsula. This reframing of the Caribbean Sea attempts to recenter the similarities that all of these regions share, with the idea that this collection of distinct yet similar groups has value as a collective that is not always pronounced, and that working together, especially in the context of diasporic narratives in Canada, will make efforts to materialize spaces for the proliferation of these cultures more effective.

Conceptually, the Caribbean Sea is a type of non-place. It can be preceived as a void, a physical space which is uninhabitable to humans, but in turn offers endless imaginative transformations. The sheer scale of the sea, a seemingly endless field of sublime unknowns, evokes wonder within the self. It is contemplative, its vastness and far-reaching connectivity serve as a reminder that we are all interconnected, whether physically through the global supply chain and shipping routes, deep-sea cables which are the foundation of our internet systems, and as a means of traversing from one place to another in a boating vessel; or metaphorically, knowing that a message in a bottle could be carried away to another continent. This physical and metaphorical understanding of the Caribbean Sea is in large part what this project builds on and attempts to bring this understanding in a microcosmic sense to the landscape of the Greater Toronto Area.

Historically, the Caribbean Sea has been a means of transport to a variety of agents throughout history (fig. 3). Prior to colonization efforts from European settlers, Indigenous communities such as the Carib and Taino peoples used the Caribbean Sea as a source of nourishment, a means of transportation, and a way of life.[5] The Caribbean Sea is almost the same size as the Mediterranean Sea,[6] which is much more entrenched

[5] Scott M. Fitzpatrick, "Seafaring Capabilities in the Pre-Columbian Caribbean," Journal of Maritime Archaeology, June 11, 2013, 101–38, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11457-013-9110-8.

[6] Ibid.



3. ***Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, "Pascaerte van Westindien : de vaste kusten en de Eylanden." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed October 20, 2025. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/01103aa0-c5d4-012f-5968-58d385a7bc34*** Source: The New York Public Library.

in the collective imagination as a place where seafaring and trading of goods occurred throughout ancient and modern history. Though not as advanced in long-distance voyages, coastal Caribbean tribes such as the Garifuna community in modern-day Honduras were apt seafarers, using currents and dugout canoes to traverse from one island to the next. This seafaring between islands and regions in the Caribbean points to a broader trend of migration throughout history in the region. Long before colonization, it is believed that Indigenous Caribbeans migrated from communities in modern-day Florida or South America and populated the Antillean archipelago as well as the Central American isthmus.*[7]

Columbus's famous voyage in 1492 gave way to a wave of migration from Europe in the form of settlers. Colonial forces enslaved large quantities of people from the African continent to relocate to foreign lands against their will, and simultaneously committed genocide of Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas. The transatlantic slave trade fundamentally shaped the Caribbean by creating plantation economies, rigid racial hierarchies, and a predominantly African-descended population. Out of this violent history emerged the region's distinctive creolized cultures and enduring traditions of resistance, which continue to inform its social structures, inequalities, and creative identity today.

The British, Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese empires were the main arbitrators of the upheaval of these existing communities, perhaps the most well-known being the fall of Tenochtitlán to the Spanish Empire in 1521. Due to their worldview as land being something to be conquered and presided over, a fragmentation of the Indigenous communities and subsequent empire outposts occurred, effectively making the land, and by extension the sea, instruments and witnesses of this redistribution. The Caribbean's geography models a world of linked yet distinct entities, and the sea thus simultaneously becomes a site of memory, movement, exchange, and trauma.[8]

Beginning in the mid 20th century, further waves of migration from Europe to the Caribbean to flee from—or in the aftermath of—the Second World War, became more frequent and many people migrated to the Caribbean and South America in search of a more stable life. Emigration from the Caribbean also grew during this time, with many settlers either returning to Europe or to North America; and there especially the United States and Canada. This period has seen emigration due to a variety of geopolitical factors, including but not limited to political unrest within the region. Events such as civil wars and economic instability were drivers for migration out of the Caribbean region. While this immigration offered a more stable environment for communities from the Caribbean and the world at large, it has also materialized at the expense and dispossession of Indigenous land. This, along with extractionary policies, has resulted in an unsettling of Indigenous populations throughout North America. This aspect of settlement is one that must be identified, as the conception of treaty

* An isthmus is a narrow strip of land with seas on either side, forming a link between two larger areas of land, in this case Central America is an isthmus which connects North and South America.

[7] Richard S. Hillman and Thomas J. D'Agostino, Understanding the Contemporary Caribbean, 2nd ed. (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009).

[8] Edouard Glissant, Caribbean Discourse (University Press of Virginia, 1992).

lands has allowed for immigrants to benefit from stable economies, jobs, and lives. Because of this, diasporic communities have a role to play in acknowledging these injustices, and begin to reconcile them with their own ancestral experiences with colonization (fig. 4).

In the context of the City of Toronto, the Caribbean Sea diaspora is also fragmented. Many groups have naturally settled in relation to their own national identity. The most prominent example of these would be Little Jamaica, whose presence on the intersection of Oakwood and Eglinton has further fomented settlement of Jamaican people in the vicinity, though this is not prescriptive on the areas in which immigrants settle and can do so anywhere. Another firsthand example is the large Venezuelan population in the town of Oakville, whose beginnings spread through word of mouth and knowledge of other immigrants from Venezuela who had previously moved to this town when immigrating to Canada, and as such, settling patterns began to emerge. In many ways these patterns depict a version of the Caribbean archipelago, though far away from the Caribbean. Some exclaves tend to be less visible than others, such as Little Jamaica, but nevertheless they exist. These new archipelagic relationships can grow, change, and evolve as time goes on and priorities shift and change.

Creolization, a term coined by Édouard Glissant, describes how diverse cultural elements transform into something unpredictable and new. While Glissant first used it to describe the Caribbean's mixing of African, European, and Indigenous races, customs, and languages, a further creolization is emerging in Canada as relationships to culture evolve. The immigrant experience in Canada is far from monolithic, and the wide range of cultures morphing and adapting demonstrates the tenacity and persistence of immigrant communities, even when we do not fully know their stories. Understanding these migratory and settlement patterns is central to this thesis.

> *"Migration has become a defining condition today, one we often grasp through stories of individual human experiences. But movement rearranges more than just people. Ideas, perceptions, aspirations, and fears move around too, and reshape the spaces around them."* [10]

This quote from the publication *The Museum Is Not Enough*, which is written in first person from the perspective of the Canadian Centre for Architecture which critically assesses the complex landscape in which institutions operate, highlights the breadth and depth of migration, which further underscores the shaping of spaces relating to people's cultures. This reshaping to reflect the needs of the communities who have migrated is of particular interest, as it begins to create a built landscape which is inhabited by specific communities. In the Caribbean Sea Diaspora, these spaces are often difficult to come across if you do not know the correct groups of people. It is this problem that bears addressing, and one that this thesis is undertaking.

[9] Edouard Glissant, Poetics of Relation (University of Michigan Press, 2010).

[10] Canadian Centre for Architecture, The Museum Is Not Enough (Sternberg Press, 2019).

Country	Code	Population
Belize	**BE**	**245**
Costa Rica	**CR**	**1,435**
El Salvador	**SV**	**10,545**
Guatemala	**GT**	**4,045**
Honduras	**HN**	**1,625**
Mexico	**MX**	**14,445**
Nicaragua	**NI**	**2,785**
Panama	**PA**	**925**
Colombia	**CO**	**17,635**
French Guiana	**GF**	**60**
Guyana	**GY**	**64,885**
Suriname	**SR**	**505**
Venezuela	**VE**	**7,905**

Country	Code	Population
Antigua and Barbuda	**AG**	**1,375**
Bahamas	**BS**	**675**
Barbados	**BB**	**6,970**
British Virgin islands	**VG**	**35**
Cayman Islands	**KY**	**50**
Cuba	**CU**	**5,685**
Dominica	**DM**	**1,770**
Dominican Republic	**DO**	**3,840**
Grenada	**GD**	**6,640**
Guadeloupe	**GP**	**65**
Haiti	**HT**	**2,490**
Jamaica	**JM**	**95,900**
Martinique	**MQ**	**50**
Montserrat	**MS**	**245**
Curacao	**CW**	**175**
Aruba	**AW**	**260**
Sint Maarten	**SX**	**35**
Netherlands Antiles	**AN**	**10**
Puerto Rico	**PR**	**105**
St. Barthelemy	**BL**	**0**
St. Kitts and Nevis	**KN**	**1,280**
Antigua	**AG**	**35**
St. Lucia	**LC**	**4,010**
St. Martin	**MF**	**25**
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	**VC**	**8,040**
Trinidad and Tobago	**TT**	**40,855**
Turks and Caicos	**TC**	**25**
U.S. Virgin Islands	**VI**	**50**



4. ***Map of Caribbean Migration to Toronto.***
By Author. Source: Statistics Canada.

Object to Relationship

The concept of identity is one that can at times be difficult to fully grasp and understand. We are constantly comparing ourselves to the world around us, and we are gauging how we relate to other people, objects, and spaces. Our identity is based upon this principle and is in fact not a static thing, but one that can evolve with time.

The concept of a social identity theory was first introduced in the 1970s by Henri Tajfel and his colleagues based on personal experiences with discrimination as a Jewish survivor of World War II. Social identity is defined as "part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership."[12] There are three main processes associated with social identity theory according to Tajfel: social categorization, social comparison, and social identification. These are all ways in which individuals can actively position themselves relative to others, whether in agreeance or defiance to them.[13] The extent to which people positively identify with their respective group, referred to as the ingroup, will determine that individual's motivation to emphasize the specific traits of that ingroup, and reinforce those traits exhibited by their ingroup.[14]

The Caribbean Sea Community is incredibly diverse. Because of this, it can oftentimes feel as though the breadth of cultural diversity is difficult to fully process. However, it is precisely this uncertainty in which we operate on a daily basis as humans who are interacting with one another. In this thesis, the Caribbean Sea Diaspora will act as the ingroup, and as such, the objective is to uphold the values of the ingroup as they manifest in the design of a building which is intended to primarily serve this ingroup.

Community identity is not the whole picture, though. Individual identity must also be considered, and its role as a determinant of community is an important one, especially with regards to self-expression in artistic and cultural avenues. The concept of multiplicity as coined by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* elucidates that an essential part of multiplicities is that its contents are ceaselessly changing in

[12] Henri Tjafel, "Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour," Social Science Information 13, no. 2 (1974): 65–93, https://doi.10.1177/05390 1847401300204.

[13] Henri Tjafel, Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations. (Academic Press, 1978).

[14] Ibid.



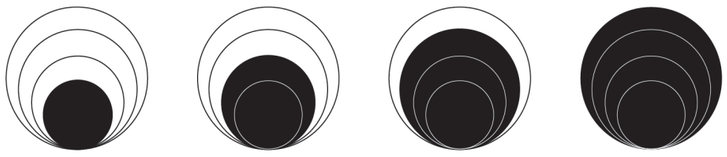


5. ***Stills from video montage "I am a museum of....."*** from Instagram user @le.i90. Posted September 13, 2025. https://www.instagram.com/p/DOjL2YaE7y-/

relation to others.[15] This ever-changing perspective and point of view is evolving within you and me as I write, and as you read these words. A person's individual identity is its own kind of multiplicity: it is shaped by relationships, events, cultures, and many other factors, as one uncontrollably weighs oneself against its environments (fig. 5). When all of these individual relationships are added together, a web begins to form. This is what we might characterize as culture, a set of relationships and rituals that are shared by a certain group of people.

The rituals associated with culture, especially for immigrants, can easily be lost if not safeguarded, however. There is an incredible breadth, richness of culture, and sense of community that is difficult to describe and even harder to emulate. We are stronger when we work together, and there is a lack of centralization when it comes to the Caribbean Sea community. While there are many distinct groups and cultures, the goal of this thesis is not to homogenize culture, but to work together for the common goal of proliferating culture and preserving it for future generations. In doing so, this allows for the many layers of multiplicities that make up culture to exist and further manifest into broader connections.

Édouard Glissant spoke of this infinite connection between people and their ever-changing qualities in his book *Poetics of Relation*. Building on Deleuze and Guattari's work, Glissant emphasizes the connections themselves rather than the things that are connected as the place where meaning lies.[16] After all, references and precedents are essential to the building of culture, and these links are what traditions are made of and what connect us to our ancestry and culture, even if we are not in its immediate proximity (fig. 6). These connections are also incredibly important in a progressive sense, as they mark a culture's evolution of traditions and customs. Relation, according to Glissant, is "an open totality evolving upon itself … In relation, the whole is not the finality of its parts: for multiplicity in totality is totally diversity."[17]



6. ***Diagram of Identity Stacking.*** By Author.

This ever-expanding field of possibilities evokes the Caribbean Sea's connective tissue. Glissant, a Martinican philosopher, was concerned with the Sea as a metaphor for linkages and connections in collective memory. These concepts of regional connection can also be linked with the concept of critical regionalism, as popularized by Alexander Tzonis, Leane Lefaivre, and Kenneth Frampton. Critical regionalism takes issue with the pastiche nature of postmodernism and instead suggests a design

[15] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (University of Minessota Press, 1987).

[16] Glissant, *Poetics of Relation.*

[17] Ibid.

ethos which is rooted in responding and engaging with local references rather than resisting or ignoring them. While critical regionalism is a step in the right direction, it is still an extension of ideals rooted in modernist thinking, including the occupation of land through design while simultaneously disregarding one's political relationship with that land, or the communities whose land one occupies.

The concept of critical relationalism spurs from ideas about critical regionalism. While critical regionalism focuses solely on its context, critical *relationalism,* as coined by David Fortin, doubles down on the relationships between things and people, and attempts to critically assess which of these is most important at any given time, echoing Indigenous concepts of coexistence with all aspects of life, not just human ones. These relationships can materialize not only between people, but also with the natural or built environment. Critical relationalism asks us to consider all of these relationships and to prioritize ones that will have a positive impact on our finite natural resources.[18] In the context of the Caribbean Sea diaspora, the relational qualities of the sea as a site of shared experiences is an important one which will be explored further in the following sections and chapters. This reframing of how architecture relates to people is interrelated with previously explored concepts surrounding identity and culture, as well as with the ideas of reconciliation with Indigenous populations highlighted in the previous section.

In this context, architecture can thus be a mediator between culture, identity, and self-expression. In the context of display, architecture can act passively, which is evident in many museums worldwide which boast white walls and even lighting in order to make pieces comparable to each other. This approach is in line with the commodification of art, and the neoliberal tradition of capital accumulation. However, this thesis explores the role of architecture in a more active capacity with regards to display; arguing that this relationality between architecture, object, and observer can be enhanced through the development of architectural moves that complement the artworks in a frame of reference that goes beyond surface treatment. Peter Eisenman elaborates on this theme in his essay *Object to Relationship II*:

> *"Architecture, unlike painting, is constrained by the presence of actual "objects" – with the real dimensions of form and space. Whereas in painting the relationship of the forms can be used to create the illusion of space, in architecture the relationship of the forms is the space. Therefore, unless one talks of the reality of the painted surface, the canvas itself, painting is inherently involved in abstraction – i.e., the use of illusion in the creation of space. No such procedure is necessary in the creation of architectural space. The mere presence of some form of construction, whether it be two walls or a grid of columns and beams, will necessarily define, suggest, and imply space. Furthermore, in painting, the plane of the canvas provides a given frame of reference for the understanding of any abstract or conceptual structure within*

[18] "Critical Relationalism, Constellations, and Community: David T. Fortin on Decolonizing Architecture," ArchitectureAu, accessed October 17, 2025, https://architectureau.com/articles/critical-relationalism-constellations-and-community-david-t-fortin-on-decolonizing-architecture/.

the painting. In architecture there is no given frame for understanding or delineating the abstract structure, as the viewpoint is constantly changing." [19]

This mediation between the abstraction of painting and the three-dimensionality of architecture is where the tension and interest lie (figs. 7-8). Architecture can achieve things related to painting that the painting or artifact itself cannot. This makes architecture an apt medium for the exploration of culture and identity, as the relationships which make up culture are experienced in space. This idea is directly related to David Leatherbarrow's *Architecture Oriented Otherwise*, in which he argues that buildings are constituted just as much by their intrinsic parts as they are by their relationships to external conditions. He refers to this concept as the building's *eccentricity*, or its existence outside of itself, as buildings are static objects that rely on their events and the people that inhabit them to construct them, give them meaning, and keep them from being demolished.[20] These ideas and relationships are further explored in the coming chapters and designs of this thesis.

[19] Peter D. Eisenman, "From Object to Relationship II: Casa Giuliani Frigerio: Giuseppe Terragni Casa Del Fascio," Perspecta 13/14 (1971): 36–65.

[20] David Leatherbarrow, *Architecture Oriented Otherwise* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2009).



7. ***View of Exhibition at the Tate Modern, London.*** Image by Author. This exhibit at the Tate Modern plays with ideas of blending art and architecture together, by placing a blue line along the perimeter of the gallery at the same level of the paintings, thereby extending the two-dimensional work to thee dimensions.



8. ***View of Exhibition at the Centrale Montemartini, Rome.*** Image by Author. This museum is held in a former power plant for the city of Rome, and hosts a variety of Roman artifacts. This juxtaposition of architecture and artifact dynamizes the experience of both the building and the artifacts themselves.

The Museum Is Not Enough

The museum originated as a colonial project and byproduct of conquest. Early uses of the word museum, from the Greek mouseion, meaning "seat of the muses" began in the 17th century, when empires such as the Dutch and British were consolidating lands and surveying them for value. Museums were private and reserved strictly for society's wealthiest individuals.[21]

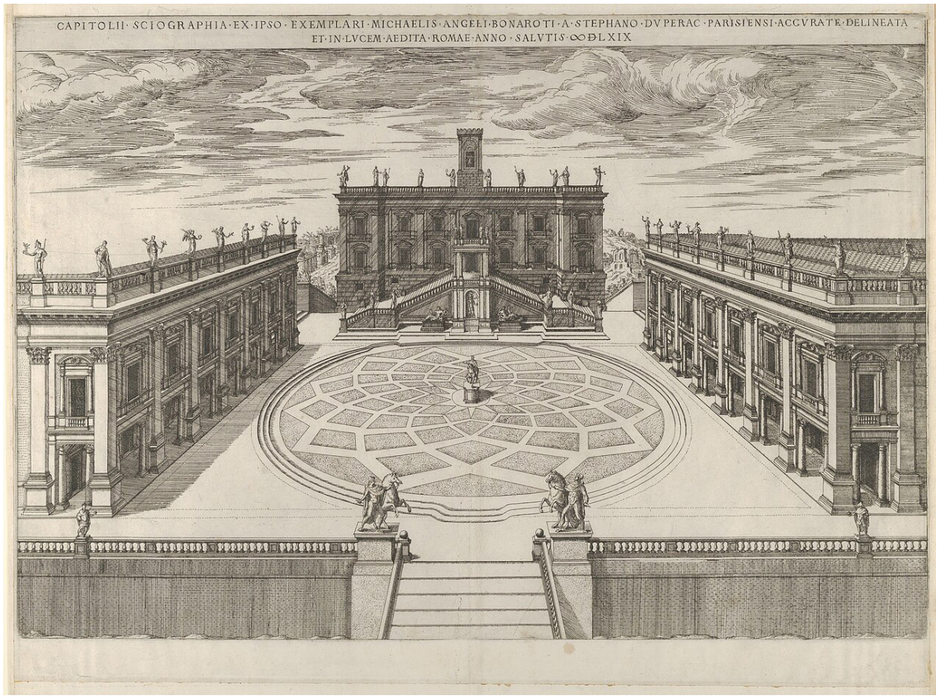
The Enlightenment, a period which was closely associated with the Scientific Revolution, placed a greater emphasis on the collection and preservation of knowledge as a whole, including the dissemination of knowledge to a wider population. During this time, museums began to shift towards the public realm. The Capitoline Museums in Rome are considered to be the first to open their collections to the wider public, having done so in 1734 (fig. 9).[22] This shift from exclusivity and privacy to inclusiveness denotes the change of thought associated with this period of history.

The new museology movement of the 1970s reframed the idea of what a museum can be and its role within society. This shift was focused on people and emphasized active education, not simply a place for the display of artifacts. This new perspective on what a museum could be, thus changed the ways that people thought about museums. The museum as an institution was now perceived as having an opinion or showcasing a specific point of view through the display and relation of its artifacts, though this would have always been the case to some extent.

The museum as an institution is undoubtedly in the business of creating a narrative, or putting forward a specific point of view, usually woth colonial or extractive connotations. Exhibitions may follow a chronological or otherwise structural arrangement of objects in order to make a point, but with the same stroke curation not only explains an idea, but stifles the possibility for other multiplicitous ideas to be put forward due simply to their arrangement in space or accompaying text. 'Frames' can be created by people who may not necessarily understand the significance of the objects at hand, especially if they belong to other cultures. Because of this, the significance of objects and their proximity, as well as their

[21] Paula Findlen, "The Museum: Its Classical Etymology and Renaissance Genealogy," Journal of the History of Collections 1, no. 1 (1989): 59–78, https://doi.org/10.1093/jhc/1.1.59.

[22] Ibid.



9. ***View of the Campidoglio as re-designed by Michelangelo from the 'Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae', print, Etienne DuPérac, 1569. 40.5 × 55.2 cm.*** Source: Wikimedia Commons.



10. ***View of the Castelvecchio in Verona, Italy.*** Image by Author. Scarpa's design for the Castelvecchio adaptively reuses the existing medieval-era castle, and seamlessly hand-picking and integrating its art pieces into the architecture itself. In this image the equestrian statue of Cangrande I della Scala is pictured, and as you ascend from the ground floor into the second floor, you are able to view the statue from a variety of different angles which you would not otherwise be able to do in a conventional setting.



11. ***View of the Venezuelan Pavilion, Expo 67, Montréal, Québec.*** Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA). *https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/search/details/collection/object/425976*. Pavilions at world expos are a way for cultures to showcase their ideas. The Venezuela pavilion at expo 67 was interesting because it did not tell you anything about it until you went inside.

relation to their physical environment, may not always be considered as elements which drive the narrative of the exhibition forward. I think back to the many museums I have visited and only a handful spring forward as having combined arrangement, environment, and participant in a way that felt novel and considered, one of these being the Castelvecchio in Verona by Carlo Scarpa (fig. 10), which displays a seamless integration between the art and the architecture, and it is noticeable that they were both treated as works of art.

While museums have historically focused on artifacts, cultures and identities have been less prominently displayed in an institutional setting. Beginning in the industrial era, world exhibitions were one of the main ways that people could experience cultures of which they were not part. In the Canadian context, Expo 67, titled "Man and His World" displayed a variety of countries' cultures and customs. The majority of the buildings were intended to seem grand and outwardly display each respective country's prowess in industrial and artistic endeavours. However, the Venezuelan Pavilion, designed by Carlos Raul Villanueva with Eduardo Trujillo[23] instead looked inward.

This pavilion displayed the idea of *opacity*, a concept coined by Edouard Glissant in his book Poetics of Relation. The Venezuelan Pavilion at Expo 67 is a particularly interesting example of this, as it acts as a microcosm of Venezuela at the time of its construction (fig. 11). The inward-facing pavilion reveals very little about itself until you head inside. Three main volumes, all perfect cubes arranged asymmetrically make up the simple parti. On the outside, each façade of the cube is coloured differently. A simple and capitalized sans serif font is the only indication that the pavilion is Venezuelan, yet the bright colours adorning the facade itself are a distillation of the country's vast natural beauty: Chlorophyll Green, Aragüaney* Yellow, Sunset Orange—and Petroleum Black.

This obscuring of Venezuelan identity forced patrons to engage with the country's exhibition more critically, not simply as a pastiche or cliché of the issues at hand. This very form of critical engagement is the goal of a place directed at the proliferation of the culture of the Caribbean Sea Diaspora. Members of the Caribbean Sea Diaspora reserve the right to not be wholly understood, and they also reserve the right to not engage in discourse they do not wish to engage in. However, while an outsider to the community may be welcomed into it, the onus is on them to learn and listen to that community so as to be a part of it. This applies not just to the Caribbean Sea Diaspora, but to any immigrant group establishing themselves in a new place, as well as the original inhabitants of colonized lands, Indigenous peoples. The architecture of a place like this can also reinforce opacity. However, this opacity should not be prescriptive, as culture has the ability to change, and does so at its own pace. This is also highlighted in *The Museum Is Not Enough*:

* The aragüaney (Handroanthus chrysanthus) is the national tree of Venezuela, whose flowers are a deep yellow colour.

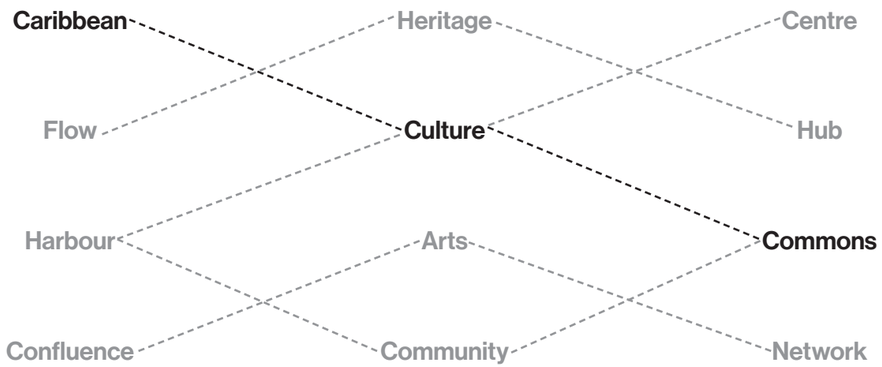
[23] Canadian Centre for Architecture, "Partial View of the Venezuelan Pavilion, Expo 67, Montréal, Québec," 1967, https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/search/details/collection/object/425976.

"Architecture carries intentions. It aims at a result, calling a reality into being. For that reason, it can help us come to specific terms not only with success, but especially with failure—a recognition that the world is not getting better, that all our 'progress' has come with other consequences." [24]

This quote alludes to the fact that culture does not live in a vacuum, and museums don't either. Architecture that houses these kinds of ideas should thus be able to adapt and change with the needs of the people who it intends to serve. This thesis argues that the word 'museum' is not an apt one for the creation of a culturally focused, arts-based institution. Its colonial beginnings, along with the connotations the word offers around the specific programming in institutions of the sort, seems to constrain the idea of what an institution can be, and the role it can play within its community and context. Instead, the name for a place of this sort should evoke themes of connection, community, and democracy in culture, deemphasizing hierarchies and embracing the collective. A cultural common, more specifically a Caribbean Cultural Common, deploys language that is a step in the right direction.

The wording for a Caribbean Cultural Common was not arrived at trivially (fig. 12). Beause the term museum carries so many connotations and associations, the Caribbean Cultural Common attempts to step away from them and offer a new term for which associations can be made. It attempts to be specific, as we are dealing specificaly with the Caribbean Sea and the cultures which surround it, while encompassing all of these cultures with a broader term, a Common, signaling to the similarities that we all share as members of this specific region. Metaphorically, the Caribbean Sea is the common of all these countries, a central meeting place that equalizes us all while simultaneously acknowledges our individuality.

[24] Canadian Centre for Architecture, *The Museum Is Not Enough.*



12. ***Naming Process Diagram.***
By Author.

Structure and Methodology

This thesis is devised as a way to take a snapshot in time of the services available to people of the Caribbean Sea diaspora, identifying the gaps of these programs and services, and suggesting solutions which materialize in a cultural centre for people of this diaspora. As such, the structure and methods of the thesis attempt to collect many varied opinions, as well as synthesize theory, precedents, and firsthand experiences into the design for the final building.

This first chapter is an introduction to the themes of the thesis, the ideas in question, and problems currently present in the City of Toronto. It lays the establishing principles on which this thesis builds, such as why there is a necessity for a place of this kind in Toronto today, how migration from the Caribbean Sea has influenced settlement patterns in the modern city, and the ways in which the gaps in current institutional programming could be addressed with a building of this kind.

The second chapter is all about people. People are at the centre of this thesis, and as such this chapter attempts to understand the ways in which the Caribbean Sea diaspora have settled and made community far away from their homelands. The immigrant archipelago that materializes from this analysis of settlement patterns, along with survey and interview data from participants from this region, will give a more accurate image of the perceived needs of the community today.

The third chapter is about institutions. Taking cues from institutions within the Caribbean Sea currently, their programming and display methods, as well as organizations in Toronto who are currently undertaking the task of proliferating culture of the Caribbean and Latin American diasporas, a forward-looking but backwards-referencing image of the institution can be constructed.

The fourth chapter is about design. Taking data from the previous three chapters and incorporating it into physical manifestations, the Caribbean Cultural Commons takes shape in three dimensions. Incorporating ideas from interviews, surveys, and architectural and identity theory, the construction of a place which is not only tailored toward the needs of the Caribbean Sea diaspora, but that is also able to evolve and change depending on the needs of this community in the future is suggested.

The final chapter consolidates all of the findings, as well as the finalized design, and synthesizes the ways in which people of the Caribbean Sea diaspora who I have spoken with have responded to this thesis, and the ways in which architecture could serve this community as a place for community building and preservation of culture for future generations.

The appendix section contains the unedited results of the anonymous survey, full transcripts from interviews with survey respondents and institution leaders within the City of Toronto, and the full Caribbean Institution Index.

The objective of this work is to offer an alternative to cultural institutions which are largely driven by profitability, and instead explore a people-centered and people-led organizational structure that is focused on the preservation of culture through an artistic and expressive lens. The resulting design will take all of these perspectives into consideration in an attempt to deliver a space for people of the Caribbean Sea diaspora within the Greater Toronto Area which will go beyond the traditional frame of current cultural understanding.

Chapter 2

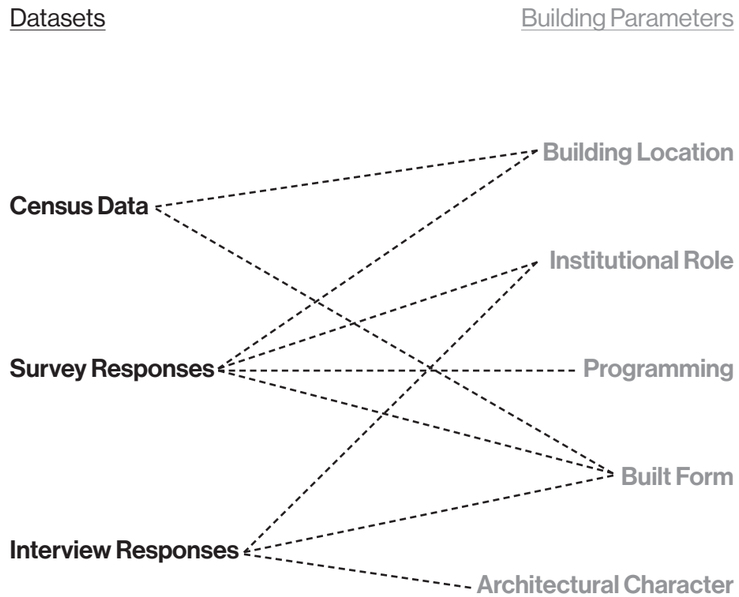
The Immigrant Archipelago

The Study

To accurately assess and address the needs of the Caribbean Sea diaspora in the Greater Toronto Area, I wanted to make sure that people of the region were purposefully represented. To do this, an anonymous survey was conducted which asked basic questions about culture and identity of people who reside in Canada but are immigrants or descendants from countries adjacent to the Caribbean Sea.

The survey also featured a section to provide contact information for the chance to be interviewed more in depth about themes of culture and identity as they relate to their specific countries of origin, as well as people's individual experiences residing in Canada. The goal of this mixed methods approach was to gather different levels of depth for communities of the Caribbean Sea diaspora in Canada, and to ensure that all dimensions of the immigrant experience were captured in some way and thus could be featured in the design for the building.

The main goal for the survey was to get an understanding of people's preferences and lacking programming in the City of Toronto, as well as to identify areas where the Caribbean Cultural Commons could live. By asking demographic questions along with opinions on cultural spaces and their relation to each individual's culture, a hierarchy of programming could begin to be established, and a list of programs which are important to the Caribbean Sea diaspora could be incorporated into the design of the Commons itself. All of this, combined with census data which will be further explained in the following sections, aims to identify and pin down the necessary parameters for the Caribbean Cultural Commons (fig 13).



13. ***Diagram of Datasets and their relationships to Building Parameters.*** By Author.

The Census

Census data from the 2021 Federal Census of Population was used as a starting point to identify where the target nationalities reside within the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). Census analysis was also utilized to determine the number of people that this centre would be attempting to serve, and the location where the centre should reside. For the purposes of this study, the "Caribbean Sea Diaspora" is denoted as the following regions (fig. 14):

Antigua and Barbuda (AG)
Bahamas (BS)
Barbados (BB)
Belize (BE)
Colombia (CO)
Costa Rica (CR)
Cuba (CU)
Dominica (DM)
Dominican Republic (DO)
El Salvador (SV)
Grenada (GD)
Guatemala (GT)
Guyana (GY)
Haiti (HT)
Honduras (HN)
Jamaica (JM)
Mexico (MX)
Nicaragua (NI)
Panama (PA)
Trinidad and Tobago (TT)

Aruba (AW)
Bonaire (BQ)
British Virgin Islands (VG)
Curacao (CW)
French Guiana (GF)
Guadeloupe (GP)
Martinique (MQ)
Montserrat (MS)
Saba (BQ)
St Kitts and Nevis (KN)
St Lucia (LC)
St Vincent and the Grenadines (VC)
Saint Barthelemy (BL)
Saint Martin (MF)
Sint Maarten (SX)
Sint Eustatius (BQ)
Suriname (SR)
Puerto Rico (PR)
U.S. Virgin Islands (VI)
Venezuela (VE)

These regions were selected not only due to their adjacencies to the Caribbean Sea, but also because of their collective perspectives and understanding of colonization, geopolitics, and culture.

The Census of Population's data does not precisely correlate with these outlined regions, however. The census allows respondents to identify in any way they see fit. The question as part of the census reads:



14. ***Map of Target Populations.*** By Author. Map Source: United States Geographical Survey (USGS).

25. Is this person:
Mark "x" more than one circle or specify, if applicable.

- **White**
- **South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)**
- **Chinese**
- **Black**
- **Filipino**
- **Arab**
- **Latin American**
- **Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai)**
- **West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan)**
- **Korean**
- **Japanese**
- **Other group — specify:** [25]

This wording allows people to identify with more than one cultural or ethnic group. Because of this, for the purpose of this study and to eliminate redundancies in selection criteria, all categories above as expressed in writing in the Census of Population are not counted to opt for the more specific ethnic or cultural groups under the 'other group' option.

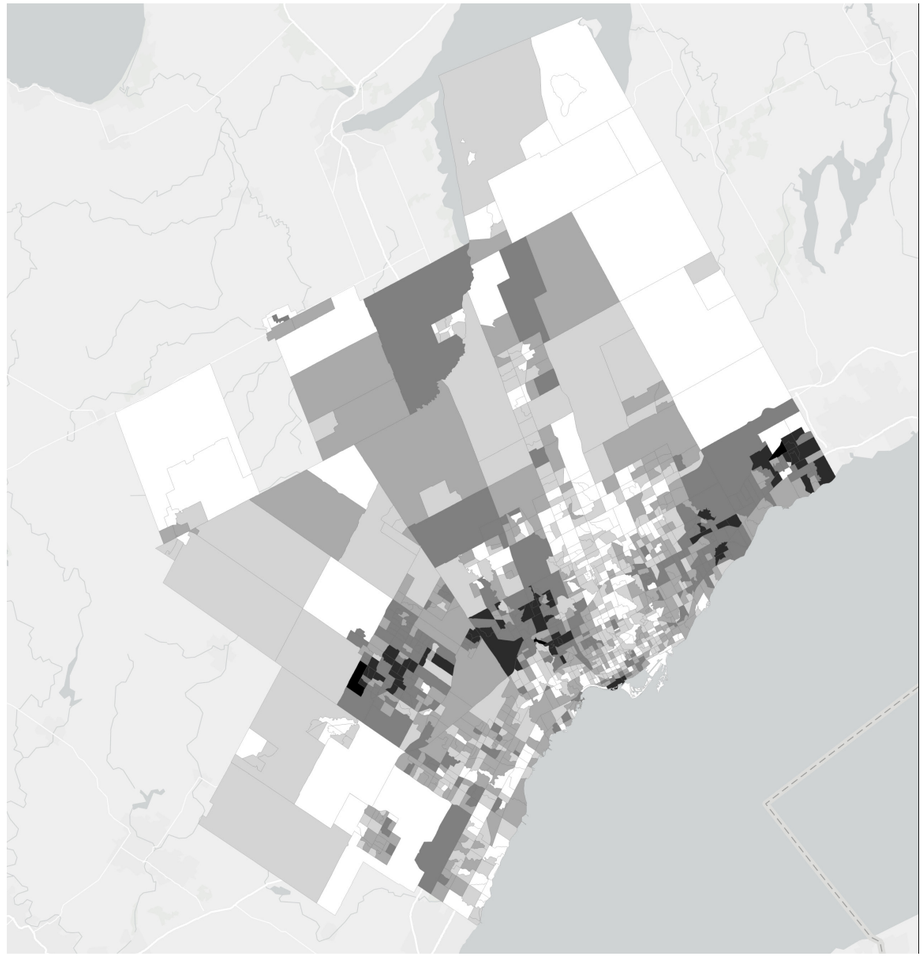
After applying this criterion, the following target groups remain:

- **Jamaican**
- **Haitian**
- **Mexican**
- **Latin, Central or South American, n.o.s.***
- **Colombian**
- **Guyanese**
- **Trinidadian/Tobagonian**
- **Salvadorean**
- **African Caribbean**
- **Caribbean, n.o.s.***
- **West Indian, n.o.s.***
- **Cuban**
- **Venezuelan**
- **Guatemalan**
- **Dominican**
- **Nicaraguan**
- **Vincentian**
- **Grenadian**
- **Mayan**
- **Honduran**
- **Indo-Caribbean**
- **Indo-Guyanese**
- **Costa Rican**
- **Lucian**

When visualized in terms of density and according to each census tract, the following map is generated (fig. 15):

[25] "2021 Census: 2A-R," accessed October 27, 2025, https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/statistical-programs/instrument/3901_Q8_V2.

* n.o.s., meaning "not otherwise specified" denotes broader categories that were not more specific in their designation.

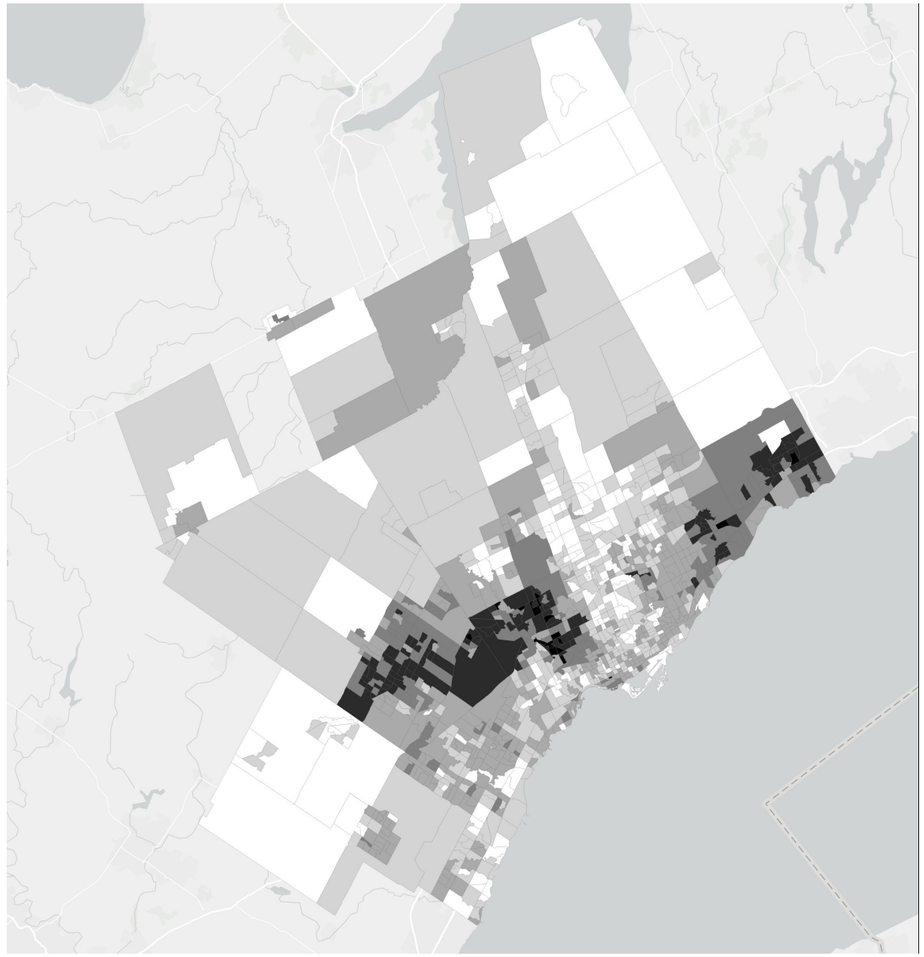


15. ***Target Populations per Tract.*** By Author. Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap Contributors and the GIS User Community.

This map highlights the densities of target populations specifically in the number of reported instances in the census. The map highlights the most densities in Pickering, East Scarborough, North Etobicoke, and Brampton, with some smaller densities in North Oakville and Downtown Toronto. The following map denotes the percentage of target populations divided by the total population of each tract (fig. 16):

This further delineates the densities per tract of the Caribbean Sea Diaspora, with the highest densities in the previous map making up approximately 25-35 percent of the total population per tract.

These maps help in understanding the immigrant archipelago further and denote the places where target populations currently reside, which will be used in the design phase of the thesis to find a building location which is conveniently accessible for the largest amount of this population as possible.



16. ***Percentage of Target Population Density by Total Tract Density.*** By Author. Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap Contributors and the GIS User Community.

The Survey

To further gauge interest and affinities for the construction of the Caribbean Cultural Commons, a survey was designed with the goal of understanding demographic aspects of the Caribbean Sea Diaspora, as well as to begin to understand the community's needs regarding cultural facilities and spaces necessary to proliferate culture. This survey was disseminated via online channels such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram.

The findings from the survey were both reinforcing of some aspects and hypotheses previously held by me with regards to culture and reframed the ways in which people seek and maintain community within different circles.

Demographically, 65% of respondents were aged 45-64, 92% of respondents were first-generation immigrants to Canada, 73% identified their personal vehicle as their main mode of transportation. 42% of respondents felt affinities with people who share cultural identities with nations surrounding the Caribbean Sea.

Regarding connection with others, 33% connect with others through festivals and other one-time events, 21% do not currently connect with others, 20% do so through social media, and 16% do so through religious institutions. 39% of respondents believe intergenerational dialogue is very important, and 37% believe it is moderately important.

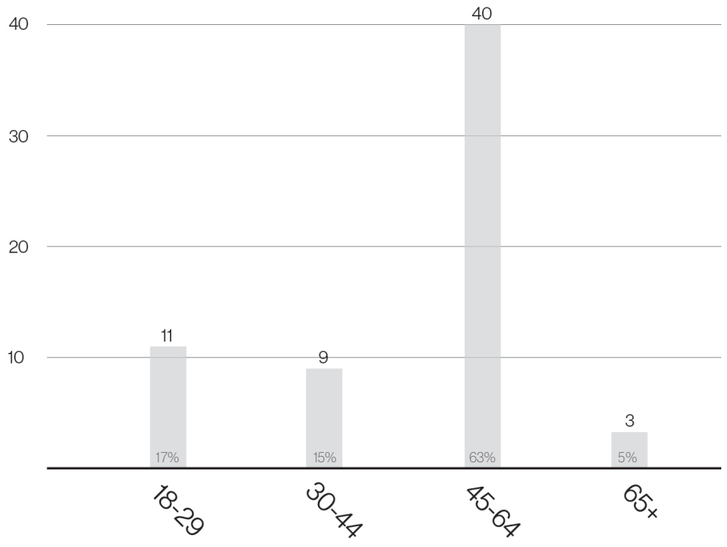
Throughout the survey an emphasis on gastronomy and culinary arts was evident. Food is a main avenue in which people can connect to each other and to their cultures, it seems to be a uniting fact in all the target cultural groups. These questions aim to gather a clearer image of the current state of the Caribbean Sea diaspora in the Greater Toronto Area by further identifying and defining its strengths, as well as its shortcomings. To this effect, both physical and more intangible parameters are included in the questions asked to participants.

An unedited version of responses is available in the appendix section.

The survey asked the following questions:

1. **Please identify your age group.**
2. **Which country (or countries) do you or your family identify with? If more than one country, please list in order from the country you identify with the most, to the country you identify with the least.**
3. **Which region surrounding the Caribbean Sea do you or your family identify with?**
4. **How do you primarily identify your cultural background?**
5. **What generation are you in Canada?**
6. **What city/town do you reside in?**
7. **What is your primary form of travel?**
8. **How far would you be willing to travel to access an arts-based Cultural Centre?**
9. **How often do you attend cultural or community events?**
10. **Do you currently feel represented in Toronto's cultural and civic spaces?**
11. **Have you experienced a lack of spaces that reflect your cultural identity in Toronto?**
12. **How do you currently connect with others from your cultural background?**
13. **Do you feel affinities or commonalities with people who share cultural identities with nations surrounding the Caribbean Sea?**
14. **Rank the types of artistic expression are most important to your cultural identity, from most important at the top to least important at the bottom.**
15. **Are there any non-arts based programs you think could complement the programming of an arts-based cultural centre?**
16. **What challenges do you currently face in accessing community or recreational services?**
17. **How important is intergenerational dialogue to you?**
18. **How do you think that cultural centres can benefit the wider community? Rank from most valuable to least valuable.**
19. **Please describe a space where you have felt most culturally represented or at home. What made it feel that way?**

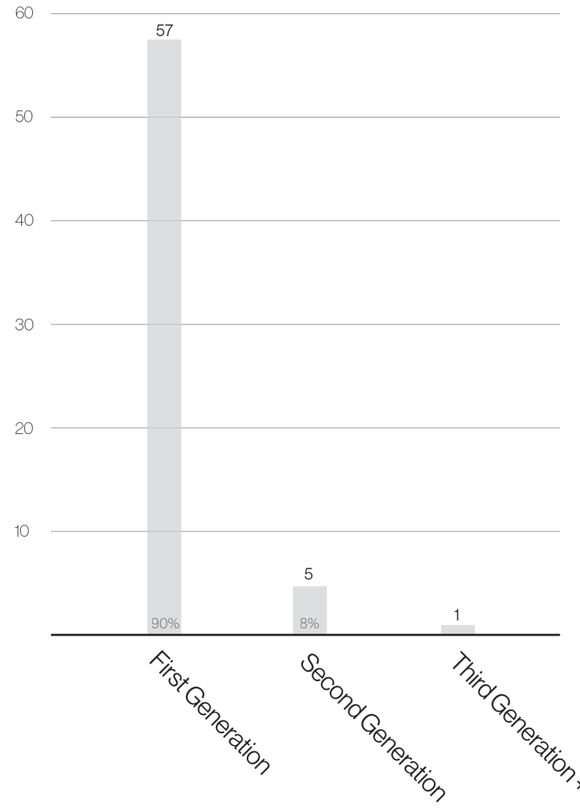
Please identify your age group.



17. ***Bar Graph of Age Distribution.*** By Author.

A majority of respondents are in the 45-64 age range. This may be due to the distribution channels used (Facebook, WhatsApp) making up a majority of the means of distribution. Instagram was also used, though not as extensively.

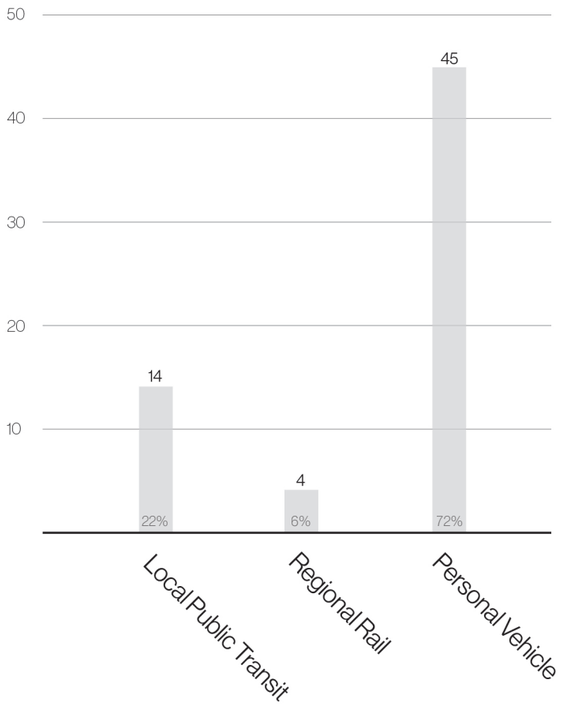
What generation are you in Canada?



18. ***Bar Graph of Generation Distribution.*** By Author.

An overwhelming majority of respondents are first-generation immigrants, which aligns with the Canadian Government's increase in the number of immigrants allowed to settle in Canada in recent decades. This also means that immigrants to Canada were born in their respective countries, carrying with them experiences of these countries from a firsthand view.

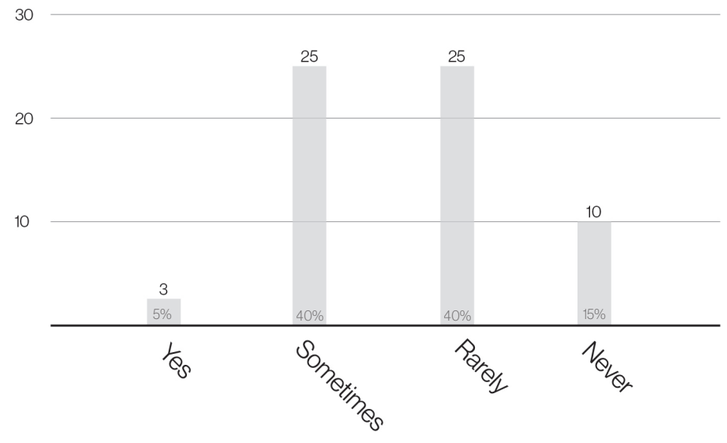
What is your primary form of travel?



19. ***Bar Graph of Primary Travel Modes.*** By Author.

A majority of respondents also noted that they use a personal vehicle to travel on a regular basis. The age demographic may have been a factor in this result, as older individuals may have less financial barriers to obtaining a personal vehicle. There may also be some class bias due to the means of distribution, as a part of respondents were reached through personal networks. This means that while driving is the main form of travel, the building should be accessible via public transit as well.

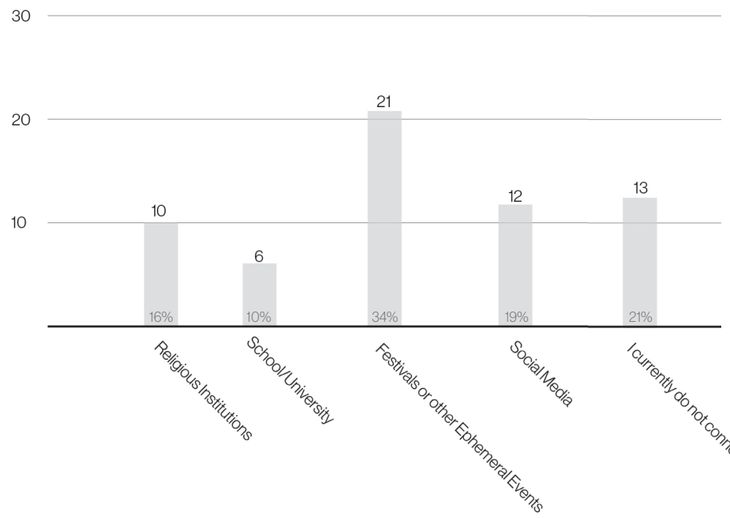
Do you currently feel represented in Toronto's cultural and civic spaces?



20. ***Bar Graph of Civic Representation.*** By Author.

The uncertainty in these responses continues to show the fact that there is not a reliable civic amenity in the Greater Toronto Area that individuals from the Caribbean Sea diaspora can feel represented in.

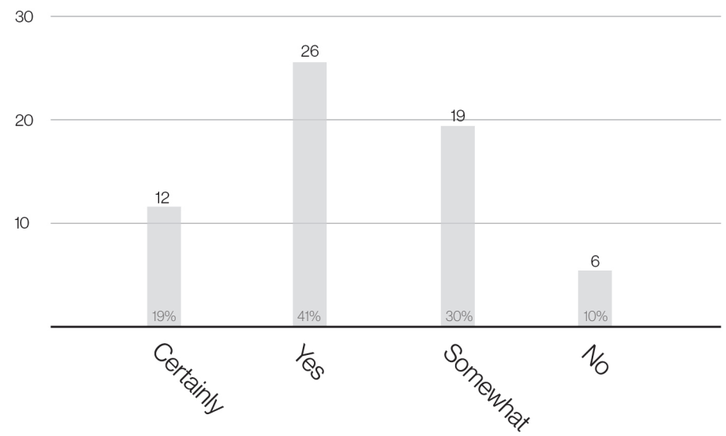
How do you currently connect with others from your cultural background?



21. ***Bar Graph of Community Connection.*** By Author.

The majority of respondents noted that they either connect with people from their background via festivals or other ephemeral events, with the next highest number of responses being that people do not connect with others. This again shows the lack of connections and networks between people, highlighting the need for a place where groups can come together year-round.

Do you feel affinities or commonalities with people who share cultural identities with nations surrounding the Caribbean Sea?



22. ***Bar Graph of Cultural Affinities.*** By Author.

Participants largely feel as though they share similarities with people from other countries surrounding the Caribbean Sea, which shows that focusing on similarities rather than differences can unite organizational, institutional, and financial efforts in order to achieve goals that will benefit the diaspora as a whole.

Rank the types of artistic expression are most important to your cultural identity, from most important at the top to least important at the bottom.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Culinary Arts	**36**	11	4	2	2	1	0	0
Dance	2	**15**	**18**	9	6	4	2	0
Visual Arts	1	3	**20**	**16**	**11**	5	0	0
Oral Traditions	4	1	2	**16**	**14**	**10**	8	1
Music	9	**23**	8	2	**13**	1	0	0
Textile Arts	0	1	1	4	6	**27**	**16**	1
Literature	3	1	3	7	4	8	**30**	0
Other	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	**54**

23. ***Table Showing Highest Rankings of Artistic Expression Types.*** By Author.

Most people feel connected to their identity through gastronomy. I believed this would be the case, as I personally feel this way, however, the following ranking was somewhat surprising: music and dance are ranked similarly, though more people placed dance in their second or third choice than music. This may be related to the fact that there are many distinct types of dance in the Caribbean and Latin America, which could perhaps help people identify more strongly with dance rather than music, as the global music market has made rhythms from all countries widely accessible, and perhaps this has diluted its role as an identifying trait.

The Interviews

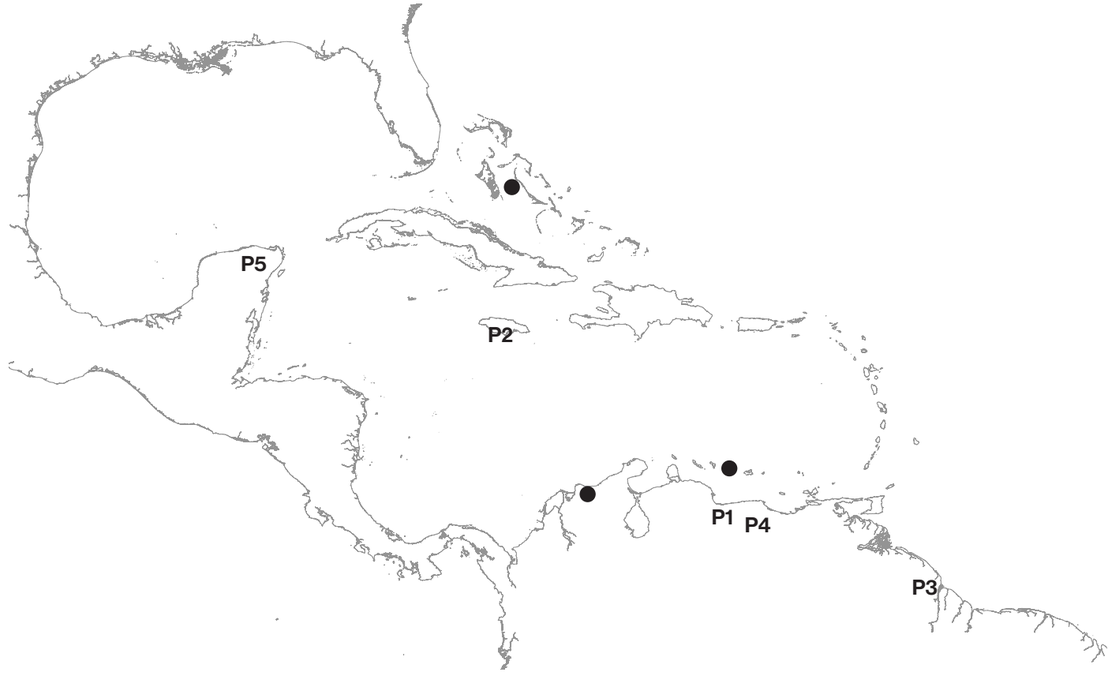
As a more intimate indicator of sentiments surrounding the affinities, successes, and shortcomings of the cultural landscape of the City of Toronto, an optional section to provide contact information for the chance to participate in a more in-depth interview was devised. The goal was to collect as many perspectives as possible from the various cultures that were previously outlined. As part of this process, individuals from Venezuela, Colombia, Curaçao, Bahamas, Jamaica, Guyana, and Mexico were contacted to participate in the interview process, though some did not respond to the interview request (fig. 24). Each participant's identity has been anonymized for their privacy; however, their countries of heritage are highlighted to underscore varied perspectives.

The interview asked 4 main questions:

1. **What does "community" mean to you in the context of your background?**
2. **Are there stories, traditions, or cultural elements you feel are missing or misrepresented in public life in Toronto?**
3. **What kinds of programs, services, or events would make you feel most connected to a space like this?**
4. **If this Centre could accomplish one thing for your community, what should it be?**

These questions aimed at arriving at a more nuanced conversation about culture and identity than the survey, and to extract tangible markers that could be used for the development of programming, events, or visual qualities in the building's design. A transcript of the full interviews can be found in the appendix section of this thesis.

Underlined excerpts of interviews are seen as key points which will be taken forward into the design chapter of this thesis.



● Contacted
P1 Venezuela
P2 Jamaica
P3 Guyana
P4 Venezuela
P5 Mexico

24. ***Map of Respondent Locations.*** By Author. Geographic Data: United States Geological Survey (USGS).

Participant 1

Venezuela

Participant 1 stressed in a few occasions that there is a lack of spaces where they feel that their Venezuelan culture is represented. They spoke about the multicultural aspect of Canadian society and about living with people from different cultures, and feeling as though they are not always able to fully express themselves even in their own home in order to be mindful of others. They expressed that if a space that was available to them to do these things, to dance, listen to music, and enjoy Venezuelan food, that is something that they would be interested in:

> *I think the main thing is a place for people to be themselves in terms of culture, because again, the fear with my culture is mainly like overstepping, whether it be in terms of noise or being in someone else's space. I think it can be just as simple as having a space where you can get to do the things you're used to doing; that would be very beneficial. I think very much in terms of being loud. It's not only in terms of the volume we speak at, but we also like to listen to music a lot. We're always listening to music and it's very much not calm or subtle music. It's very loud and very expressive. I also love to dance, so even a space where you can get to do that without restrictions and where you get to dance and to share with others, that's kind of what comes to mind, maybe with food as well. I would love a space to come together and catch up, like we did growing up. The family we found once we came to Canada, especially as young kids, we'd meet up every weekend, do an activity like a picnic, because that was our way to get connected with our culture again and to see each other and talk and eat, I guess is mainly the thing too.*

While these things seem quite simple to achieve in theory, being able to have a more authentic cultural experience proves to be more difficult. When asked about the ways in which they currently connect to their culture, food is the principal way in which they do so. Secondly, they speak of dance and music as a mode of self-expression, noting that cultural events place less of an emphasis on drinking than in Canada. There is a sense of longing when they speak about this, further denoting the disconnect between Venezuelan and Canadian tendencies in events:

> *I think the first thing that comes to mind is food. There's not a lot of it, and you're always kind of craving it and there's no place to find it. Also, in terms of general like Latin culture I always tend to come back to dance, but to go and dance and celebrate—not to generalize—but here in Canada, the culture of going out is more around drinking; and not that in Latin America it's not, we also drink, but it's also about dancing. And I think there's not that many spaces where you get to go dancing with Latin music that you get to see a lot.*

Another main aspect seems to simply be about being in the vicinity of people with which one shares similarities. They expressed that places with larger Spanish-speaking populations make them feel more at home, as the sensory experience of peripherally hearing your native language is a positive one, especially outside of their home country.

> *I've been in Canada for over 12 years now and I don't think I've ever felt at home in a place, versus when I go maybe to Miami or Madrid, where you get to see a lot more Latin culture, and you get to find these spaces where there's a lot of people from Venezuela or the Caribbean and then you really feel at home. I think that sense is kind of missing here. It's almost like you're not fully from here, but you're not fully from there either. I feel like a lot of people could relate to that.*

Evidently, there is a disconnect to the culture which they are being thrust into, but also a very literal disconnect with their own culture, as they are physically distanced to the places and events which would make them feel as though they belong. To that end, a place where there is a sense of reliability for its cultural makeup and cultural programming would in itself be an enticing aspect. Museums now attempt to do this to some extent, and the district model of museum design that has become increasingly popular in recent decades incorporates some aspects such as gastronomy, which denotes an acknowledgment of these concepts influencing culture. However, these concepts are more aligned with the neoliberal model and profit-making as opposed to the preservation of culture itself, which is what the Caribbean Cultural Commons is concerned with.

Participant 2

Jamaica

Participant 2 was very reverent to their Jamaican background. They expressed that they arrived to Canada at a young age and were ahead of their classmates of the same grade in elementary school. They expressed that they faced push-back from teachers about their English level when they were proficient, and they spoke highly of their heritage:

> *Oh, gosh. It's everything. It's my identity. It's where I have my deepest, closest friendships. It's my DNA, you know? It's absolutely everything to me. It gives me the confidence that I need to hold my head up high and walk these streets and contribute to society. I don't know what I'd be without it.*

This strong identification with heritage is one that I am sure many would identify with. When the conversation shifted to things they believe are misrepresented about their culture, they expressed that large gatherings are usually seen as a negative thing in the Canadian context:

> *I think there's a presumption that when we gather en masse that it can't be anything good, that it's going to turn into violence or it's just too loud and can't be any good. It's a silencing thing that happens to our communities. We can't really gather in large groups and not have it be a celebration without people thinking nothing will go wrong. We're never really given the benefit of the doubt and such.*

A place where these activities are sanctioned and that has the capacity for gatherings with many people would be something that would be beneficial for this community, not having to face assumptions about behaviours which others from a different culture may not welcome. To that end, they spoke about their own experiences with organizing and making their voice heard:

> *…nothing's going to be handed to you on a silver platter. If you really want something done, you got to do it yourself. You really have to create it yourself and so that's what I've been doing as time goes by, not waiting for somebody to create something for you. We just go and do it ourselves and get it done, and if it's able to get funded somehow or what have you, that would happen after that. But I don't wait for bodies to create things on our behalf, because we'll be waiting forever. It just won't be done.*

The do-it-yourself nature of organizing is congruous with the immigrant experience in Canada. As an immigrant, there is a relearning that occurs when your life is uprooted and transported to another country. Small things such as finding a grocery store or a dental care facility, things you might otherwise have no issues doing in your home country can suddenly become monumental tasks, and this can certainly take a toll on individuals, notwithstanding other factors such as language, economic, or social barriers.

They continued to speak about large events and their impact on communities as well as the City of Toronto at large:

> *Oh gosh. I mean, the biggest one for me is Caribana, a.k.a. Toronto Carnival. It's overwhelmingly positive when you see what we're able to do en masse. You know, it's also very interesting how millions of people could be in one end of the city. You go to another end of the city, and you'd never know anything's happening, where the million of us is gathering. I take a lot of solace in attending these events organized for our communities.*

Caribana is a Caribbean festival that dates to 1967, when the first instance was organized as part of Canada's Expo 67 celebrations by the Caribbean Cultural Committee.[26] Since then, the festival has grown to host more than a million people annually.[27] Caribana serves as a celebration of emancipation and is a symbol of the significant contributions that Caribbean and Black communities have made in building Canada (fig. 25).[28] When speaking further about the need for dedicated space for the Caribbean community, they expressed that the next generation of the diaspora are the ones who will benefit the most from it:

> *Our youth need a physical space that they can touch and feel and see examples of what's possible. There's nothing like the ability to have a physical spot that you can say "this is mine. It's open to me. I can get there and it's there and I know the hours. I'm always gonna be welcome. I don't have to pay a fee. Nobody's gonna be judging me negatively." And I hope it could be a place where they can get all kinds of support, whatever they might need. And hopefully it also includes an intergenerational piece in it as well. Because—oh my gosh, what did they call me the other day? —I'm an elder. I nearly died. But I get it. I'm not even 60 yet, but my experience is valued, and when called on now I have to step up, as much as I'd like to leave everything for the younger ones to come up with, it's not fair. I don't like repeating cycles. It's like, why would you want to make somebody behind you go through the same things you did when you've got solutions and possibilities?... I'm hopeful that this center would, you know, be sort of an all-encompassing place where we can learn life skills together and not repeat our mistakes but repeat our successes instead. I'm all for virtual programming, but yeah, we need the physical too.*

[26] "The History of Caribana & the Grand Parade," Museum of Toronto, n.d., accessed October 27, 2025, https://museumoftoronto.com/collection/caribana-the-grand-parade/.

[27] "Our Story - Toronto Carnival," TorontoCarnival, accessed October 17, 2025, https://www.torontocarnival.ca/about-us-section-2/our-story-.

[28] Ibid.

The need for a space that is permanent, reliable, and inclusive for the entire community is something that would be beneficial to create networks which can become stronger with time, and the physical space that these networks inhabit can be come a hub for these different stakeholder groups, and welcoming intergenerational dialogue can ensure that negative experiences are not repeated and, as this participant expressed, cycles can be broken for the betterment of individuals, and of the community.



25. ***Caribana Parade, 2013. Chris Harte from Toronto, Canada, CC BY 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0).*** Source: Wikimedia Commons

Participant 3

Guyana

Participant 3 hails from Guyana. Though they are a second-generation Canadian, they spoke fondly about their upbringing in Canada and their relationship with their cultural background in our conversation. When speaking about their relationship with their identity, they spoke of their community as a place of learning:

> *…it's a space where you can learn, share and reinvigorate what your culture means to you. A lot of times, because I'm [second] generation Guyanese Canadian, it's rediscovering cultures that I wouldn't have a first-hand feeling with because I wasn't born in Guyana. But because Caribbean experiences are often shared, I get always something new from a different country anytime it's a Caribbean based event. I appreciate that even if I go to a Trinidadian event or a Bajan or a Jamaican event, there's still similarities that you can share, but there's still so much community and knowledge that you can learn from the people that are there. It's always a shared space of open arms; it always feels like a warm hug and a family reunion. I love spaces and events that reaffirm that feeling.*

They also spoke to the tenacity and positive attitude of the diaspora in Canada:

> *Ultimately, I think the Caribbean mantra is that as long as we're out, as long as we're liming*, as long as we're having a good time, we'll make the best out of a bad situation.*

When speaking about aspects that were missing or misrepresented in Toronto, they spoke of the seemingly diminishing number of events that are specifically catered to the Caribbean community. Some of the issues they expressed were lessening resources and events beyond Caribana, which has been renamed "Toronto Caribbean Carnival" to 'better reflect the diversity of the Caribbean nations represented and to emphasize the carnival's location, in keeping with international trends." [28]

* "Liming" is a slang term from the Caribbean which describes spending time with others in a social, and usually public, setting.

[28] Toronto Carnival, "Our Story - Toronto Carnival."

> *Some of the events that I used to go to when I was a kid, and a teenager no longer exist now. I don't know if that's because of the city or because of the infrastructure and the organizations building it. But I remember when I was younger there were where way more resources, and places, and events to find and enjoy with uncles and aunts. Now that I'm an adult and I can find those spaces myself, they're harder to find…. Other than Caribana, which is no longer called Caribana, everything on the map is kind of disjointed. I find it harder to find these events, and I usually find out about them matter-of-factly or through hearsay, whereas before it was kind of baked in and I always knew something was coming up. I would say the connection of letting people know what's happening and where it's happening is a disconnect, and probably a problem for me if we're talking about issues that I wish were fixed.*

The sentiment of wanting a space which is centralized and shared is one that Participant 2 and 3 shared. Participant 3 refers to it as a 'headquarters', and for it to be a place that is reliably available for events and other types cultural celebrations.

> *As long as it's a shared space, that people know they can always go there, the event will kind of turn itself. Having a headquarters, I think is the biggest hurdle to jump, because once you have it and people know that you can always come here, it doesn't matter what flag you're waving. They're going to keep coming to that spot.*

When asked about what they would most like to see in a space catered to the Caribbean Sea diaspora, they expressed the importance of gastronomy as a driver of community.

> *I always believe food and representation is probably the biggest thing. You'll fall in love with the country based on what you eat…. I'm salivating now, thinking about how many different countries I could potentially taste in one spot. That's the dream. And then you find once the food's there, people are coming regardless, right? It's easy to add onto that, but if you make sure your kitchen is set and people can always eat there and they're eating from authentic sources, they'll find that connection to home and you can always add on that easily.*

Food is certainly an attractor for people, and similarly to Participant 1, they expressed that a connection to food is usually one of the main ways that immigrants can feel connected to their cultural heritage. They summarized this once again as the most important aspect in a building of this sort:

> *Cultures, communities, and people need gathering. If you give them a space where they can just be themselves and enjoy laughs, sounds and tastes, I think you're ahead of the curve…. We love food. Just keep giving us food. If you got food under lock, then you got community.*

Participant 4

Venezuela

Participant 4, who also hails from Venezuela, expressed their own definition of community as a group with shared commonalities and frequent contact:

> *…we are in an environment where we see each other every day and we have things that are similar — probably our socioeconomic level, we probably share tragedies. The day the power goes out on the whole street, for example, those are people with whom you share life, and people with whom you try to accomplish things. I think that would be, for me, the meaning of community.*

To participant 4, tragic or perhaps negative things are also community builders, as they bring out people who are truly committed to each other in times of need. This idea of networks and going through shared experiences, whether they are positive or negative, is a builder of community. They continue to speak about their experience in moving to Canada and the community that they have found here, and the ways in which these communities have somewhat transformed:

> *Basically, I think at the beginning it's a survival thing, and the Latin or Caribbean person is not made to be alone. We are made to live with lots of people around, which in most cases is family. Family is your weekend, it's Mother's Day, it's birthdays, it's even traveling. Beyond that there are the friends who get added. That's our way of feeling alive — with people around, with noise, with racket, even with bullying too.*

There is a fullness of experiences when they speak about their community, especially the things they have searched for in Canada. It's a nuanced topic, and some might be surprised to see the word 'bullying' in there. However, in this case the word carries an endearing connotation, and that at the end of the day when something is said to you that could be perceived as negative, it is in fact a type of friendly banter that is shared. They also spoke of some of their experiences with family and community in Venezuela, and the ways in which culture in their country of origin is different from customs and gatherings in Canada.

> *I remember that after one of those big family gatherings, on my way back home I would say, "Damn, I won't see those people for at least a year," because I left feeling more beaten up than when I had arrived, but it's about that interaction. People seek interaction and not necessarily in a "nice" way — people say things like, "How are you driving that ugly car?" or "This is the third time I see you in that shirt." All of those interactions, which in the end, to survive in Canada, you seek out — especially because even though language can be a barrier, people here don't have that level of interaction. For example, the 'bullying' that usually happens in our culture, that's something we miss. We miss [joking around]. We miss teasing someone to laugh. And in Canada, if it's not with Latinos, you can't have that level of communication. And that's something for us like music — it's a basic thing. How do you communicate? How do you tell a joke? How do you laugh? How do you understand when the other person is not okay but still know what word to say?*

These cultural barriers are certainly much more visible to a person who is hyper aware of them, namely immigrants who have to navigate the nuances of adapting to living conditions and other aspects they are unaccustomed with. What this participant refers to as 'bullying' is in fact a very normal part of the Caribbean and Latin American experience and is not seen as a negative thing. It's a part of the culture of place that is certainly not something which one could easily get away with if it is someone they are not fully acquainted with. This is not the case in Latin America and the Caribbean. There is a more laid-back and humorous attitude towards negativity that diffuses the perceived aggression of a statement similar to the ones outlined above. This can be likened to Participant 1 and their definition of 'overstepping' and being afraid to say something that while meant in a joking manner, could be perceived as negative or aggressive by someone of another culture. These sorts of interactions are also ones which, like Participant 4 points out, are necessary for culture as they are synonymous with the cultural norms of Latin American and Caribbean populations.

When discussing the types of events that makes them feel most connected to their culture, Participant 4 had this to say:

> *I'll be honest with you, sometimes Latin festivals and those things, I don't like them. Usually, it's a lot of people making a lot of noise, dancing, yelling, eating fried foods, whatever. But there's something I have looked for and haven't found, and that's Spanish. I mean, at least in the libraries, there is very little bibliography in Spanish. I've read almost all the books in my local library. Once I even tried to see if there was a publishing house that worked in Spanish in this area and there isn't — there was one in Montreal, but it wasn't much help…. I would love to see a storyteller or a play or things like that: Cuban, Panamanian, Costa Rican, Mexican, whatever, you know?*

Participant 4 points out that while there is certainly a level of outward visibility of Caribbean and Latin American communities, there is a lack of nuance in representation and intersectionality of the community.

> …*cultural events [in Toronto] are usually very cliché. It's like a bunch of people dancing salsa in the street, and that's it. Which is fine, but that's not everything, you know? I'd love to see something like a guy who published a book in Santiago de Chile, and he could come to a place and present it, and people could interact. That kind of culture doesn't exist. Think about it — if you wanted to set up a theater group here, where would you perform? You'd have to perform in a bar, because I think that's all there is.*

People of all backgrounds have multiple dimensions to them, and our community is no different. This sentiment that the surface is barely being scratched with regards to the amount of literature, theatre, and arts that exists in the Caribbean Sea region should be further fostered and explored. They continued explaining the ways in which this lack of dimensionality has affected their own connection to their cultural heritage:

> *I think immigrants seek several things, but one of them is that they romanticize what they left behind, in most cases. And what lies ahead, or what they have today, they avoid understanding. I think a lot of people keep living in that romantic past that no longer exists; whatever the country, because all countries change. But in the present, they also don't participate — it's not that I stopped attending cultural events in Spanish and now I only go to events in English. It's that I don't go to any.*

This erosion of culture is unfortunately all too common and is a feeling I have personally experienced. It would not be atypical that beyond family friends and small celebrations with acquaintances, large events with an emphasis on the community are rare. It would seem as though the lack of events that appeal to these demographics sees a further retreating from culture altogether. They also expressed disappointment with current logistical challenges and bias from specific cultural groups, and expressed interest in a new place to be able to synthesize a variety of events in a single place:

> *It's hard for me, because sometimes if I join a WhatsApp chat, or Facebook, or some Venezuelan group, I'll only find out when someone is coming that interests that group. And maybe it interests me, maybe it doesn't, but I'd like to know not just if a Venezuelan is coming. The hardest thing is that the place has to find a way to make that connection with people somehow.*

A centralized place where programming is advertised and is not segregated for events within the community is something that is fully absent in the Greater Toronto Area. While some communities may know the goings-on of their ingroup, it can be difficult to expand beyond them.

When describing their ideal qualities of a place, and the most important things which would make them feel at home in such a space, they spoke of the materiality of institutions which made them feel at home:

> *…in Caracas there were these institutions that were in colonial-style houses, or concert halls where when you went in, the floor was still made of — what do you call it? — cobblestones. Something like that, where you feel like you are entering your own home, and that's something they must do in Venezuela, Costa Rica, Mexico — where you go in and say, "I feel in touch and I haven't even spoken to anyone, I haven't heard anything."*

The feeling of the place is tangible portion of belonging. Seeing elements that are held in the collective memory as placeholders of identity can act as an aid in making people feel as though they are back in their country of origin. While cobblestones are specifically named, there are many more of these visual markers which can be incorporated into the building design that achieve this effect, thus connecting the memory of the Caribbean Sea to the memory of Toronto.

> *It has to be something really attractive for what our culture is. [North American architecture is] a shock…because no one is interested in looking backward — everything is modern. For me, that's what I'd say is the most important thing.*

The reflective nature of this passage is one that I have thought about a lot in the development of this thesis. While the building and the work being conducted looks forward into the future, there is a referential aspect to the architectural quality which cannot be overlooked. This very quality also must not be, as participant 4 put it, 'cliché', for people to have an authentic connection and experience to the building and thus want to preserve and uphold it for future generations.

Participant 5

Mexico

Participant 5 hails from Mexico and is a first-generation immigrant to Canada. They emphasized their familial connection as the most intimate form of community:

> *When you immigrate, especially if you're thinking about community, especially the context of your country of origin, I'd say 100%, The biggest part of that is family. I think that's just very forward facing. It's also, the time that you primarily interact with community in the Latin American context. Secondary to that is all the Latin American friends bordering on family, let's say. It's even common to just call them your aunts, your uncles, family friends that you've made here, I think it's mostly just social gatherings, social events to do with family, you know the famous dinner get-together, or a Friday night dinner, weekend barbecue, something like that. Public type get-togethers I think it's the core part of community.*

Once again, the presence of food in the sphere of culture presents itself as a principal builder of community, further cementing it as an element which I believe should be present in the building's design. Participant 5 continued speaking about community, and how they felt as though they did not have a very close connection to their community. They do, however, share an anecdote where they felt as though they wished for a greater connection to their own community:

> *…the closest I got to feeling like, "wow, this is something that's really, interesting and that I might have wanted to be a little bit more part of my life." We had a 'Club España' is what they're called* [figs. 26-28]. *They're everywhere in most places where there's a big Spanish—specifically from Spain—Spanish community…. unfortunately it seems like they were always petering out and they would close out for a few years and they would try to open it back up and I think a big hurdle to them keeping something like that alive was the interest of younger people.…I think what it might have been missing, or at least in my experience, that specific club that we went to here once we moved in Toronto. The reason that it was struggling is that young people weren't coming in. It kind of turned into an old people place and thing, and it kind of died out. And I'm not sure how you would fix this because I think objectively is just a good thing for the community to have. But*

> *yeah, I do believe that that was really, interesting place of culture that again, I feel petered out because the interest just wasn't there. I mean for the young people, and I'm not sure how you'd fix that.*

Cultural clubs, which are mainly for one specific religion or nationality, are certainly not a new concept. Institutions such as Islamic centres or Italian/Spanish/Japanese cultural venues are present in the fabrics of many cities around the world. Growing up, I routinely visited the Italian-Venezuelan Centre of Caracas, which hosted cultural and recreational programs, and also had sports facilities for its members. That specific type of venue is translated across the world, with some instances being bigger than others. However, they all aim at the same result: the proliferation and preservation of a specific culture in a foreign country. Participant 5 continued to speculate about the ways in which a place of this sort could be beneficial to the diaspora:

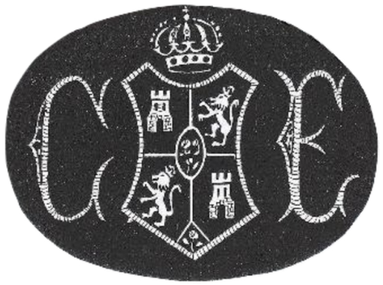
> *But if the experience of going to that community centre would have been a little bit more like the default third place like you're talking about. You don't have somewhere to go, and you just want to go somewhere to pass the time where you know you're going to see people that you're interested in being around. Well, it would certainly be a lifeline to places like that instead of having only special occasions, which was really where the group came together to shine fully. But again, that's probably a lot more susceptible to petering out than a place where family goes and there's places for everybody to hang out.*

Echoing many of the sentiments that Participant 2 shared, Participant 5 expressed a place that they feel they would like to visit:

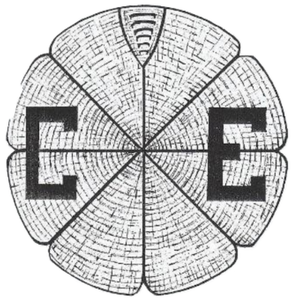
> *…imagining somewhere that I want to go to I think is about having a place that's for everybody. What I mean by this is I think that anywhere where you want culture to actually flourish, there's a lot of recreational activities that younger people need, things like dancing and socializing; and a lot of recreation, especially for young adults and teenagers, happens later at night. If somehow that was legitimized in some way, I think it would help a lot in being able to properly embrace the culture, especially as Caribbean and Latin American culture in general.*

The legitimization of the needs of the youth of the diaspora is an important sentiment that Participant 2 also shared. Participant 4 continued talking about the ways in which sanctioning activities for youth would create a mutually beneficial relationship between youth and the institution:

> *I think especially around the city, now that I live in downtown Toronto, whenever you see groups of teenagers the prevailing sentiment about everybody on the on the street is kind of like, "oh, what are these guys doing here?" And I think that would be something really important to do if you really wanted a Community Center to speak to younger people, which again, I think is a very big piece if you need the long-term success of anywhere that's cultural.*



26. ***Club España, Mexico City Logo, 1912.***
Source: Wikimedia Commons



27. ***Club España, Mexico City Logo, 1917.***
Source: Wikimedia Commons



28. ***Club España, Mexico City Logo, 1919.***
Source: Wikimedia Commons

> *You need the buy-in from young people, it needs to be something that they want to administer, right? Because it's never going to live a very long time if you're just having. older people, I'd say. Of course I'm generalizing here, but you need the buy in from young people, I think. And that means they need to administrate it and that they need to be able to do, within boundaries, what they want to do.*

When I asked them the most important thing that this building should achieve, they said this:

> *If you want a city to thrive, I think you need to eliminate the antagonization of young people, and the alienation of their needs. I think that's what kills a lot of cities. If you're not in New York or I guess even Toronto, cities that are financial hubs of relatively large wealthy countries where you can just sustain it with, rich people coming to downtown and spending all their money, any normal city has working aged people that need to stay alive and thrive. I think everyone needs community, and a big cornerstone of that is legitimizing young people and what they want, and to give them spaces where they can feel like they're going to inherit something from this, you know what I mean?*

The legitimization of young people's needs in cities is an underlying issue within the City of Toronto. By offering them a space which is reliable and available to them, and in turn focuses on artistic and cultural expression, they can not only become more connected to their heritage, but also to each other.

Key Takeaways

Across the interviews, a set of shared principles emerged that point toward what a Caribbean Sea–oriented cultural centre in Toronto must provide if it is to sustain and empower its community. While each participant spoke from their own experience, their reflections consistently returned to the fundamental needs of belonging, access, cultural continuity, and intergenerational connection.

At the core is the desire for a space where people can simply be themselves, surrounded by familiar languages, foods, sounds, and sensitivities. Participant 1 emphasized the deep comfort of hearing one's own language and being with others who share cultural references, while Participant 4 noted the subtle forms of cultural sensitivity they miss in daily life—elements difficult to name but central to feeling at home. Both highlight that the centre must function as a refuge of familiarity.

Another recurring theme is the necessity of food and shared meals as the primary driver of community cohesion. Participant 3 stressed that food is the most direct pathway to understanding and connecting with others, and that a central place to access culturally specific foods and events would counter the disjointed nature of existing programming in the city.

Participants also underscored the importance of reliable, stigma-free gathering spaces, especially for youth. Participant 2 described the social stigma surrounding large gatherings of diaspora communities and the absence of any dependable venue for them, pointing toward the need for a space with consistent access, extended hours, and no associated fees. Participant 5 echoed this, insisting that youth must see the centre as a natural extension of their social world if the project is to thrive long-term.

The interviews also revealed an urgent need for cultural infrastructure and resources, from Spanish-language books (Participant 4) to life-skills training and community development programming (Participant 2) that support the intellectual and practical needs of the community. Such resources not only affirm cultural identity but help break cycles of uncertainty and provide tools for stability.

Finally, participants stressed the value of centralization and continuity. The fragmentation of programming across the city leaves many feeling disconnected from their own communities. A single, recognizable hub—a "default meeting place," as Participant 5 described—would anchor the diaspora, offer clarity, and cultivate sustained participation across generations.

Together, these principles outline the structural, cultural, and emotional components that a Caribbean Sea cultural centre must embody. Cultural comfort and familiarity form the emotional foundation upon which community life rests, while food expands this foundation into a shared social practice. For these practices to occur meaningfully, accessible and stigma-free gathering spaces are required, especially for youth who sustain long-term community vitality. Cultural and educational resources then extend the centre's purpose beyond social gathering toward empowerment and stability. Ultimately, all of these elements rely on a centralized, dependable hub that weaves them together, reducing fragmentation and ensuring that community life persists across generations. Together, they outline a holistic vision for a cultural centre rooted in belonging, nourishment, support, and continuity.

Chapter 3

Cultural Institutions

The Caribbean Institution Index

Producing an accurate representation of the cultures of the Caribbean Sea as wholly as possible is a difficult task. However, it felt important to at least attempt to acknowledge the breadth of institutions which already deal with various aspects of the preservation of culture within the countries which I am attempting to design for to bring these qualities into the Caribbean Cultural Commons.

Since this thesis is concerned with the Caribbean and attempts to be referential in its search for community, I believed it was important to understand the ways in which institutions make themselves available to the public and highlight display techniques, the buildings they reside in as vestiges of previous ways of thinking or new adaptations to ideas on institutions, and to attempt to glean some general concepts that could be applied in the design for the Caribbean Cultural Commons. Because of this, an index was devised to attempt to consolidate this knowledge.

The goal is that the comparison between one building to the next can provide clues in analyzing materials, typologies, and contexts. This index is not created with the intention of being entirely comprehensive, but with the goal of understanding the strategies that are currently being used in countries of the Caribbean Sea, and how these institutions interact with their local populations to gather perspectives on content, display techniques, and architectural typologies.



29. ***Map of Museum Index Locations.*** By Author.
Map Source: United States Geological Survey (USGS).

I attempted to choose at least one cultural institution from each country of study outlined in the previous chapter, with some countries receiving more than one entry due to their architectural interest, variety in construction method, or architectural value to the country in which the institution resides. The institutions are:

1	**National Archaeological Museum**	Aruba
2	**Museum of Antigua and Barbuda**	Antigua and Barbuda
3	**National Art Gallery of the Bahamas**	Bahamas
4	**Barbados Museum and Historical Society**	Barbados
5	**Museum of Belizean Art**	Belize
6	**Mangazina di Rei**	Bonaire
7	**Lower Estate Sugar Works Museum**	British Virgin Islands
8	**Medellin Museum of Modern Art**	Colombia
9	**Museo de Arte Moderna de Bogota**	Colombia
10	**Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Cuba**	Cuba
11	**Kura Hulanda Museum**	Curacao
12	**National Museum of Costa Rica**	Costa Rica
13	**Kalinago Barana Aute**	Dominica
14	**Museo de las Casas Reales**	Dominican Republic
15	**Museo de Arte de El Salvador**	El Salvador
16	**Grenada National Museum**	Grenada
17	**Camp de la Transportation**	French Guiana
18	**Memorial ACTe**	Guadeloupe
19	**Museo Ixchel del Traje Indigena**	Guatemala
20	**Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology**	Guyana
21	**Musée du Panthéon National Haïtien**	Haïti
22	**Centre D'Art**	Haïti
23	**Garifuna Cultural Centre**	Honduras
24	**Museo Para la Identidad Nacional**	Honduras
25	**National Gallery of Jamaica**	Jamaica
26	**Musee de la Pagerie**	Martinique
27	**Museo Anahuacalli**	Mexico City
28	**Museo Nacional de Antropolgia**	Mexico City
29	**Museo Frida Kahlo**	Mexico City
30	**Museo Jumex**	Mexico City
31	**National Trust Museum**	Montserrat
32	**Museo de Arte Fundación Ortiz-Gurdián**	Nicaragua
33	**Afro-Antillean Museum**	Panama
34	**Biomuseo**	Panama
35	**Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico**	Puerto Rico
36	**National Museum and Art Gallery**	Trinidad and Tobago
37	**Harry L. Johnson Museum**	Saba
38	**Fort Oranje**	Sint Eustatius
39	**Wall House Museum**	Saint Barthelemy
40	**Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park**	Saint Kitts and Nevis
41	**Morne Fortune Museum and Art Gallery**	Saint Lucia
42	**Amuseum Naturalis**	Sint Maarten/Saint Martin
43	**Fort Charlotte Interpretive Centre**	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
44	**Surinaams Museum**	Suriname
45	**National Museum of Turks and Caicos**	Turks and Caicos
46	**Fort Christian Museum**	U.S. Virgin Islands
47	**Teatro Teresa Carreño**	Venezuela
48	**Museo de Arte Moderno Jesus Soto**	Venezuela
49	**Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Caracas**	Venezuela
50	**Centro Italo Venezolano**	Venezuela

The following chart condenses all of the pertinent information in order to analyze spatial and cultural parameters throughout this set of institutions. The chart is divided into the following categories:

Architectural Period: The period which the building dates back to. Vernacular refers to native methods, materials, and techniques of building construction, colonial refers to architectural styles which were brought by settlers, and contemporary refers to modern movements or otherwise contemporary use of materials.

Building Purpose: Refers to the building's initial use. If the institution was built specifically for its current use, it falls under 'New Build'. If the building existed prior to the institution and was adapted, it is referred to as 'Adaptive Reuse'.

Institution Type: Whether the institution focuses more on art or anthropology within its exhibitions.

Display Type: Whether the institution deploys standard exhibition displays or focuses on more immersive, experimental techniques to engage its viewers.

Materials: What materials are visible on the building's exterior. 'Clay' refers to all clay products including terracotta and brick, 'Organics' refers to other materials beyond wood products that are naturally produced, and 'Composite' refers to materials that are made from multiple other materials, such as asphalt roofing tiles.

The main objective from this study was to gain an idea of the ways in which culture is preserved in the Caribbean Sea region, and the ways in which a cultural institution in Canada could bring some concepts to immigrants from the diaspora, or deviate from it in a way that is meaningful to the community.

	Architectural Period			Building Purpose		Institution Type		Display Type		Material								
CATEGORY	Vernacular	Colonial	Contemporary	Adaptive Reuse	New Build	Art	Anthropology	Conventional	Experimental	Wood	Stone	Plaster	Clay	Metal	Glass	Concrete	Organics	Composite
*1		x		x			x		x	x			x		x			
2		x		x		x	x	x		x	x				x			x
3		x		x		x		x		x	x		x		x			x
4		x		x		x	x	x		x	x		x		x			
5		x		x		x		x		x			x	x	x			
*6	x			x			x	x		x		x					x	
7		x		x				x		x		x	x					x
8			x		x	x		x			x			x	x	x		
9			x		x	x		x					x	x	x	x		
10			x		x	x		x			x			x	x	x		
*11			x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x					
12		x		x			x	x		x	x	x			x			
13	x				x		x		x	x							x	
14		x		x			x	x		x	x		x		x			
15			x		x	x		x						x	x	x		
16		x		x			x	x		x	x	x	x					x
17		x		x			x		x	x	x		x	x		x		
18			x		x		x	x						x	x	x		
*19			x		x	x	x		x				x	x	x			
20		x		x			x	x		x					x			x
21			x		x		x	x			x			x	x	x		x
22		x		x		x		x		x			x		x			
*23	x						x		x	x							x	
24		x		x			x	x		x	x	x	x		x			
25			x	x		x		x						x	x	x		x
26		x		x			x	x		x	x							x
27			x		x	x			x					x	x	x		
28			x		x		x	x			x			x	x	x		
29		x		x		x		x		x	x	x		x				
30			x		x	x		x			x			x	x	x		x
31			x		x		x	x		x	x	x		x				
*32		x		x		x		x		x	x	x	x		x			
33		x		x			x		x	x				x	x	x		
34			x		x		x	x						x	x	x		x
35		x		x		x		x			x	x	x		x	x		
36		x		x		x	x	x			x	x		x	x			x
37		x		x			x	x						x	x			
38		x		x			x	x			x	x	x					
39		x		x			x	x		x	x				x			x
40		x		x			x	x			x							
41		x		x		x		x		x	x			x	x			
42		x		x			x	x		x	x			x	x			
43		x		x			x	x		x	x			x				x
44		x		x			x	x		x	x		x		x			
45		x		x			x	x		x	x	x		x				
46		x		x			x	x			x	x	x	x				
*47			x		x	x		x						x	x	x		x
48			x		x	x			x					x	x	x		x
49			x		x	x		x						x	x	x		x
50			x		x		x	x						x	x	x		x
TOTAL	3	29	18	33	17	21	29	41	8	29	29	14	18	28	35	18	3	17

30. ***Chart of Museum Index Analysis.*** By Author.

The first interesting aspect is that a majority of the buildings studied were constructed in the colonial periods of these respective countries, and these buildings have in turn been adapted to better reflect the needs of the institutions which reside within. This is an interesting approach, as it could very well be a pragmatic one, as if there is an existing building it is in the institution's financial interest to reuse it rather than start anew, but it also signals to a quiet acknowledgment of colonization, so as to express the fact that it happened, and to attempt to quite literally rebuild using the pieces which remain. Because of this, it seemed fitting to also reuse an existing building within the context of the City of Toronto. As buildings within the Canadian context are also in many ways products of colonization, the chosen site and building within the city will attempt to put forward ideas of reconciliation through its built form.

There was a somewhat even split between artistic and anthropological institutions, though some examples, such as the Museo Ixchel, checked both boxes, as the art and anthropology aspects are so ingrained within each other, in this case in the act of textile production. Exhibition displays are a somewhat ambiguous area, as it is difficult to characterize which institutions are traditionally or experimentally exhibiting work, however, the Caribbean Cultural Common will endeavour to exhibit works in a way that contextualizes them in an immersive way.

Regarding materials, glass is the most used material, with wood and stone being the next most used. Incorporating a variety of these materials will ensure that a similar character to the character of the Caribbean is maintained, and thus a connection is established towards the architecture. Some material and architectural elements are unique to some buildings, such as the language of courtyards within the Fundacion Ortiz-Gurdian, the thatched roofs of the Indigenous institutions such as Kalinago Barana Aute, or the breeze blocks in the Aruba National Archaeological Museum, which are immediately recognizable by members of the diaspora as aspects of architecture within the Caribbean Sea which would evoke a sense of place that is not widely found in the Canadian context. These are denoted by the asterisk next to each precedent's respective number.

The Toronto Organization Index

Similar to the Caribbean Institutional Index, the Toronto Organizational Index performs the same exercise, but it focuses on institutions that are putting forward culturally focused arts programming in the city of Toronto. While the Caribbean Index is based only on Caribbean institutions, the Toronto Index places emphasis on cultural programming of both 'Latin American' and 'Caribbean' programming, due to their overlap. as seen in the survey on chapter 2. The rational behind this is to assess the breadth of programming in the city and the ways which organizations are making cultural programs accessible to all Canadians.

In turn, this mapping exercise establishes a secondary archipelago and the proximity of these places to target population groups can give insight into the accessibility of these cultural spaces. The Caribbean Cultural Commons is a continuation of the archipelagic quality of the cultural institutions in Toronto, and as such should be in dialogue with exiting institutions to ensure that networks are identified, fostered, and upheld.



31. ***Map of Museum Index Locations.*** By Author.
Map Source: Google Earth.

Black Artists' Networks in Dialogue

19 Brock Avenue

Toronto, Ontario

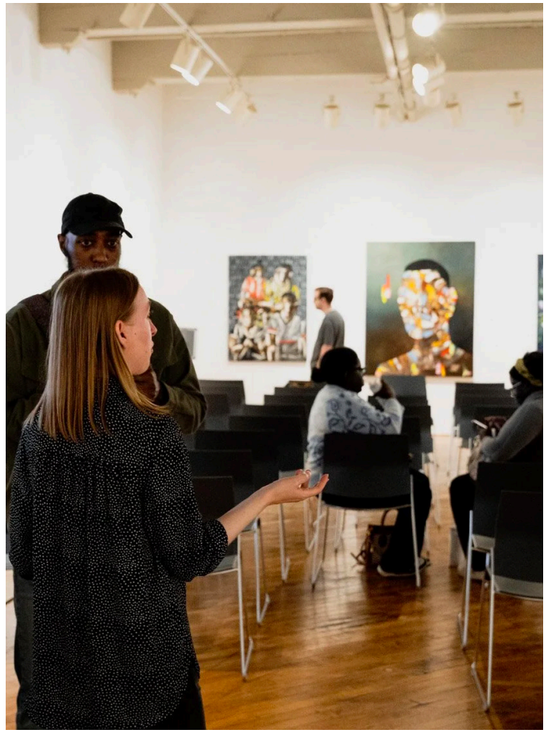
bandgallery.com



32 ***Rendering of BAND Gallery Renovations at 19 Brock Ave.*** Image: Diamond Schmitt Architects. Retrieved from. https://dsai.ca/projects/black-artists-networks-in-dialogue-band-gallery/.

BAND Gallery is Black-owned, Black-focused, and proudly serving a diverse public. They operate in Canada and internationally in order to link artists and cultural workers with audiences, mentors, and opportunities, spark dialogue on culture, sector equity, and creative possibility, and guide emerging Black artists as they shape their practice and amplify their voices.

[30] "Black Artist & Arts Professional Network," BAND GALLERY, accessed October 20, 2025, https://www.bandgallery.com/artist-newsletter.



33. ***BAND Gallery 'Meet the Funders' Event.*** Retrieved from https://www.bandgallery.com/past-events

34. ***BAND Gallery and Surrounding Context.*** Source: Google Earth

Blackhurst Cultural Centre

777-779 Bathurst Street

Toronto, Ontario

blackhurstcc.org



35. ***View of Blackhurst Cultural Centre Exterior.*** Source: Google Street View.

BCC serves as a place for the stories, achievements, and cultural heritage of Canadians of African and Caribbean descent. Through literature, music, drama, dance, and visual arts, they bring stories to life, offering a space where the past meets the present, and where every visitor becomes a part of the ongoing legacy.

[31] "Our Story - Blackhurst Cultural Centre," Blackhurst Cultural Centre, n.d., accessed October 20, 2025, https://blackhurstcc.org/our-story/.



36. ***BCC Roundtable Event.*** Retrieved from https://blackhurstcc.org/event-gallery/



37. ***Blackhurst Cultural Centre and Surrounding Context.*** Source: Google Earth

Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples

Suite 200, 2141 Jane Street

North York, Ontario

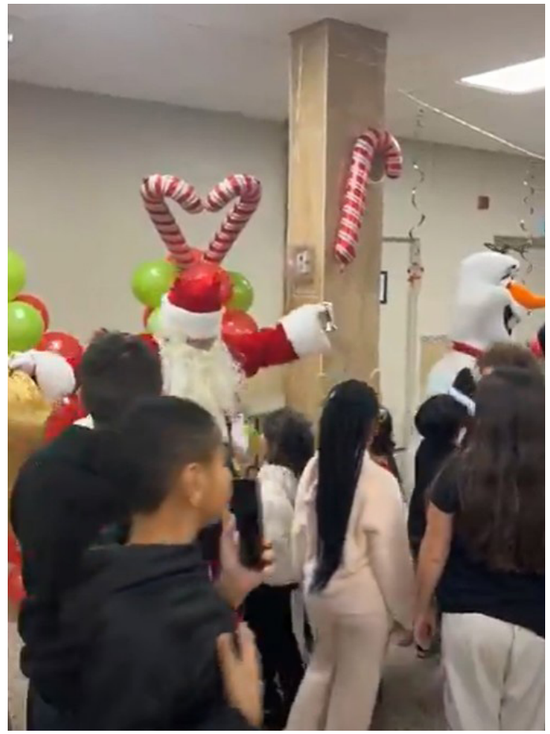
spanishservices.org



38. ***Exterior View of the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples.*** Source: Google Street View.

The Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples focuses its energy on enhancing the quality of life for the Spanish-speaking community, and deliver purposeful services to advance the social and economic integration of the community into broader Canadian society.

[32] "About Us - Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples," accessed October 27, 2025, https://spanishservices.org/en/about/.



39. ***CSSP Christmas Event.*** Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/reel/3178855635590273



40. ***Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples Surrounding Context.*** Source: Google Earth

Hispanic Canadian Heritage Council

720 Bathurst Street

Toronto, Ontario

hispaniccanadianheritage.ca



41. ***Exterior Vew of the HCHC.*** Source: Google Street View..

The HCHC is a community organization established with the purpose to highlight and promote the contribution of Hispanic/Latin American culture to the evolving fabric of Canadian Heritage.

[33] "About Us," Hispanic Canadian Heritage Council, July 10, 2014, https://ispaniccanadianheritage.ca/about-us/.



42. HCHC ***Parade Section.*** Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/o/?fbid=944463997783189&set=a.525000309729562



43. ***Hispanic Canadian Heritage Council and Surrounding Context.*** Source: Google Earth

Hispanic Canadian Arts and Culture Association

6 Brant Avenue

Mississauga, Ontario

hispaniccanadianarts.ca



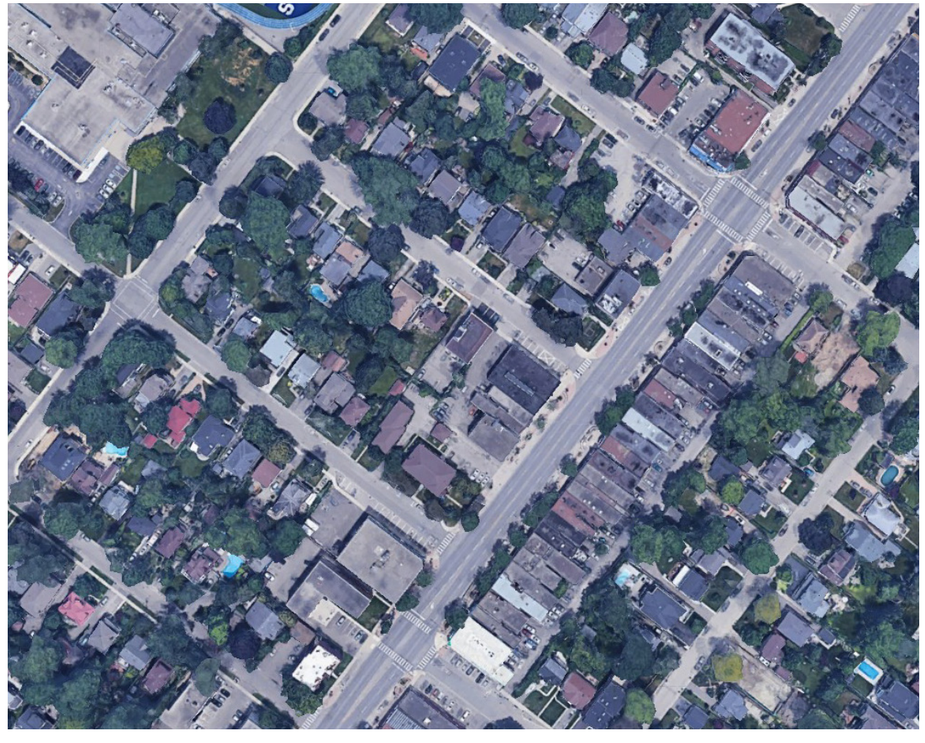
44. ***Exterior View of the HCACA.*** Source: Google Street View.

The Hispanic Canadian Arts and Cultural Association is a non-profit charitable organization that supports the development of local artists, including musicians, visual artists, performers and others interested in Latin American and Hispanic music and culture.

[34] "Hispanic Canadian Arts & Cultural Association," Hispanic Canadian Arts & Cultural Association, accessed October 20, 2025, https://www.hispaniccanadianarts.ca/.



45. ***HCACA Symphony Event. Retrieved from https***://www.instagram.com/p/DRGKh_GD2Ap/?img_index=1



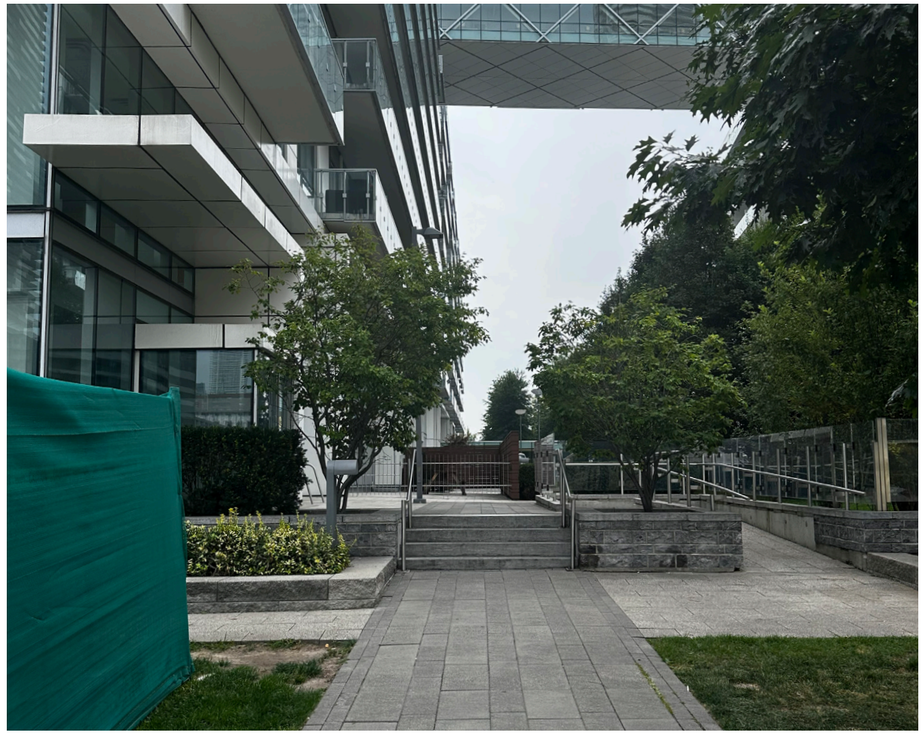
46. ***Hispanic Canadian Arts and Culture Association and Surrounding Context.*** Source: Google Earth

Latin American Canadian Art Projects

100-39 Queens Quay East

Toronto, Ontario

lacap.ca



47. ***Exterior View of Sur Gallery.*** By Author.

LACAP is a Toronto-based, not-for-profit arts organization dedicated to the implementation of art projects, which promote Latin American art in Canada with an emphasis on artistic excellence, critically engaged artistic practices, and hemispheric networks of exchange.

[35] "About LACAP // Latin American-Canadian Art Projects," accessed October 17, 2025, https://lacap.ca/about-lacap/.



48. ***Interior View of Sur Gallery.*** Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/DP6sR5i-DLmu/?img_index=1



49. ***Latin American Canadian Art Projects and Surrounding Context.*** Source: Google Earth

Nia Centre for the Arts

524 Oakwood Avenue

York, Ontario

niacentre.org



50. ***Exterior View of Nia Centre for the Arts.*** Retrieved from https://niacentre.org/this-space-will-create-a-larger-platform-for-black-artistic-expression-in-canada-nia-centre-is-featured-in-black-dollar-magazine/

The Nia Centre for the Arts is a space built with purpose and dedicated to Black artists and young creatives. Designed to serve a wide array of multi and interdisciplinary arts, the Centre provides the community with a multi-purpose performance theatre, event space, a digital media lab, exhibition space and a dedicated youth hub. 'Nia' is a Swahili word which means 'purpose'.

[36] "About Us – Nia Centre for the Arts," accessed October 20, 2025, https://niacentre.org/about-us/.



51. ***View of 'A Black Art Fair' Event at Nia Centre for the Arts.*** Retrieved from https://niacentre.org/what-went-down-at-a-black-art-fair/



52. ***Nia Centre for the Arts and Surrounding Context.*** Source: Google Earth

Organization Interviews

Organizations that are already thinking about parts of this work have a valuable perspective to give in the context of cultural engagement and displaying of art. A variety of institutions within Toronto and the GTA were identified as dealing with cultural programming related to the Caribbean Sea Diaspora and were reached out to be interviewed in that regard. The institutions not only form another cultural archipelago in the same space as the immigrant archipelago, but they provide a different perspective on the artistic and cultural aspects of the Caribbean Sea diaspora. These institutions could also participate in the formation and management of the Caribbean Cultural Commons, as they already well-versed in the realm of cultural programming and outreach.

Joséphine Denis, Curator at Black Artists' Networks in Dialogue (BAND) is on the verge of designing exhibits in a newly renovated gallery, and she discusses specifically themes of display, architectural manifestations of BAND's curatorial ethos, and more broadly the ways in which she believes visual art can be a transformative medium for Black people in Canada.

Carlos Bastidas is the Executive Director of the Hispanic Canadian Arts and Cultural Association (HCACA), which focuses mainly on onsite community events such as festivals and concerts. His expertise and views on culture from an event planning standpoint add to the ephemeral programming of a cultural centre.

Tamara Toledo is the Director and Curator at Sur Gallery and co-founder of Latin American Canadian Art Projects (LACAP), two initiatives that focus on the preservation of Latin American art in Toronto. Her work spans multiple decades and has involved workshops, exhibitions, and initiatives which help Latin American artists in the Toronto arts scene.

Rodrigo Barreda is the Education Programming Director at Latin American Canadian Art Projects and set out to build a Latin American Arts Centre approximately 15 years ago. Though this centre was never realized, Rodrigo's experiences with the initiation of community and network building, as well as the challenges he faced, can be used as learning opportunities for the Caribbean Cultural Commons.

<u>Underlined excerpts</u> of interviews are seen as key points which will be taken forward into the design chapter of this thesis.

53. ***BAND Gallery Logo.*** Retrieved from www.instagram.com/blackartndialog/

54. ***HCACA Logo.*** Retrieved From www.hispaniccanadianarts.ca/

55. ***LACAP Logo.*** Retrieved from www.facebook.com/LACAParts/

56. ***Sur Gallery Logo.*** Retrieved from www.surgalleryvirtual.ca/

Adaptive Reuse and Contextual Display

Interview with Joséphine Denis, BAND

One of the first things I wanted to ask Joséphine about was how BAND approaches their curation and technique. As a gallery focused solely around Black art, and whose artists hail from a number of countries surrounding the Caribbean Sea, their programming and exhibition design has to place this art in the Canadian context. When I asked her in what ways her exhibition design challenges or reflects cultural and social identities, she emphasized the fact that connection can be found anywhere.

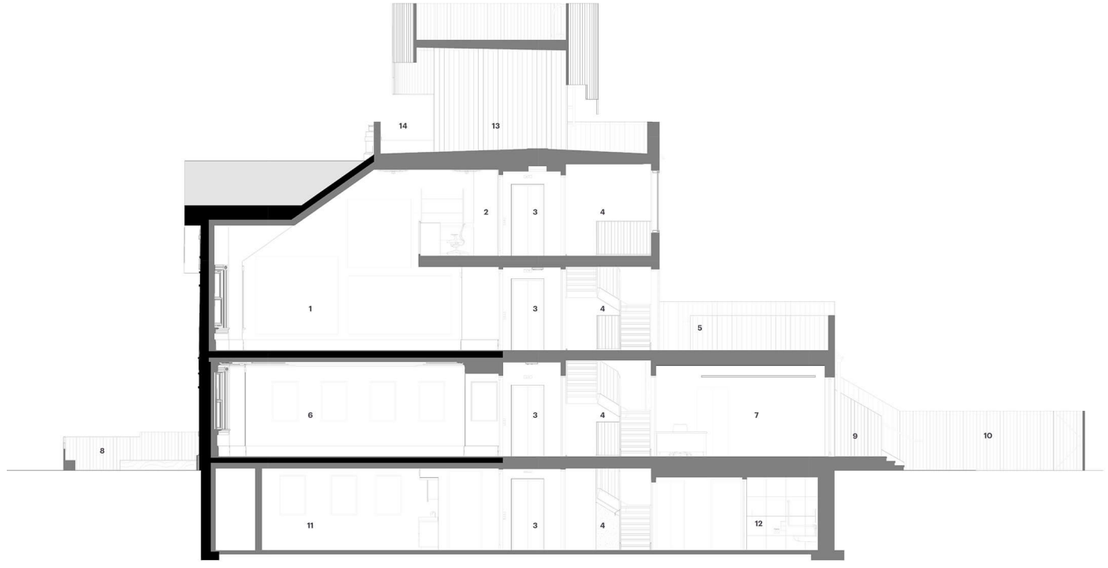
> *I think at the core of what we do—the exhibitions, the programming—is really to see the differences but also similarities as both vectors of connection. And so, if they challenge anything is maybe by encouraging to see the nuances and specificities that exist, and the plurality of identities that exist within our communities by focusing solely on black artists, locally, nationally and internationally. What that challenges us to do is to make sure that we're not boxing everyone into one way of thinking of identity. I think maybe curatorially for me that would be the challenge; to always dig deeper into how we can present artists in a way that reflects them, in a way that can be conveyed collectively but that also is grounded in that specific person and context.*

Asking about the logistics of an exhibition and working directly with artists in the choosing of works to exhibit, the approaches vary widely. From a curatorial perspective, the narrative of the exhibition takes more of a lead when group exhibitions take place, while in solo exhibitions there is more of a collaborative nature to the work. However, works are not simply serving the narrative, but as I learned they also are in service of the artist's career:

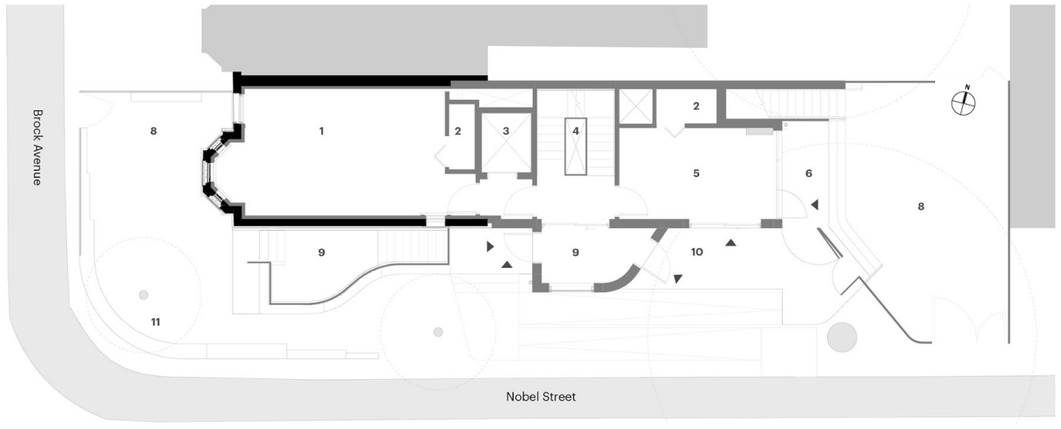
> *Well, it depends if it's a solo exhibition or a group exhibition. With a group exhibition as a curator I have total authorship at the beginning of what the concepts and the research framework will be, and when you do solo exhibitions it becomes a lot more collaborative, because the artist has a series of work that they're already thinking about, and so your role is to amplify that, to broaden the context and enrich the message. In terms of what you decide [to display], it's obviously about what serves that narrative and what*



57. ***Rendering of BAND Gallery Renovations.*** Image: Diamond Schmitt Architects. Retrieved from. https://dsai.ca/projects/black-artists-networks-in-dialogue-band-gallery/.



58. ***Section of BAND Gallery Renovations at 19 Brock Ave.*** Image: Diamond Schmitt Architects. Retrieved from. https://dsai.ca/projects/black-artists-networks-in-dialogue-band-gallery/.



59. ***Ground Floorplan of BAND Gallery Renovations at 19 Brock Ave.*** Image: Diamond Schmitt Architects. Retrieved from. https://dsai.ca/projects/black-artists-networks-in-dialogue-band-gallery/.

> *you think represents that artist the best as well. You're trying to serve them too; you want the exhibition to push their career forward, so making sure that the work is strong [is important]. I think for me also, generally the artists that I am interested in are ones that are able to synthesize so much in one work—talk about place, history, cultural identity—and Black artists that are able to subvert expectations of representation by looking more inwards, looking at what an internal portraiture can be.*

This idea of an 'internal portraiture' speaks to the depth and nuance of the cultures that surround the Caribbean Sea. The themes that Joséphine brings up: place, history, and cultural identity, are also central to the design of a Caribbean Cultural Commons. The renovated headquarters of BAND, designed by Diamond Schmitt Architects, is in its final stages of construction. The design retains and adaptively reuses an existing Victorian-era building in the Parkdale neighbourhood of Toronto. The building, located at 19 Brock Avenue, holds symbolic importance for BAND:

> *This is a very unique project because the decision to buy a domestic house and turn it into an art museum was very intentional, because of the history of Black folks that have created their own museums out of their houses that exists not only in North America, but in the Caribbean, where people see the value of the objects that they have in their archives and try to make it accessible to whoever. And so we didn't want to completely erase that sense of home that was part of that architecture because it is residential…. I think that when you're working in a space that isn't necessarily made to exhibit in there's charm in that, there's character in that, but there's also unfortunately not the best environment for the work to shine.*

The trade-off between display space quality and adaptive reuse of existing structures can certainly be seen as a negative aspect, however, BAND are seeing it as a curatorial challenge. They also seemingly view the institution as a more democratic one and built into Joséphine's language is an understanding that while she is a keeper of the institution, her role is not to watch the door, but to open it. BAND's approach to the design of their facilities the democratization of the gallery and the institution as a whole, making the staff stewards, not guards. As such, the design of the spaces reflects this philosophy:

> *…this is a thing here that is quite different from major institutions is that people have access to us and we have access to our community extremely directly and intimately. There are so many informal conversations that you have where you are intimately familiar with what your community needs, you're not detached from that. You see where we work, you can walk towards us and meet us, and we have conversations. Artists work in our spaces when we're not there, they take over the backyard [of 19 Brock] and paint there, so we already had a sense of the different creative ways that people were using the space, because it wasn't a space made necessarily for that. So, we saw how people were claiming space and wanted to use that as an inspiration.*

The process of renovations has also been a unique one in figuring out each space's use, as Joséphine explains:

> *Being in the house for three years without renovating and knowing that we would always renovate was in itself a study. The house was bought in 2016 and renovations started in 2022. During COVID people loved the fact that we did public art installations on the fences because that gave them a place to go during their walks. Throughout the seasons, and throughout those years it was incredible to see how people claimed that space, and what people came to us for…for us that physical experience of that space was a lot truer to how people within our community give feedback rather than to sit them down and ask them things, for us that's not really a way of asking people. It's more about inviting them in and seeing how they respond.*

This trial period where BAND inhabited the facilities while knowing that a renovation was in their future acted as a very hands-on testing experience, as they got to understand the ways in which people responded to and adapted the space, and could thus select their design requirements based on this experimentation within the space. However, their space holds limitations as well, as any space would.

> *…in terms of displaying of works that already exist, the space determines that. You can't ignore the architecture of a space. You have to be in conversation with it, because it's holding up everything. It really is….Museums were conceptualized as white boxes because of ideas around white purity and cleanliness and elitism, so you were very grounded in that, you can't ignore that. I think for us [19 Brock] is a very experimental space, because the skeleton remains a house, so the space is much smaller than our temporary space right now. You're going to be in spaces that are much narrower and smaller, and you can see that as a limitation, because you think "what if I want to have an artist come in and do something that's twelve feet grand?" because some artists like that as a challenge, but I think here that challenge will be to reorient people in a space. How can I as a curator make them aware of that intimacy in the space? That will always be how we invite artists in, not to just use the walls, but to really use the space in as many creative ways as they can.*

There is an element of 'reframing' that is present in this idea of reorientation. The space, the work, and the person all have a role to play in this reframing. The residential nature and initial typology of the new BAND gallery plays a role in this reframing, offering a domestic language of solutions for the display of artworks:

> *My priority in a space like that is to invite the viewer to imagine "How do you live with art?" In the Caribbean, that's so important, it's everywhere, it's how you live. Our wealth is this surrounding and bursting of visual culture, so I want to remind our own communities of that by putting works in places where you might think of them as 'in-between' spaces, but it's not, it's everywhere.*



60. ***Rendering of BAND Gallery Renovations.*** Image: Diamond Schmitt Architects. Retrieved from. https://dsai.ca/projects/black-artists-networks-in-dialogue-band-gallery/.

This re-contextualization and blending of gallery space and domestic space is thus appealing to the viewer in the sense that they could see themselves as curators of some sort, buying and selling things that live in their own homes.

The previous idea of democratization also lends itself to the institutional aspects of gallery space, attempting to rethink the structure of the museum from within:

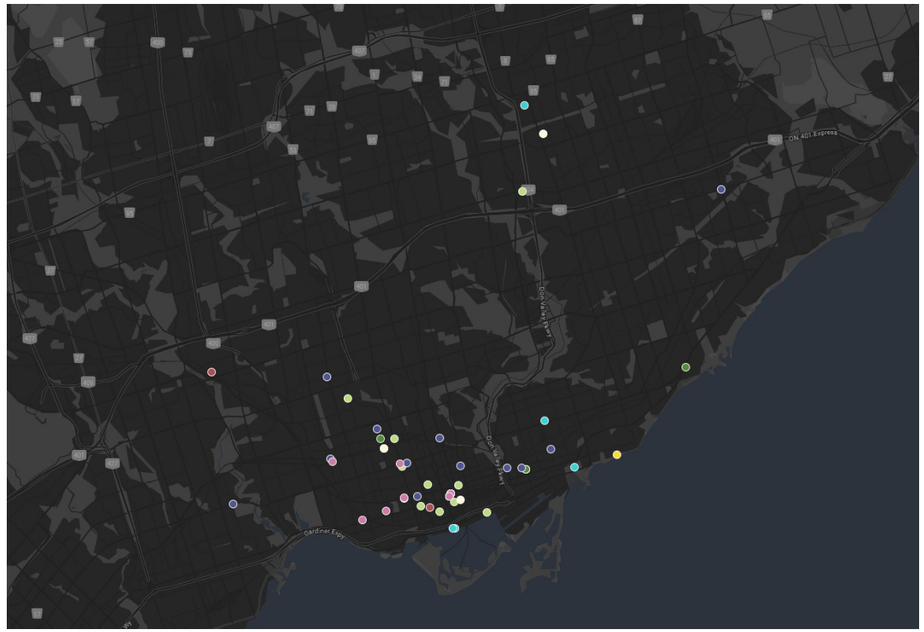
> *Our name is Black Artists'* Networks *in Dialogue, so we also want to tap into those networks, how do we sustain them and invest in them. Because of that we're thinking of having organizations that are in the Caribbean, Europe, and the African continent to take over the space for a whole season. That for us is replicating an idea you're talking about that the Caribbean is a shared space. Our gallery is also a reflection of that idea.*

The understanding that there are more perspectives than your own and that your thinking can be changed by someone else's view of the world around us is another central aspect to the question of reframing. The impact that a work can have on a person is at times profoundly emotional, and allowing for a variety of perspectives to coexist and flow through the same space will further allow for a reframing to occur. Works can, however, go beyond the visual art world:

> *…we do live arts, like theatre and film screenings, people have used our space as a stage where they remake plays where they take over a room. Also, programs that are focused on dance, meditative programs that are focused on healing the mind and the body. We do culinary arts, so we'll have dinners where we ask chefs and culinary food historians to come and tie in cultural and artistic expression to food and the way that is tied to our cultures as well. We are also going to host Caribbean- and African-focused farmer's markets; so, there's a gazillion things.*

Furthermore, the variety and breadth of programming as well as forms of artistic expression that are negotiated within the gallery space at BAND legitimize these other viewpoints. Joséphine is also wholly open to a reframing:

> *We don't want to simplify or reduce culture for it to fit the space simply because it was thought of for a different purpose. I'm sure the way we're thinking about it now will change in the future, and that's the whole point of having people take over. We want to see how they will use the space because it might be way different than how we think about it. It's about being constantly open to what the community needs and how they claim the space, and we see that as enrichment.*



61. ***BAND Gallery's Black Arts Map of Toronto.*** Retrieved from. https://www.bandgallery.com/black-art-mapping.

Visibility and Ephemeral Events

Interview with Carlos Bastidas, HCACA

The Hispanic Canadian Arts and Cultural Association undertakes mainly events which are ephemeral. When speaking to Carlos about the organization's origins, he explained that their approach to planning is one that involves collaboration with other groups which possess other kinds of expertise, and can thus fill gaps more efficiently.

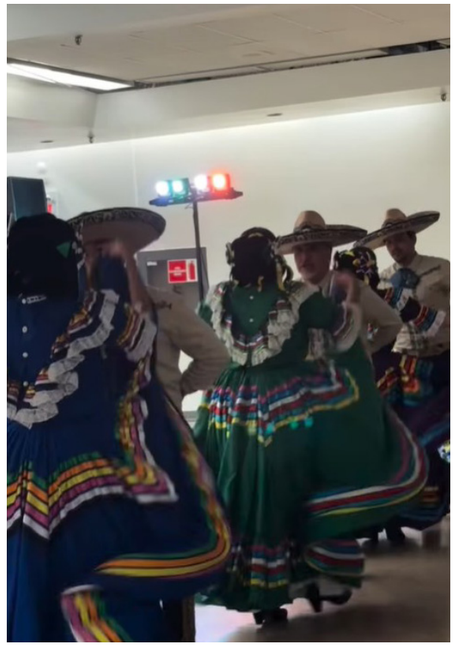
> *The festival is the event that we started out with and the one that brings in the most people, and from there we have expanded into other types of events, but we always host them in collaboration with people that are experts in those fields. For example, those that are experts in painting are the ones with which we organize art exhibits, theatre experts, like the Mississauga Players, are the ones that collaborate with us to host theatre-based events, those that are experts on books, we will collaborate with them for events such as the National Book Fair, and so on.*

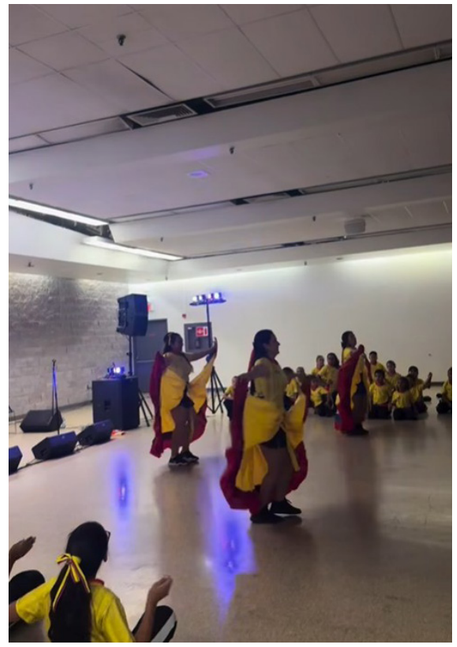
When speaking about their approach to governance in planning of multi-day events, Carlos expressed a very sensible approach:

> *We are two people working as full-time employees, but the team is actually, very large. We have a Board of Directors that is made up of volunteers and other members of the community, and on a semester basis we also host students that do co-op terms with us from Humber College. These students are in fields like marketing, event planning, and community service, so we give them the opportunity and the space to complete their co-op terms with us. Obviously, the team is small because we do not want to waste all our resources on salaries instead of offering services to the community, but the salaried team members are the ones that oversee overseeing these other groups of people.*

As the team for an ephemeral event expands and contracts in accordance with the size of the event at hand, the parts of the event are also sub-contracted, which keeps these events viable for the organization.

> *The process is very simple in the sense that if you have experience with planning these events, you can subcontract the rest of the team. All the departments that help in making the event are subcontracted for the event itself. Every event that we do generates somewhere around 40-50 temporary*





62-63. ***HCACA Event. @latinfestivalto. "What an unforgettable weekend! Thank you for joining us at the Latin Festival 2025"*** Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/DPP0jqEgJnA/

64. ***Drum. Guyanese, 19th Century.*** Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art Open Access Database.



65. ***Gourd Rattle. Guyanese, 19th Century.*** Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art Open Access Database.





66. ***Ocarina, Tairona People, ca. 1300-1500.*** Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art Open Access Database.



67. ***Rattle, Guyanese, 19th Century.*** Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art Open Access Database.

jobs throughout the course of the festival. This is a model that is widely used here in Canada.

After speaking about logistics, the conversation shifted towards the visibility and reach that events of this magnitude have in the community. While these events are large, they burn bright for a few days and then must be dismantled. Carlos outlines a way in which visibility for performers and other artists that take part in these events is fostered so that they are able to further their personal careers:

> *…we have had occasions where people that organize other festivals have asked us if we know Hispanic jazz groups, or mariachi bands, or Venezuelan dancers, or Colombian cumbia players, and obviously those groups exist, but there is a lack of visibility. Because of that, we have created an initiative that is there on the website, which is an artist directory. We already have about 150 artists that are registered in various categories that include music, theatre, dance, art, event administration, and it has been a total success because the artists that register can do so completely for free, they send us their work, pictures, and contact information, and the directory has helped its registrants defined work because they're more easily discovered by people that need those types of artists for their events. It has been a very excellent resource so that artists can be more visible.*

Visibility can also occur via physical means, and the need for a physical space was also stressed, albeit with asterisks like cost and planning. I also asked Carlos what some of the things are that he would envision if there was a physical space that HCACA could use:

> *A physical space would definitely help a lot. A lot. Unfortunately that kind of project requires a lot of capital, but yes, it would be a very positive thing…. For example, one of the things that would be beneficial would be permanent folklore classes that teach youth about Latin American folklore, things such as dance and music classes that are also based in folklore that teach kids to play [Indigenous] music and play instruments such as zampona, kena, and the Venezuelan cuatro, Colombian tiple, Caribbean drums, An art class with Latin American themes... The sky's the limit.*

Carlos became very excited at the prospect of these ideas. Speaking more about them, Carlos brought up a very important point about Caribbean and Latin American histories, and how culture is spread:

> *…many of our customs that we have in Latin America are passed down orally, there's a lot of oral tradition between grand father and father, from father to son... For example, when you start out playing an instrument you start as a child, especially regarding folklore music, it's something that is learned almost entirely through oral traditions. So, there's a lot of space for creativity and communication in that exchange. That is where creativity is born. And practice makes perfect.*

Modes of Display and Institutional Programming

Interview with Tamara Toledo, Sur Gallery

Tamara has been involved in the visual arts scene in Toronto for many decades. She is a pioneer in the exhibiting of Latin American art and has been championing the needs of the diaspora since the early 2000s. She is very in tune with the needs of the community and has been attempting to cater to it for many years through programming and curation. She spoke to me about the challenges of running a small gallery and trying to keep Latin American art as a part of the arts scene in Toronto.

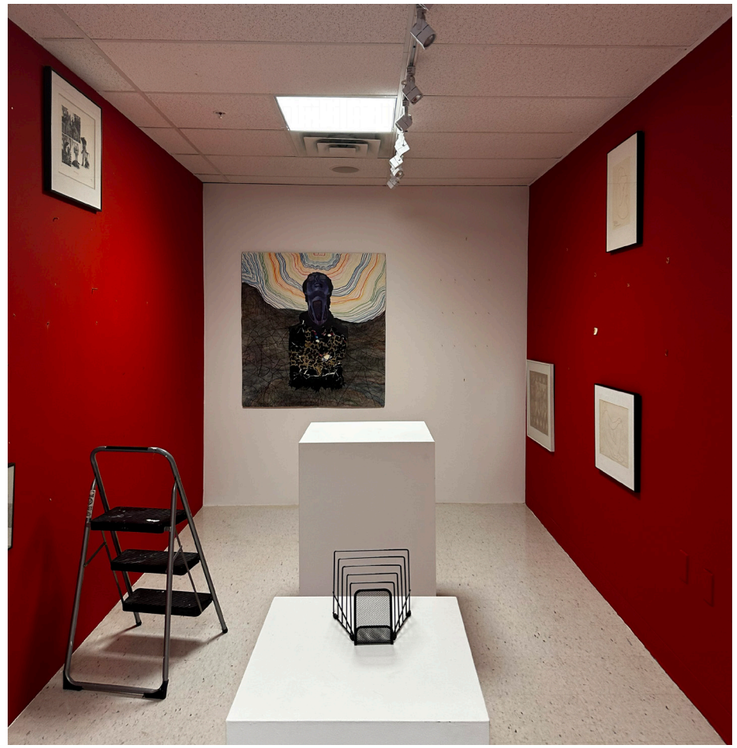
> *Sur Gallery is the only space that showcases Latin American art from the region and of the diaspora in Canada. So, in that sense, it's unique, and it is essential to towards, you know, developing some sense of belonging for the diaspora in the context of Canada…. We've been an organization that has strived to adapt and respond to [people's] needs and the different projects that LACAP has developed throughout the years really have been developed in response to those needs.*

Tamara also spoke about the ways in which the perception of Latin American art in Toronto historically, as well as how it has changed in recent years:

> *…I think throughout the two decades that I've been involved within the visual arts sector and the industry in Toronto, my personal objective has been to master that and to present our craft as you've mentioned, with the most utmost professionalism as possible in order to step away and reject that stereotype of Latin Americans being 'all over the place' or 'unprofessional'. Twenty years ago, a lot of the artists within the community were presenting their work in small shops and in cafes, and that's that. The best they could do is rent a small little gallery space, but they weren't given the opportunity to show their work in and be represented by commercial galleries or in larger institutions, there wasn't that sort of platform for them.*

Having firsthand connection to the art scene herself, Tamara has really created a place for Latin American art in Toronto, one that did not exist at the time that she was coming up:

> *I started my profession as an artist and as a Latin American artist, and at that time there were no platforms, there were no opportunities for me to*



68. ***Interior of Sur Gallery.*** By Author.

develop as an artist in Toronto. I slowly started building those opportunities for my fellow colleagues, and I think that there is in essence not only this need for representation and visibility, but also in a way, we are the ones who decide how that representation is developed and how to develop that narrative ourselves.

I also asked her about the ways in which this idea of Networks that BAND is centrally focused on applied to the Latin American Community, as these networks are the ones that strengthen the diasporic community.

I think in terms of network, the connection between organizations and individuals, leaders, and community; not that I want to be hierarchal, but it's not there. There should be some sort of communication and collaboration happening. Otherwise, you just have silos of different organizations doing their own thing and unaware of each other, which hasn't been ideal. We haven't reached that sort of level of collaboration. There is some communication, but I think that if we're able to collaborate in more meaningful ways, we could grow as a community a lot further.

I think a lot of these organizations are in such a precarious situation; as you know, non-profits as underrepresented and underfunded communities, so it's very difficult to also collaborate under those conditions, but I think that it is needed for our community to be a lot more in sync so we can work together towards building something bigger.

The fact that there is a lack of connection between organizations is a factor that cannot be overlooked. To put forward the needs of the Caribbean and Latin American communities, there needs to be some sort of organization and community dialogue. This aspect is one that this thesis is trying to suggest solutions for, offering ways in which these different groups could be centralized and work together to eliminate inefficiencies and have a greater impact. Tamara also spoke of the challenges to this idea of collaboration, and that historically it has been difficult to overcome these challenges:

I think that from the very beginning it's always been very divided and very difficult to collaborate. I think that there is a lot of competitiveness for the little resources that there are. There's a lot of individualism and egos in the community that hinder any possible collaboration. I'm sorry to be so blunt about it, but it's something that I'm sure is not only true to our community as Latin Americans, but it's probably something that repeats in other communities as well. However, I think that particularly our community, because we're composed of so many different nations, cultures, and political ideologies or stances within our community, they can sometimes divide more than unite us. I think it's very difficult at the same time to come to meeting points with other people.

When the conversation shifted about the ways in which a new space could be used, Tamara offered some of the possibilities that she saw as beneficial for the betterment and preservation of the diaspora:

I'm envisioning a larger space for sort of gallery, a space where you could have not only exhibitions but public programming, maybe artist residencies. A space that could potentially host a library of Latin American art books. A space where you could also host talks and screenings…that's sort of where my mind is going.

While these programming are certainly needed, I think that they can be supplemented with some of the programming needs that the survey respondents expressed in the previous chapter.

Identity and Plans for a Latin American Arts Centre

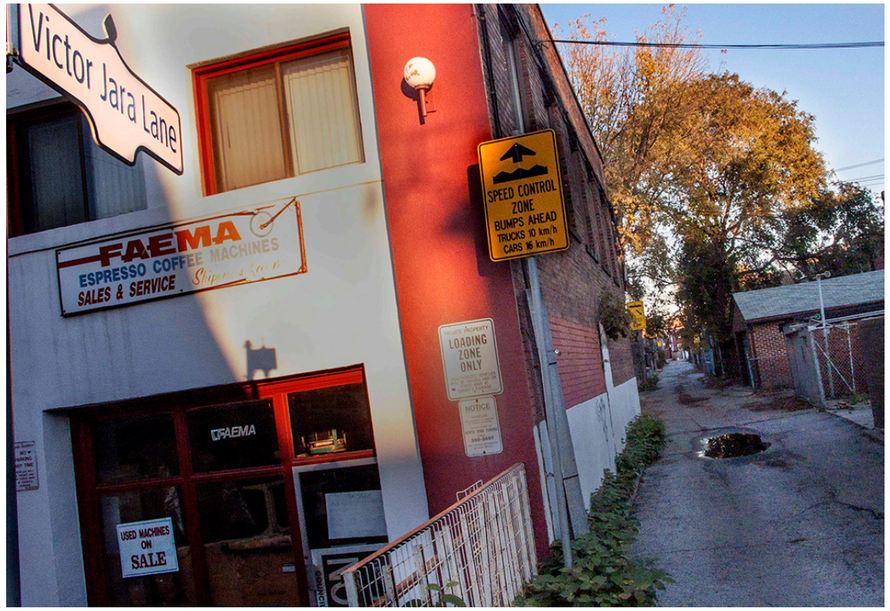
Interview with Rodrigo Barreda, LACAP

When speaking to Rodrigo about his idea for a Latin American Arts Centre, I thought it would be valuable to understand the challenges involved at the time when he was hoping to start this endeavour, and to hopefully use these as learning experiences or ways in which to develop the proposal for the Caribbean Cultural Commons. The idea originally stemmed from the Salvador Allende Arts Festival for Peace, a festival that he helped organize back in 2003. He talked to me about the reasons behind starting this initiative:

> *I think the main motivation was to create a platform for presenting Latin American artists and their work. It was a multidisciplinary festival, but we started diving into things like advocacy. We started doing, for example, Aconsejate, we started working on the Victor Jara Lane Project. We started working on also providing workshops. Since we were learning, we also partnered up with the art councils to see if they could actually provide workshops for artists in the community on writing grant applications and things like that.*

After experiencing some natural growth and interest from community members that they had built up by organizing these events, there was a plateau, as Rodrigo explains:

> *…I think we hit a bit of a plateau, because even within the festival, one thing was to showcase your work or present your work as an artist or designer. Another thing was to organize the platform. Not only to present your work, but to present the work of others. And to be quite honest, I think that was the main obstacle. People were and actually told me, you know, openly, they would say "What I want is for you to organize an event for me to present my work. I'm not going to dedicate any effort in organizing an event to promote others' work. why would I do that?" And that was heartbreaking, but it was also part of the environment that we were working in. And so, through that process we decided to begin focusing more on visual arts and performance specifically, and in visual arts we also included community projects and design projects.*



69. ***'Victor Jara Ln', Living Toronto Journal.*** Image by Schuster Gindin. Retrieved from https://livingtorontojournal.com/victor-jara-ln/.

The seeming separation between the 'artist' and the 'organizer' was understandably a difficult obstacle to overcome, as the resources for an initiative of this sort at the time were quite scarce, and the bandwidth for managing increasingly bigger events was likely impossible without exterior help. Another obstacle they faced was the market for Latin American art at the time, so they first had to set out to make this market more prominent.

> *We felt that the biggest challenge was that there wasn't a market specifically for the visual arts. So, to generate that market or create that market, we needed to promote an understanding, for starters, of what Latin American visual arts were. Because we felt at that at that time, at least when we talked about Latin American art, the mainstream of the Canadian audience, their minds went to Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, and that was it. You couldn't move beyond that, there was no knowledge, understanding, or awareness that there were other artists and other art forms.*
>
> *There was starting to be some interest in Latin American art, but you had instances like the AGO's Frida Kahlo exhibit. It was not curated by a by a Latin American, and you could see even in the curatorial premises, a very eurocentric gaze or perspective on what Frida Kahlo meant, not only artistically, but also culturally and politically. So, we started feeling like, "well, we need a space where we could talk about and articulate our own perspectives on Latin American art." So, we set out to talk to other organizations, the ones that I've mentioned, and talked about the possibility of working on a Latin American Arts Center together.*

After some time of conceptualizing what this centre could look like, another challenge they faced was that there was an element of self-preservation that was difficult to overcome, and Rodrigo speaks to some of the probable causes for the unfortunate end of the collective:

> *Part of the challenge that we found was that we had this collective organizing these kinds of things; research and fundraising activities, but the coordination table that brought together the actual art organizations wasn't really gaining traction in terms of having a collective perspective on the work that we could be doing. In other words, everybody was just pulling water to their side, and it came to a point where people just said: "You know what? I'm not really interested in a Latin American Arts Center. What I'm interested in is for my theater company to have a space", or "I'm interested in maintaining Lula Lounge, because that's my project."*
>
> *I think there's some factors that obviously kind of allowed for that, that kind of response. I would think that first and foremost this, the lack of resources dedicated to Latin American arts is one. There's a bit of a scarcity mindset within the community. Everybody's competing for the very limited resources that are out there, and the little resources that we have in terms of organizational capacity, why should be we be dedicating it to a collective effort when I have my own needs and I need them to survive? And we couldn't*



70. ***Interior of AGO Exhibit 'Frida & Diego: Passion, Politics & Painting'.*** Image by Anne Thériault. Retrieved from https://bellejar.ca/2012/10/22/frida.



71. ***Interior of Sur Gallery Exhibit 'Demystifying Blackness'.*** Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/DKAkEKuPSZe/?img_index=1

get past that, to be quite honest. We couldn't because you could have said "Okay, well, why don't we share resources? Why don't we have a common office space? Why don't we share operational expenses? So, instead of going in that direction, everybody went inwards. So that was the biggest challenge. After that we decided to go at it alone, basically. We said: "Okay, well, if everybody's pulling to their own side, then I guess it's not an Arts Center that's possible right now. Let's focus on establishing an art gallery." And that's how the Sur Gallery project came to be.

This inward trajectory is likely one of the causes the Latin American archipelago is as fragmented as it is today. The historical lack of collaboration has thus impacted the community's ability to self-organize and advocate for the things they believe they need in order to feel more at home in Canada. The shifting away from each other instead created more intimate groups, which are not necessarily a negative aspect, but I believe they have detracted from the major commonalities that we do share and made these less visible. The disjointed fashion in which all of these organizations operate thus makes it difficult to unite for a common goal, such as a Caribbean Cultural Commons.

I think the main issue is that there aren't purposely designed spaces for specific activities. We don't have the resources, the infrastructure, or even the organizational capacity to access funding to build a Latin American Arts center or a gallery or a theater space, right? So, to a certain extent, we're still programming or using spaces that are not necessarily designed for those purposes and that are specifically for the Latin American community.

I would say that also the other issue has been an issue of identity. When we talk about 'Latin American' art, whether it's visual art or theater or music, what exactly do you mean? Because the truth is that most people, when they arrive to Canada, independently of their status, whether they're economic immigrants, they come to work, they come as part of a program or as political refugee, the reality is that they come with a national identity. They might come as a Brazilian, as a Chilean, as a Mexican. And in time you start realizing that others see you as Hispanic or Latino or Latinx or Latin American.

What we want to emphasize is that we have a common experience as a colonized territory. And so, right away it became political. To us, we have more in common with a Brazilian immigrant, although they might not speak Spanish. But we have a common history of colonization, of political dissidents and of military dictatorship, of migration, and a whole bunch of other experiences that bring us closer.

Rodrigo then speaks about the process of organizing the centre, and recalls a conversation he had with a person at Nia Centre for the Arts:

It's interesting because when we were working on trying to put together the Latin American Art Center collective, we had conversations with the folks at Nia, and they were working on it as well. And one of them said to me: "You know, the problem that you guys have is that you're not Black." So I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, you guys suffer from the same problems that we suffer from: lack of resources, lack of voice, lack of representation. But we're receiving tons of funding because we're Black. You guys are not receiving anything because you look white, or you could pass for Filipino, or you could pass for Black, or you could pass for anything. That visibility—or invisibility—doesn't help you guys."

This is something that came from a black artist who was organizing Nia, right? And it's true. In that sense, we get lost. We're lost in the diversity and inclusion discourse. Consider also, that 10 years ago even, it was hard for an artist to identify as Latin American. They didn't want to. They thought they didn't want to pigeonhole themselves as a Latin American artist. So, they would just say "I'm an artist." Today that has changed. Now there's value in stating that you're Latin American because it provides you access to funds. But ten years ago, it was a no-no. So, it's complicated and all of that has also played a role in all of this.

This issue is certainly one that is central to this thesis. While communities within Latin America and the Caribbean are not at all homogeneous, and customs may vary between groups, this thesis argues that our similarities unite us more than our differences divide us.

it's not lost on me that there's also a different kind of perspective on how to do this work in comparison to maybe 10, 15, 20 years ago. Things have evolved in different ways, and we've learned certain things that have shaped the way that we are approaching this work now in comparison to the past, and some of those things have to do with the state of development of the community itself.

The access to funding for a centre of this sort is also a major aspect which cannot be overlooked. The largest funding bodies, such as the Canada Council for the Arts, also carry immense weight in their discretionary funding practices, and they can very directly impact which groups become prominent and which do not. Rodrigo anecdotally shares an experience he had with these themes:

I remember the Canada Council for the Arts was interested in funding organizations that were working on efforts to reach communities that did not have access to the arts, let's say 'marginalized' communities. So, they came up with this program and made it public to all the institutions and organizations. The idea was to focus on outreach to communities that were indigenous, black, and people of color.

But when time came to give out the grants and the resources, it was primarily the bigger organizations and institutions that received the funding. And in the case of the visual arts, it was the AGO. They received the funds to contract people to operate, to create programs, to essentially spearhead this effort towards marginalized communities. And so, they received the funding, they turn around and they contact Sur Gallery. And they say "we need contacts within the Latin American community, which we don't have. Can you work with us on reaching out to the Latin American community?" And we said "Sure. What's the reciprocity here in terms of the relationship?" They said "Well, we don't have funds. We need you to do this work on a volunteer basis." So we said, "Okay, well, no thanks." If the Canada Council for the Arts want this to happen, they should fund the community organizations. Don't give the funds to the Art Gallery of Ontario. Why would you do that? Because that reinforces the cycle of dependency and marginalization, really. That's a very clear example of how the neoliberal model is expressed on a day-to-day functioning of the arts system.

The issue of representation is much more complex than it seems at the surface. The perpetuation of institutional hierarchies is something that is a challenge in the development of the Caribbean Cultural Commons. Towards the end of our conversation, Rodrigo pointed out that it is not simply about events, however, and his sentiment aligns with many of the survey respondents:

it's such a diverse community. For example, there is a group in the Chilean community of old folks that just get together to have tea once a week and just chat. And that's it. Sometimes they do it at a Tim Horton's. Sometimes they do it somewhere else. Because that's what they need. And it's that simple. You don't necessarily have to have the same needs or the same ideas, but how do you create a space that accommodates the community? That's the challenge.

Key Takeaways

Across these interviews, a set of shared principles emerged about what a Caribbean Cultural Common must offer if it is to counter the structural invisibility, fragmentation, and extractive cultural logics that Caribbean and Latin American diasporic communities face in Toronto. Each participant identified—through different avenues—the need for infrastructure that not only preserves culture but allows it to live, circulate, and evolve in daily practice.

A central theme was the importance of community-held archives and the aesthetics of the everyday. Joséphine emphasized that people in the Caribbean diaspora deeply value the personal objects, stories, and artistic expressions they preserve, and that these archives gain meaning when shared. She also spoke to the beauty embedded in daily Caribbean life and the need for a space where art is not separated from lived experience but woven into it—an ethos echoed by every participant in different terms.

Another principle concerned flexible, responsive spaces for cultural presentation. Joséphine highlighted the charm and creative potential of curating in unconventional spaces, which encourages dialogue between art and its surroundings and resists rigid institutional models. Carlos reinforced this by noting the absence of dedicated venues for music, performance, and oral history—forms of cultural transmission that thrive in adaptable, community-driven environments.

Participants also stressed the role of visibility and recognition in countering marginalization. Carlos and Rodrigo each described the lack of platforms for artists within the Canadian arts ecosystem, noting how this invisibility reinforces cycles of dependency and exclusion. Rodrigo, in particular, argued for a space designed by and for the diaspora—one capable of breaking from extractive, neoliberal display models and instead accommodating the full range of cultural activity, including the mundane.

A fourth principle emerged from Tamara's insistence on infrastructure for collaboration and collective agency. She emphasized the disconnect between organizations, community leaders, and the people they aim to serve—disconnects compounded by scarce resources and divisions within the arts landscape. For her, rejecting stereotypes of unprofessionalism and building meaningful networks are essential to strengthening the community and ensuring that its representation is self-determined rather than imposed.

Finally, the interviews collectively underscore the shared histories and solidarities that bind the Caribbean Sea diaspora. Rodrigo emphasized that despite differences, these communities share histories of colonization, displacement, and resilience that should anchor a space like the Cultural Common. Tamara and Joséphine, in their own ways, echoed the need to resist simplifying culture; to allow its nuances, contradictions, and multiplicities to remain visible and alive within the gallery's walls.

These principles point toward a cultural centre that is not simply a venue but a living ecosystem, one that holds community memory, fosters everyday creativity, and strengthens collective presence within the city. Community-held archives and everyday cultural expressions form the foundational material the centre must honour, while flexible spaces enable this material to come alive in dynamic and authentic ways. Visibility and dedicated infrastructure then ensure that these expressions are not only possible but sustained within the broader cultural landscape. Collaboration and network-building provide the social architecture necessary to expand impact, build trust, and resist imposed narratives. Ultimately, grounding the centre in the complex, shared histories of the diaspora gives it purpose, clarity, and ethical direction, ensuring that cultural expression remains nuanced, interconnected, and self-determined. These principles together articulate a vision for a cultural institution that is structurally supportive, socially generative, and historically grounded.

Chapter 4

Caribbean Culture Commons

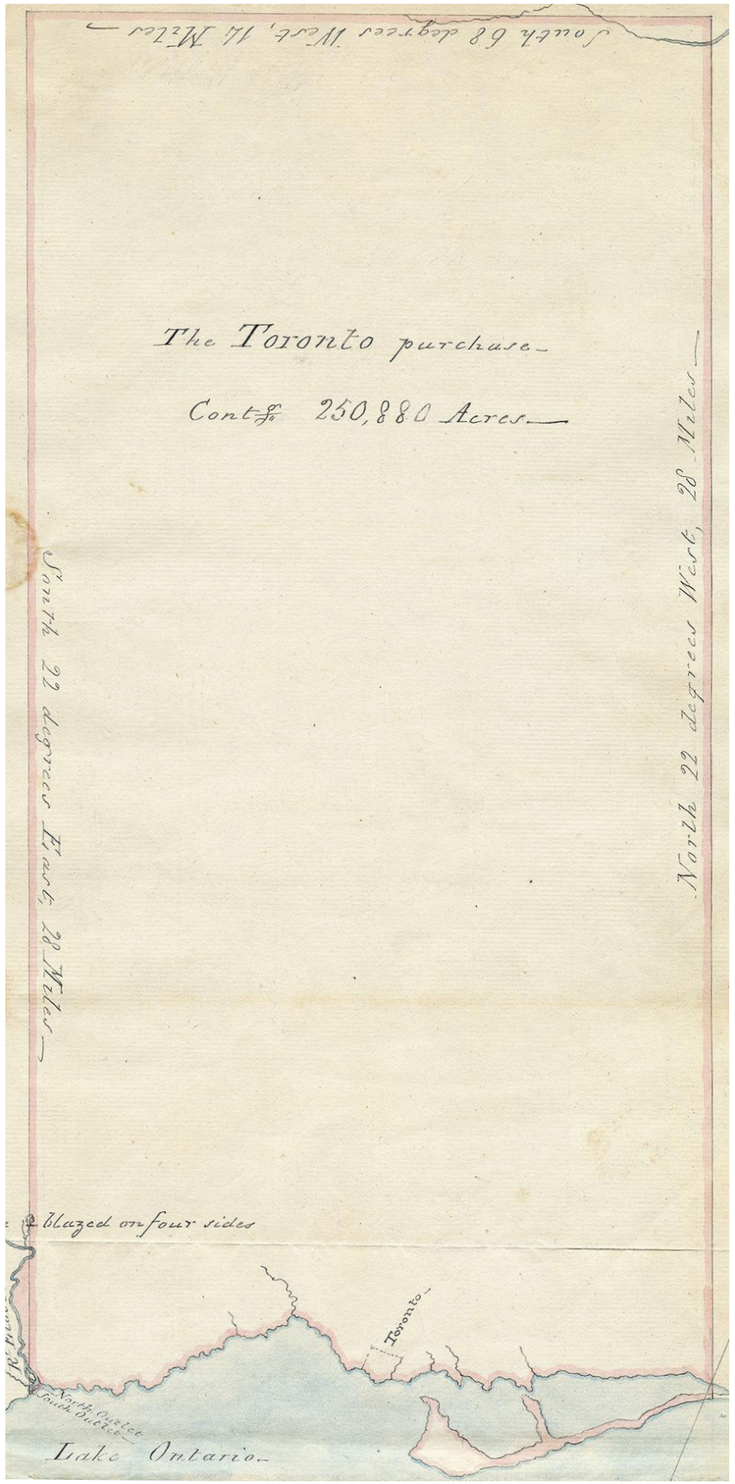
Site Selection and Analysis

Selecting a site for the Caribbean Cultural Commons was a process that deployed the use of census and survey data, attempting to obtain the most accurate representation of the needs, challenges, and opportunities of the Caribbean Sea Diaspora in the Greater Toronto Area.

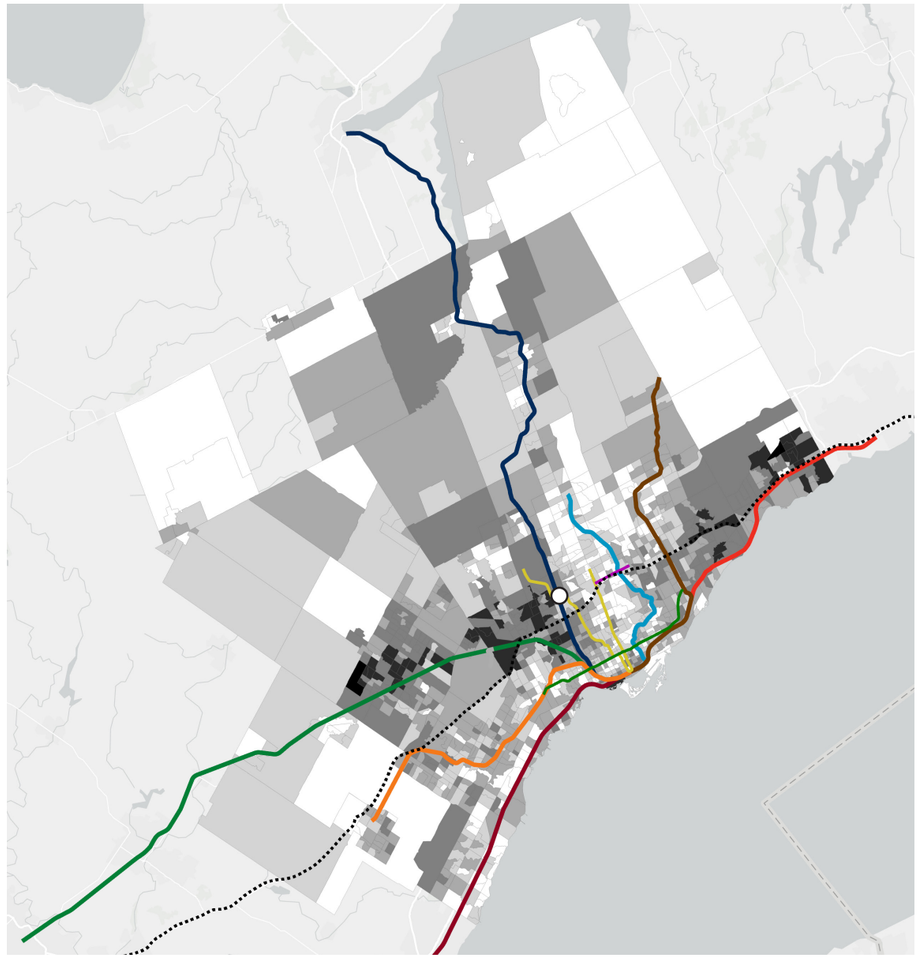
The challenge in selecting a site came from the ability to make it as central and convenient to the target populations as possible. Conceptually, the location of the Caribbean Cultural Commons should embody the Caribbean Sea, as a place that centralizes narratives and brings people together. Pragmatically, the maps of population density per census tract in the Toronto CMA as seen in Chapter 2 were used in order to determine a location that was the most accessible to the largest number of people within the established area, and that also fit into the parameters derived from organizations in the third chapter (fig. 73). Several sites throughout the City of Toronto were considered and weighted in terms of their accessibility via personal vehicle or public transit. Most of the study area revolved around Downtown Toronto, however, as this area is mostly developed, it was difficult to suggest a building that reused an existing space, which felt in line with the explorations in Chapter 3. After expanding the area of analysis, the selected site was determined to be the former Downsview Airport lands. This area is currently undergoing a major redevelopment effort by various developers such as Northcrest Development's YZD redevelopment of the former airport runway and adjacent hangar district, thus the area is currently being reimagined, and a variety of existing building stock is being reused. After selecting the site, an analysis of travel times via personal vehicle and transit were conducted to ensure that the site would be usable by the target populations (fig. 74).

Historically, these lands are part of the original Toronto purchase of 1805 (fig. 72). The inclusion of Indigenous placekeeping is one that is central to the Downsview West District Plan,[37] and is also a matter of importance within the Caribbean Cultural Commons. As immigrants from one colonized land which inhabit another, it is important to acknowledge that reconciliation is also necessary in this instance. This is achieved at the urban scale with the inclusion of 'Heart Park', a circular park at the central intersection of the district, and at the building scale

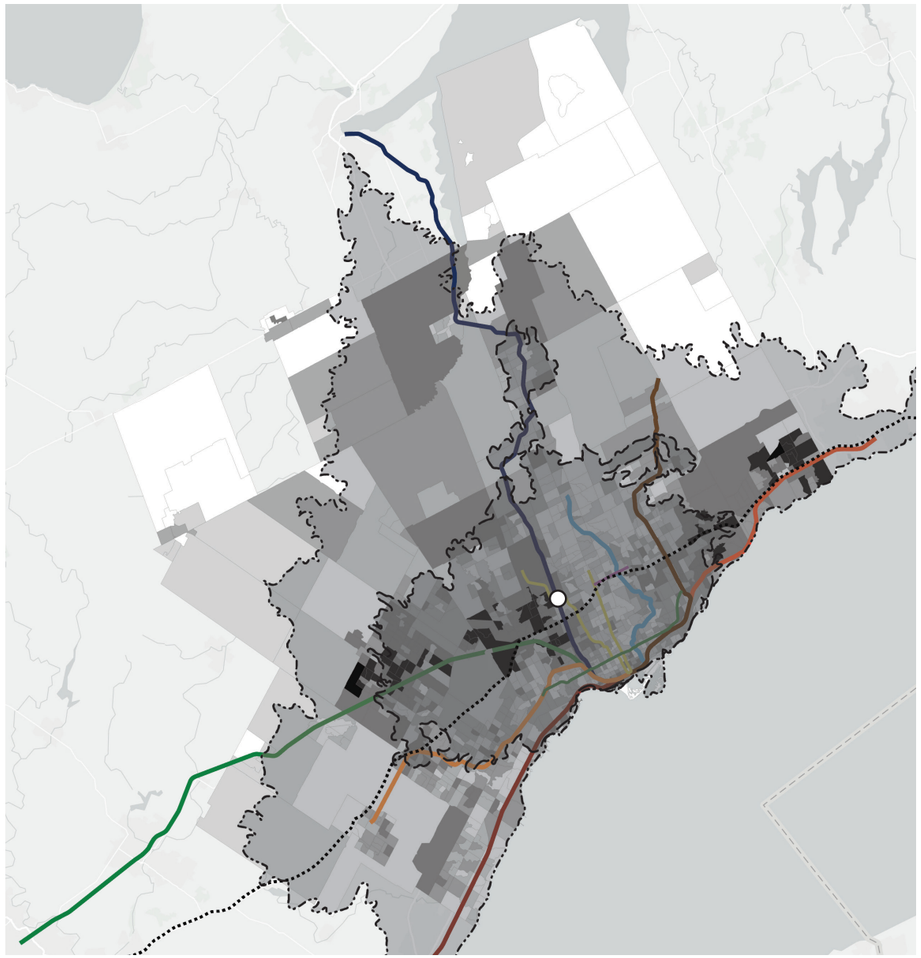
[37] Canada Lands Company, "Downsview West District Community Engagement Report," Canada Lands Company, January 23, 2024, https://downsviewwest.ca/resources.



72. ***The Toronto Purchase - Contiguous 250,880 acres (1805).*** Source: Toronto Public Library. Object Number Ms1902.1



73. ***Target Populations per Tract.*** By Author. Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap Contributors and the GIS User Community.



74. ***Target Populations per Tract.*** By Author. Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap Contributors and the GIS User Community.

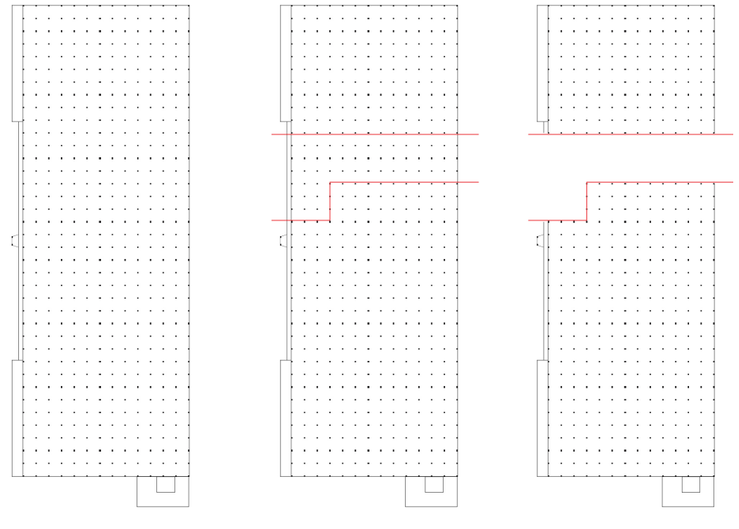


75. ***Satellite View Site of Existing Conditions.*** Source: Google Earth.

the Commons does so by emphasizing this park from across the street. The existing conditions offer proximity to the Downsview Park GO and TTC station, making it accessible by both regional rail and subway. It is also near Highway 401, which connects large swaths of the Greater Toronto Area, namely Brampton, North Etobicoke, Scarborough, and Pickering, which are the regions with the largest populations of the Caribbean Sea diaspora in the GTA as outlined in Chapter 2. The figures depicted on the following page outline the connections to public transit as well as 60-minute commuting times using both public transit and personal vehicles, as this was the biggest time commitment respondents were willing to travel for the Cultural Common. The location selected is centralized within the densest population tracts, allowing a large number of the target populations to arrive within their desired travel time.

Furthermore, considering expansion with the potential for the current development of the former Downsview Airport lands, as well as future transit network expansions like the westward expansion of the Sheppard West line, which is currently under development, this site holds a promising future to be a centre of connection as the adjacent infrastructures continue to develop and improve.

The site is currently owned by the Canada Lands Company, and the selected building is 40 Carl Hall Road, which is a 7.5-hectare building. The building itself dates to 1953, when the Canadian Government needed a new storage facility to store airplane parts. As part of the West Downsview District Plan, the building is set to be partially demolished for the construction of an east-west main street, splitting the building into two separate buildings, one about one third of the original area, and another the remaining two thirds, as shown in the diagram below. The selected site is the smaller of these parcels, which is the closest to the Downsview Park TTC and GO stations.



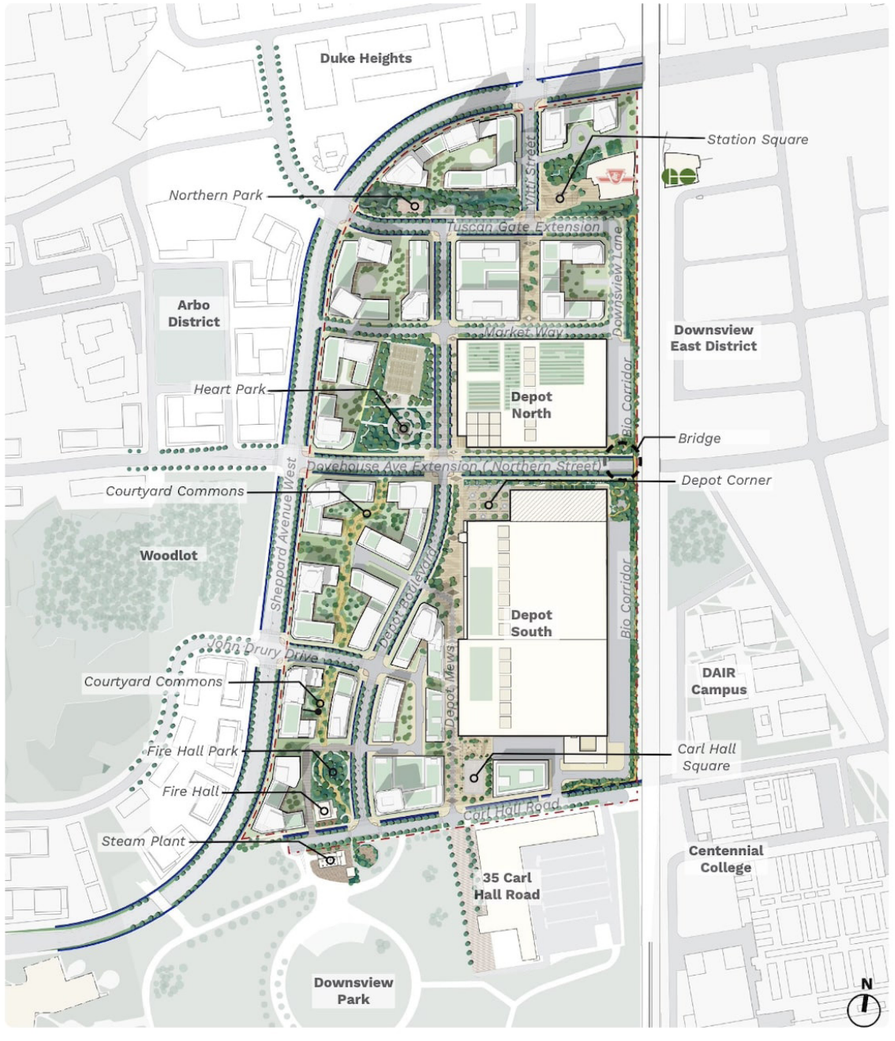
76. ***Diagram of Building Grid and Separation.*** By Author.

The western end of the site is lined by the Barrie GO line tracks, the south will border the new east-west street, the east will face another street, and the midpoint of the building on the north facade will have a direct promenade linking it with the TTC and GO stations.

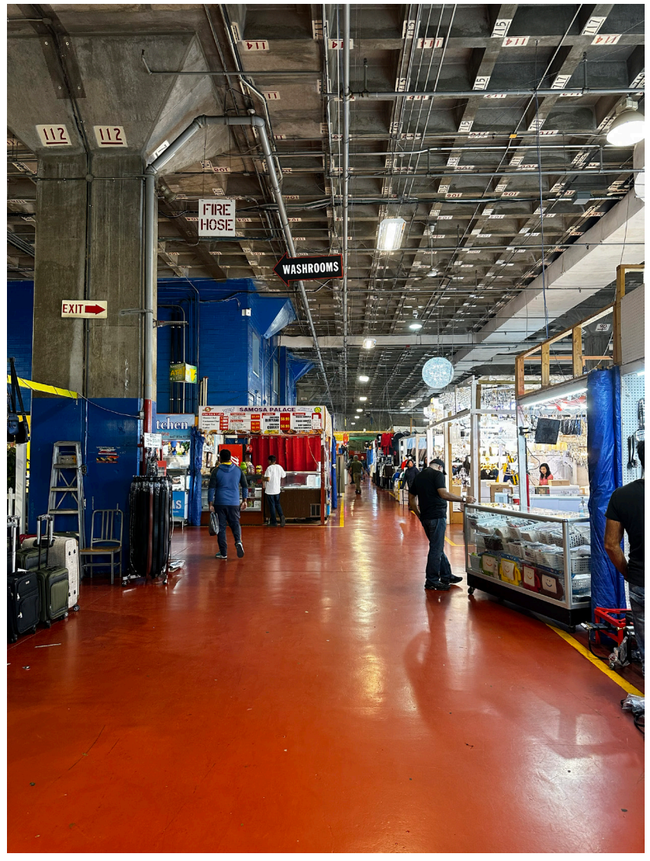
The building currently hosts the Downsview Park Merchant's Market, which opens its doors to the public on Saturdays and Sundays from 10am to 6pm. This market hosts a variety of different vendors and includes standard vendor stalls along with an antiques section, a food court serving various foods from a variety of cultures, as well as a farmer's market. While this is an incredible public amenity, it is unfortunately only open on weekends. The character of the market, however, reminded me a lot of the markets that you see throughout countries surrounding the Caribbean Sea. Vendors sell a plethora of different goods and services, stalls are small and tightly packed with anything you can think of, ranging from clothing and footwear to electronics, furniture, cookware, and even jewelry. Even though the space is expansive, it still felt intimate along the corridors, and in a few certain instances, such as in the farmer's market section, the rooms would open up to give way to larger 'plazas' resembling an urban plan; and in many ways the expanse of this place requires a plan at the urban scale in order to effectively create varied space, albeit under one overarching roof structure. This character is one that the design attempts to maintain.

At the urban scale, the building is labeled as "Depot North" in the redevelopment plan for the Downsview West District plan, as devised by Urban Strategies and Canada Lands Company. The site is very well-positioned within the district itself, as it is adjacent to the central intersection of the plan; an extension of Dovehouse Avenue to the south of the site, and the planned Depot Boulevard to the west. Dovehouse Avenue will also be grade separated, creating a large elevation difference at the southeast corner of the site, and making this corner the most inaccessible, as the Barrie GO line borders the east façade. Across the street from Depot Boulevard is 'Heart Park', a large area at the centre of the district. The north façade is well-connected to the TTC and GO stations, with an urban walkway planned to bisect the block above.

The adaptive reuse of the existing structure is also quite in line with many of the buildings which were explored in the Caribbean Organization Index. While the rigidity and monumentality of the concrete structure could be seen as a challenge when attempting to design an intervention for a culture as vibrant as the Caribbean Sea diaspora, it can also create a reference plane which can be interacted with in different places. Metaphorically, the thought of all of these cultures very literally being under one roof is a concept which I wanted to explore, and keeping in line with the ideas about the Caribbean Sea that this thesis explores, the intersections between the sea and the land are the touch points for people and ideas. These themes will be explored further in following sections.



77. ***Downsview West District Plan Layout.***
Source: Canada Lands Company.



78. ***Merchant's Market Interior.***
Image By Author.



79. ***Farmer's Market Interior.***
Image By Author.



80. ***Antique Market Interior.***
Image By Author.

Concept

The concept for the Caribbean Culture Commons is based on the idea that the building is a microcosm of the archipelagic and connective qualities of the Caribbean Sea. The existing depot's structural elements act as a framework in which to execute the various programs that are derived from previous surveys, interviews, and research. The programs placed in said framework respond to it in various ways, with more rigid and permanent programming adhering more to the existing structure, and fluid programs responding in more organic ways. Some structural bays are strategically carved to allow foliage and sunlight to penetrate the most interior bays within the floorplan.

Recognizing that there is a large amount of capital required to adapt an existing building of this size, the existing building's structure and nature of the adaptive reuse also allows the embedded pavilions to be constructed incrementally and as the organization accrues more capital to build them. This allows the programming to evolve as the needs of its inhabitants change with time. Like culture, the building is envisioned to evolve and change as the needs of the user groups change. Furthermore, due to the variety of user groups, this flexibility gives groups the agency to design, develop, and iterate the spaces in which they spend time.

Using David Leatherbarrow's five concepts of *orientation beyond the self, advance and retreat, unscripted performance, contextual fit,* and *materials;* as well as incorporating concepts of the *rhizome* and *multiplicity* as outlined by Deleuze and Guattari, and *opacity* and *creolization* from Glissant, I have developed the following set of design concepts which can act as guidelines for the construction of the Caribbean Cultural Commons were devised. Leatherbarrow's thinking on eccentricities and connections relates to the programmatic ideas for the Caribbean Cultural Commons because the meaning lies in the connections themselves. This reassessment of the above concepts attempts to tailor them better to the ideas discussed in the introduction.

These concepts highlight the qualities that the building aims to develop:

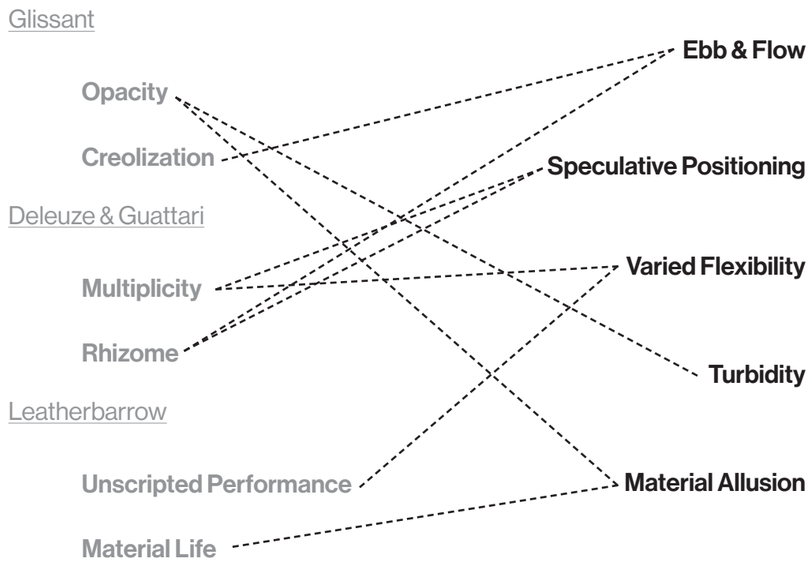
Speculative Positioning: Interstitial spaces within the Caribbean Culture Commons will attempt to position themselves with relation to their specific programs, but will not be prescribed a program as such, so that they are able to be appropriated for a variety of uses.

Ebb and Flow: Depending on the use case and program at a specific time, adjacent spaces should be able to be appropriated and released depending on need. Thinking about gatherings in areas as tides, they should have the ability to grow and shrink into adjacent spaces depending on demand.

Varied Flexibility: Programatically, the building should have the ability to respond to unforeseen events to remain relevant within its context. It also needs to have a variety of spaces and programs where culture can flourish.

Turbidity: Echoing concepts of transparency and opacity, different areas should allow for both small and large gatherings, and a variety of options for the level of exposure to the public should be able to be controlled by the users.

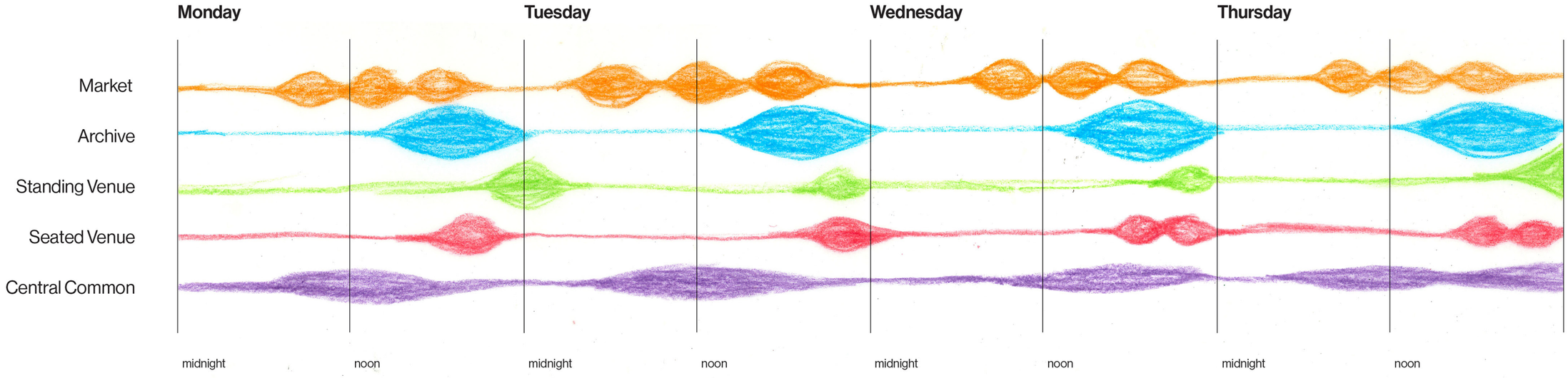
Material Allusion: Using information from the Caribbean Organization Index, the building aims to incorporate materials and textures that allude to the experience of being in regions surrounding the Caribbean Sea.



81. ***Diagram of Datasets and Their Relationships to Building Parameters.*** By Author.

The diagram opposite highlights the concepts as they relate to each of the reworked concepts for the Caribbean Cultural Commons. Speculative positioning borrows from ideas of multiplicity and the rhozome, as it emphasizes the connection and transitional spaces between more rigid programs as places of connection. Ebb and Flow uses the concept of creolization as a base, as well as rhizomatic thinking to allow for hybridization of programs in adjacent spaces. Varied flexibility relies on concepts of multiplicity and unscripted performance, allowing the spaces within the building to respond dynamically to unforseen uses. Turbidity mainly borrows from isead of opacity, allowing building users to select how public or private they wish to be. Lastly, material allusion relies heavily on Leatherbarrow's concept of materials as a way to show age and allude to the emotional quality of materials, whilw at the same time rewuiring a level of understanding about the architecture of the Caribbean Sea region in order to make that connection, thus also

From a programmatic experience, the building emphasizes programming that occurs at all hours of the day and attracts a variety of people to maintain a lively space that is enjoyable (see fig. 82). An emphasis on programming and activities for younger generations will help them become involved in the project as a means of preserving it for future generations, while giving them a place that legitimizes their lived experiences.



82. ***Cathemeral Use Diagram.*** By Author.

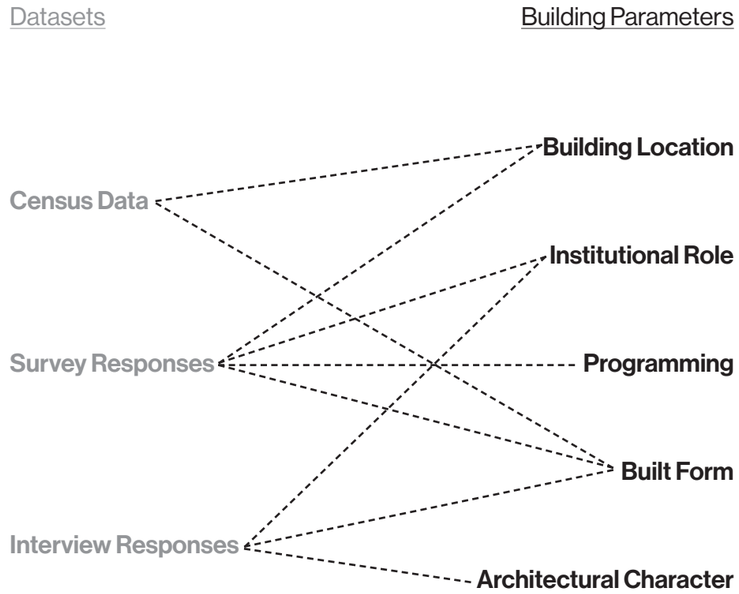
Design

The design of the Caribbean Cultural Commons attempts to balance many of the complex ways in which the Caribbean Sea diaspora exist within the city of Toronto. All of the aspects explored in previous chapters are in service of the design, and these relationships are expressed in the diagram of datasets. Firstly, the census data was used to determine suitable locations, which in turn influence the built form. Survey responses determined travel time data, programming roles, institutional requirements, and the built form. Interviews aided in the institutional rile, built form, and architectural character areas of the building design.

The decision to adapt an existing building is a purposeful one, not simply from an environmental sense, but an affirmation to the context we are entering as an immigrant archipelago. While constructing a brand new building on a site would perpetuate ideas of extraction, by adapting an existing one an attempt is made to accept the existing conditions of the place, and to not try to take it for something it isn't. Carving space in an existing environment and inhabiting it in a way which preserves a culture which is foreign to it also echoes many of the adaptive reuse examples listed in the Caribbean Organization Index. By doing so, the hope is to embed the culture into the place, not in an imposing way, but a long-lasting one.

The building itself is very architecturally rigid. Its existing concrete structure is stripped back to its most basic components, the pillars and waffle roof structure. The perimeter of the building is thermally sealed with opaque and clear components depending on the activities occurring at the façade. The structural columns are very generous in all dimensions, the building grid being 12 metres and the height of the building being approximately 8 meters. These wide spans were necessary for the previous warehousing use, and they allow the design to also be generous in its provision of space for its programming. Infill within these large bays can take many forms, including adding multiple stories in one bay as needed.

The site is surrounded by streets on all sides except for the east, which is bound by the Barrie Line GO railway. Because of this, more forward-



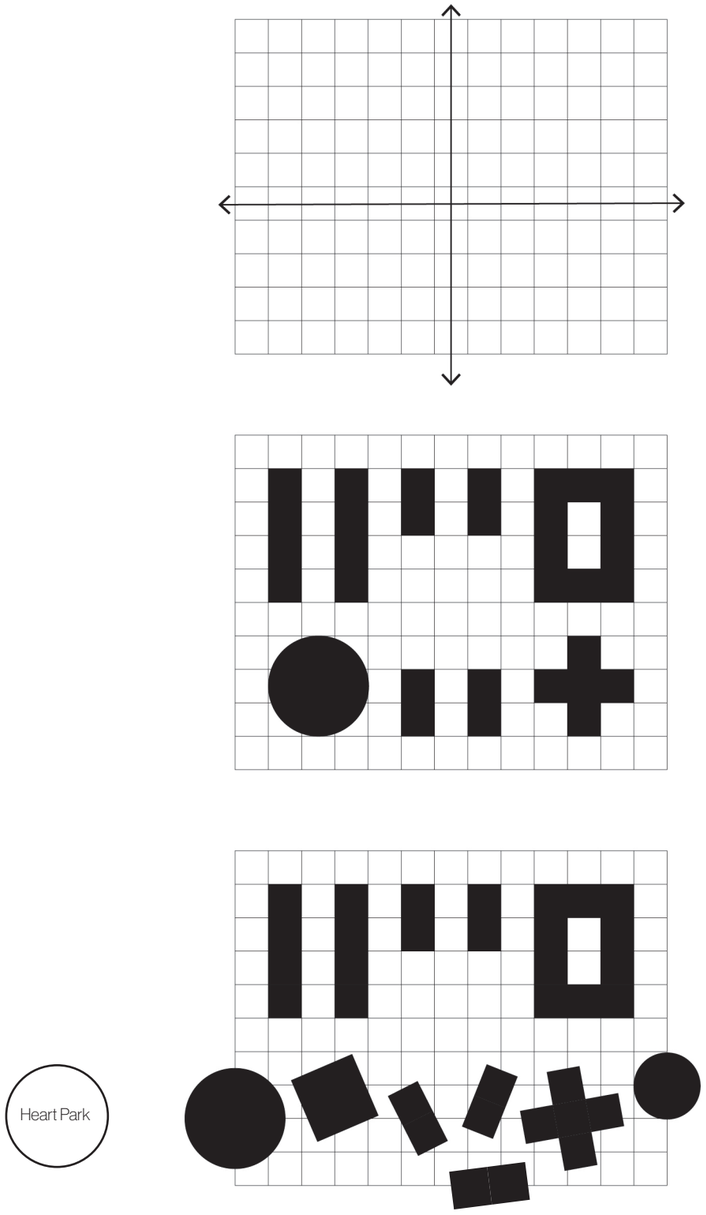
83. ***Diagram of Datasets and Their Relationships to Building Parameters.*** By Author.

facing programming is placed along the western building façade, while more private programming and services are placed near the eastern façade. Due to the promenade on the northern edge of the building, a main entry point into the building is placed along the midpoint of the façade. A few bays are removed to create an entry point that is evidently visible from the transit station. Following this entryway, a central hallway is denoted as informal space with movable furniture and services along its edges. The same occurs in an east-west corridor, creating a central meeting place in the middle of the expansive space.

Programmatically, the building's grid denotes a pixelation which gives way to increasingly finer grains corresponding to smaller and more intimate programming. At its largest scale, a nine-square grid of space is denoted for four distinct programmatic uses: Auditorium, library, marketplace, and gastronomic hub, the latter two being reimaginations of the existing Downsview Park Merchant's Market and food court which are known and loved by the surrounding community. At the four-square grid level, exhibits from institutions as well as gathering spaces and a nightclub are incorporated into the design. At the singular grid level, smaller spaces such as multi-purpose rooms and gathering spaces act as more intimate places to gather and meet. Bays can get further divided to host services, mechanical rooms, washrooms, and other smaller programming and use.

The general architectural approach for the structure attempts to break up the monotony within the rigid structure of the existing building by introducing volumes into the large expanse of concrete which interact with it in different ways. Interview responses from participants and general survey responses from Chapter 2, as well as formal studies from the Caribbean Organizational Index and programmatic requirements or concepts from interviews with institution members in Chapter 3, were all used to determine the formal requirements and general character of the building. These concepts are outlined in the key takeaways sections in Chapters 2 and 3, and they include but are not limited to visibility and recognition in countering marginalization, food as a driver of community, culturally tailored infrastructure and resources, and solidarity through shared histories.

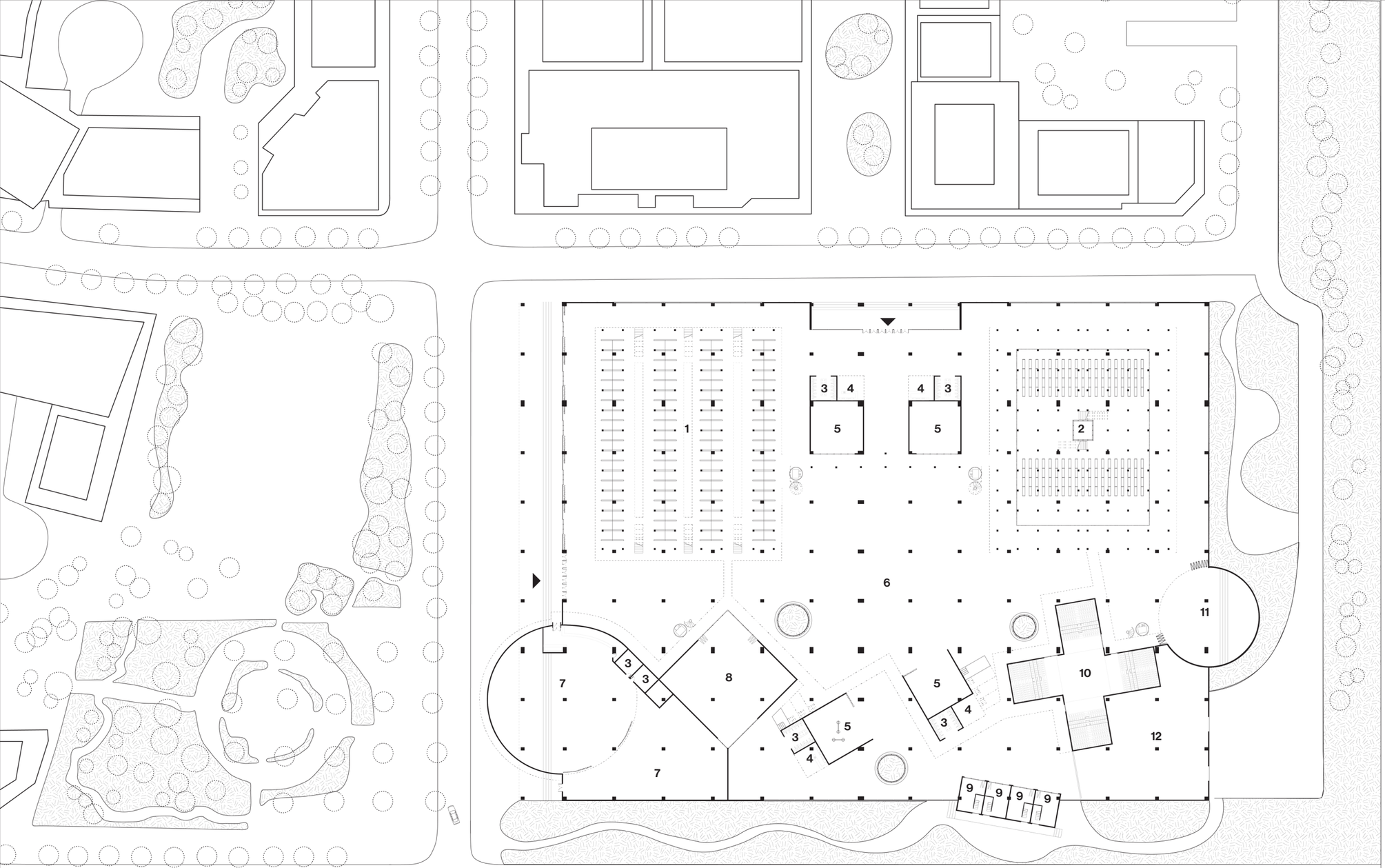
Towards the north end of the building, the rigidity is continued with the interventions designed, creating a sense of these volumed being rooted and heavy within the context of the existing structure. At the south side of the building, however, the volumes, like the sea, have begun to drift, and they offer a different reading and language from the structure, breaking away from it and carving imposing their own geometries within it. These 'drifting' volumes become smaller at the centre of the building, creating an opening for a space at the heart of the building that can be appropriated for a variety of different uses as shown in the parti diagram. The circular volumes also relate to Heart Park across the street, acknowledging the reconciliatory qualities of the park (see fig. 77).



84. ***Parti Diagram.*** By Author.

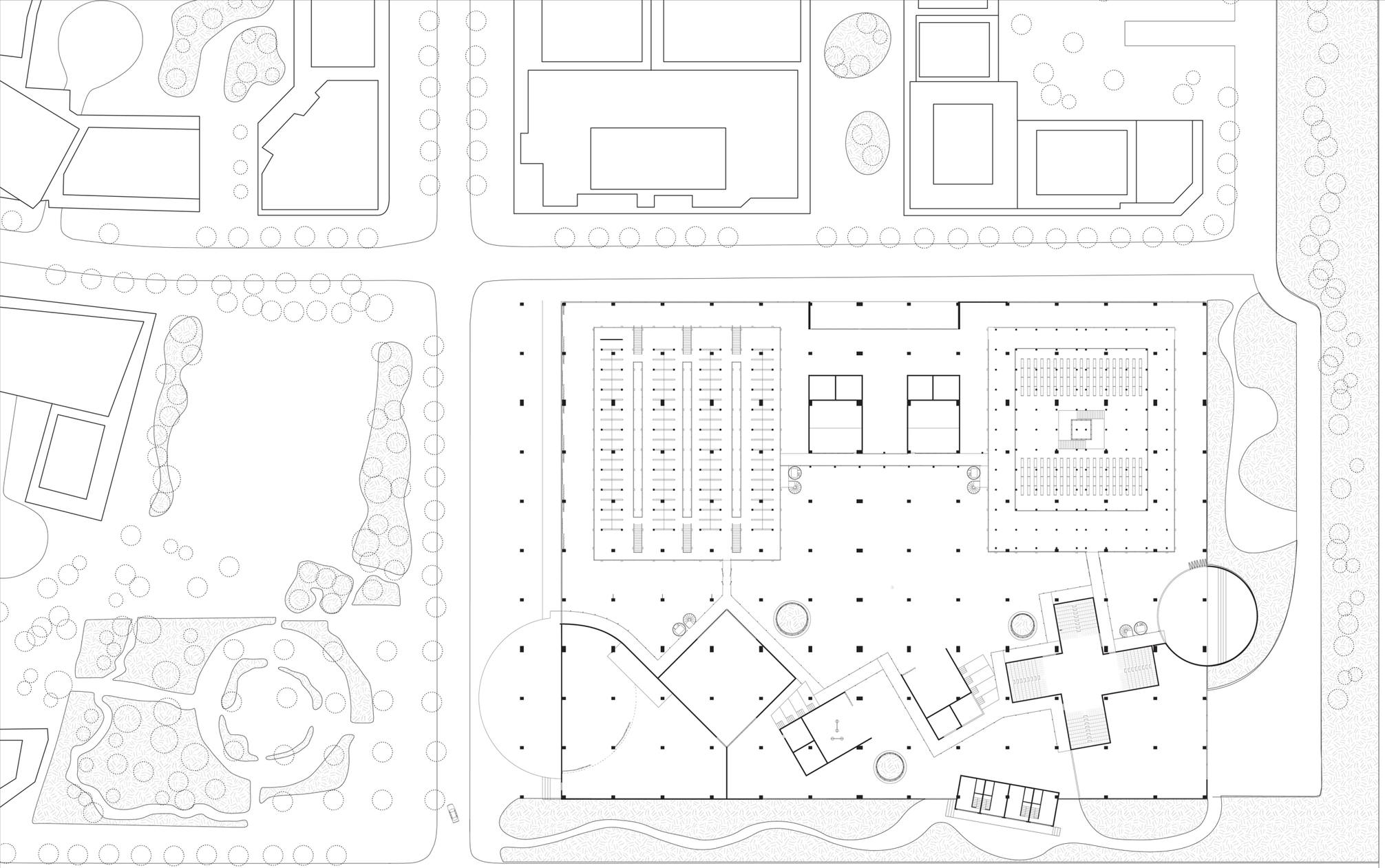


85. ***Site Plan.*** By Author.



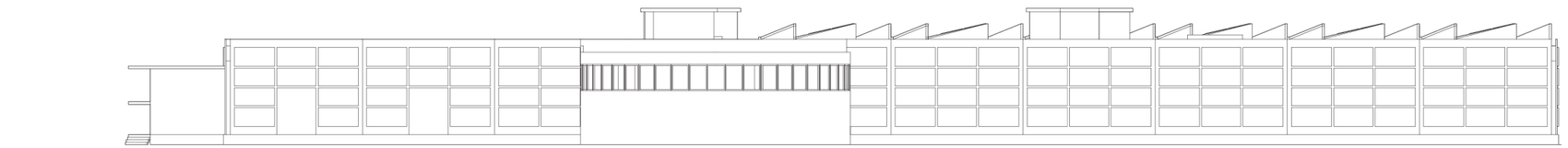
1 Market
2 Archive
3 Washroom
4 Large Food Vendor
5 Multi-Use Space
6 Central Common
7 Standing Venue
8 Enclosed Standing Venue
9 Artist Studio
10 Seated Venue
11 Permanent Gallery
12 Loading and Storage

86 ***Ground Floorplan.***
By Author.

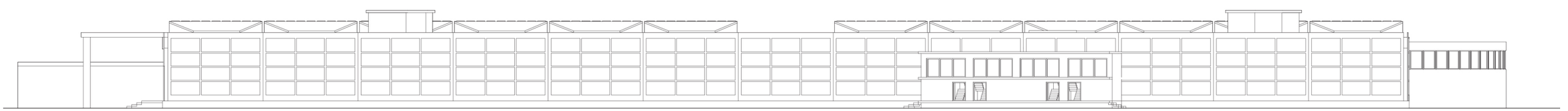


87. ***Second Floorplan.***
By Author.

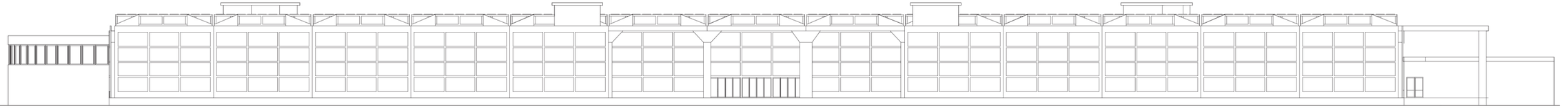
88 ***Roof Plan.*** By Author.



W



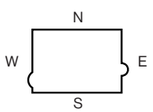
S



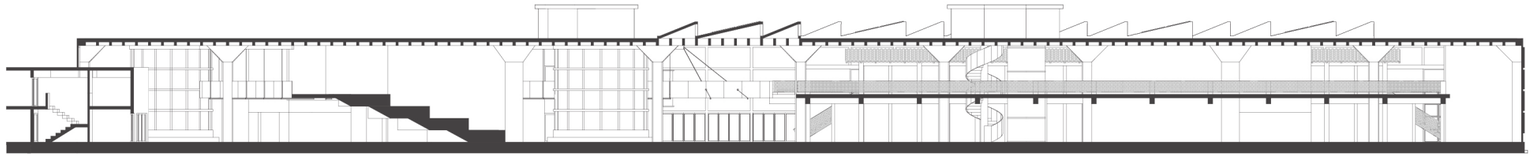
N

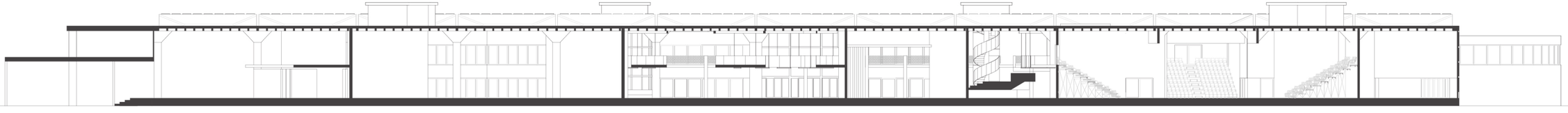


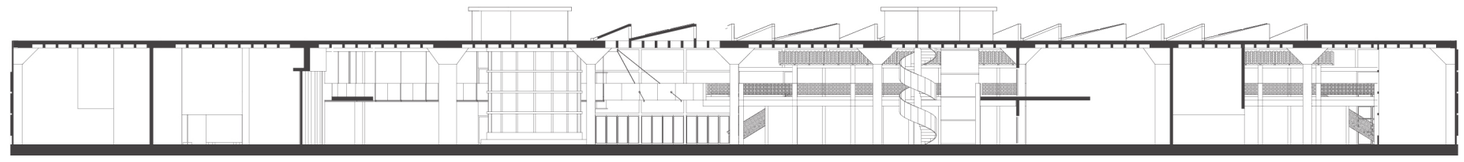
E



89. ***Building Elevations.***
By Author.





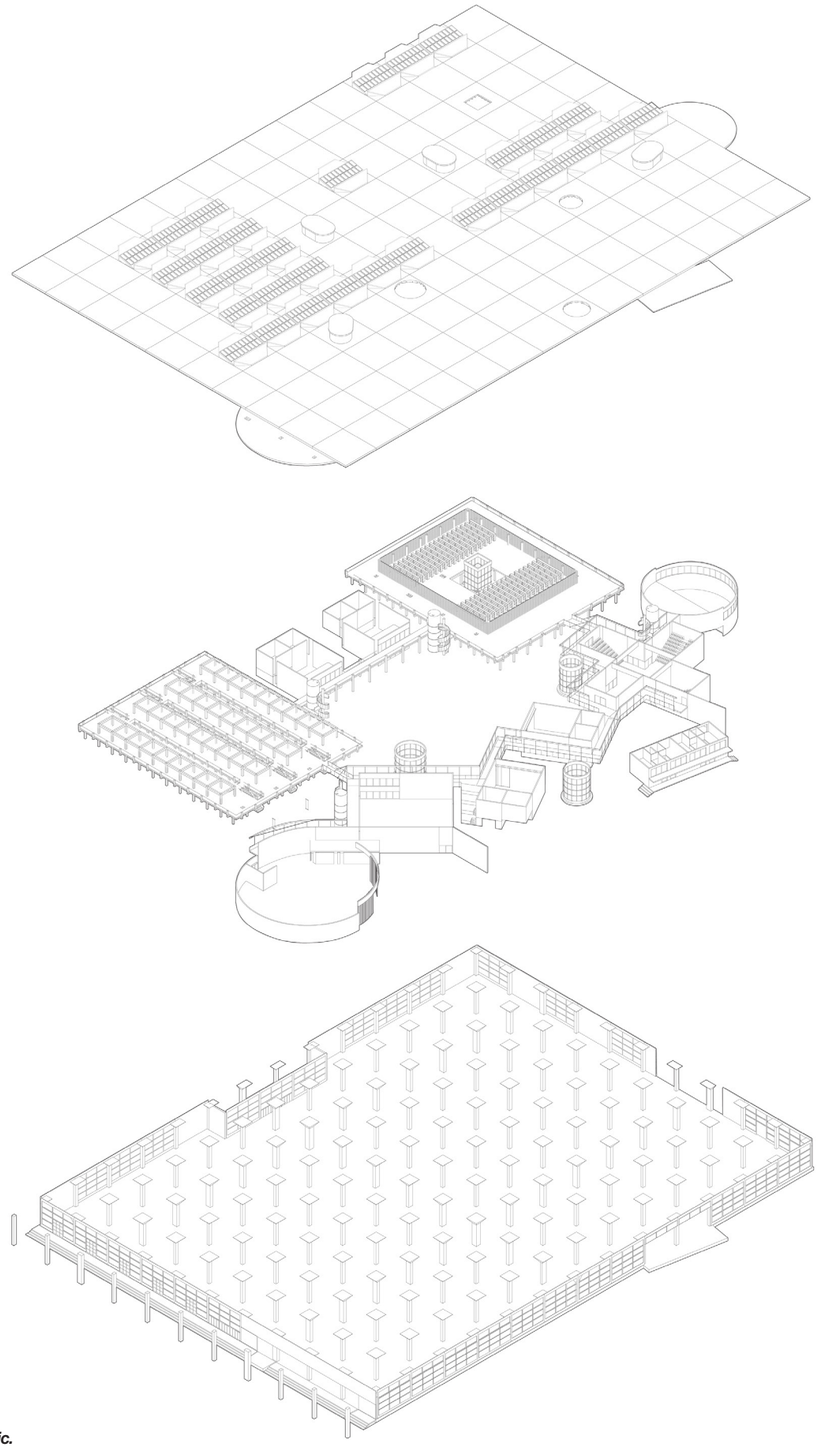




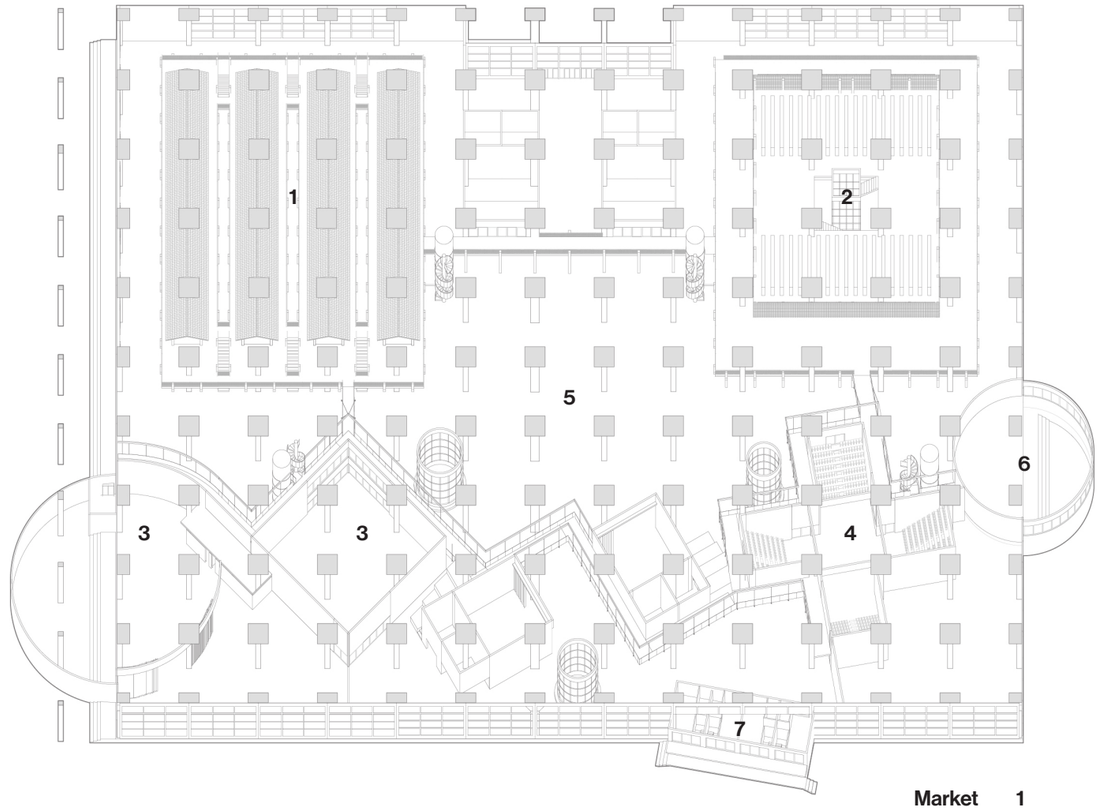




90. ***Building Sections.***
By Author.



91. ***Exploded Axonometric.***
By Author.



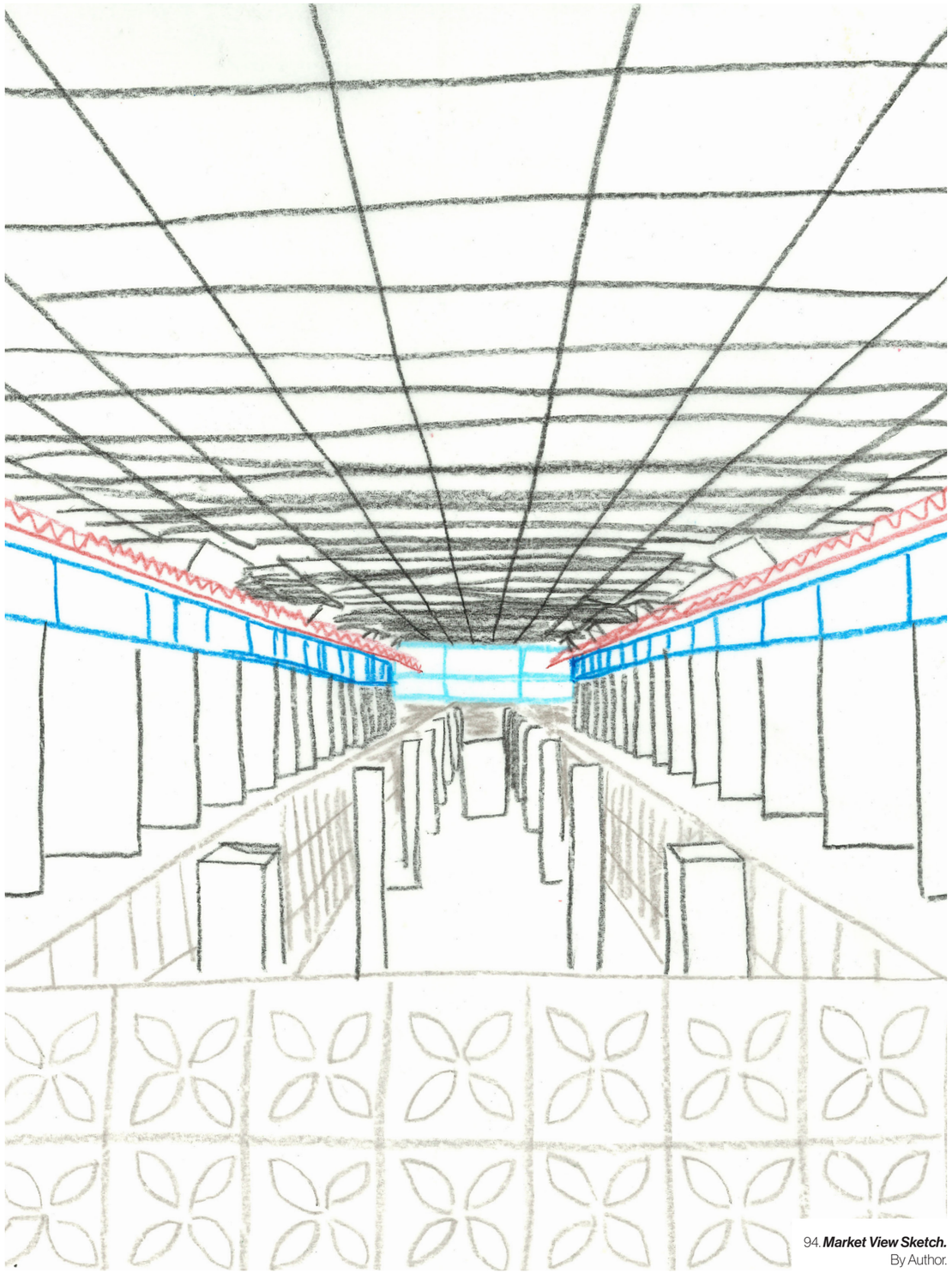
Market	**1**
Archive	**2**
Standing Venue	**3**
Seated Venue	**4**
Central Common	**5**
Permanent Gallery	**6**
Artists' Studios	**7**

92. ***Shear Drawing.***
By Author.

The Market

The market typology is one that is well known and documented. Markets throughout the Caribbean and elsewhere are vibrant and lively places which sell a variety of goods and services. These markets are at times the backbone of communities, as they are a central place where people can get most, if not all of the goods they might need. The existing Downsview Park Merchant's Market on site is also to be considered, as it is a cherished amenity for the members of the surrounding community. For both of these reasons, and to implement ideas from interview participants 1 and 3, the marketplace typology is retained. A similar number of stalls as the Merchant's Market is maintained by stacking a second floor of stalls and a mezzanine floor being added. A portion of the stalls on the ground floor are conceived as 'wet', or in other words require direct water access, while stalls upstairs could be considered 'dry' and only have access to electricity.

93. ***Building Exploded Axonometric.*** By Author.



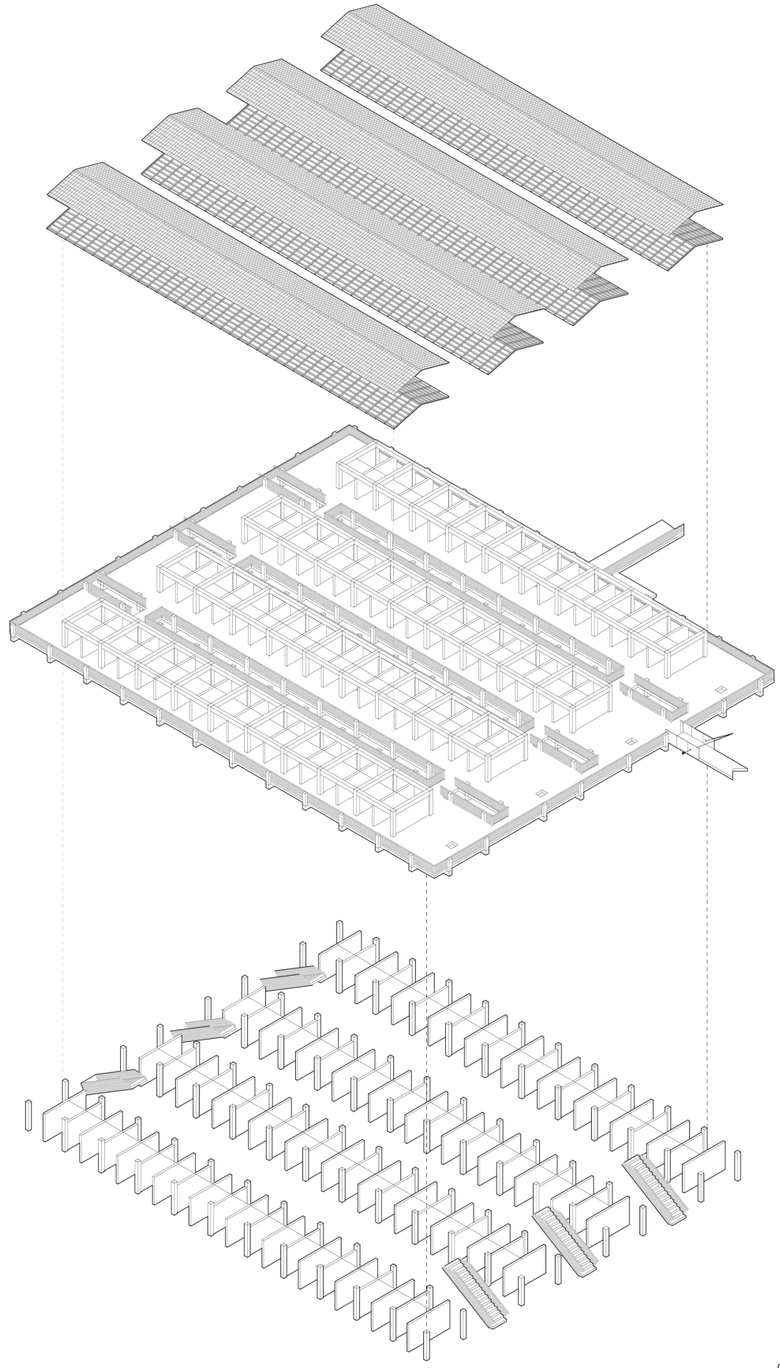
94. ***Market View Sketch.*** By Author.



95. ***Market Upper Floor Rendering.*** By Author.



96. ***Market Lower Floor Rendering.*** By Author.



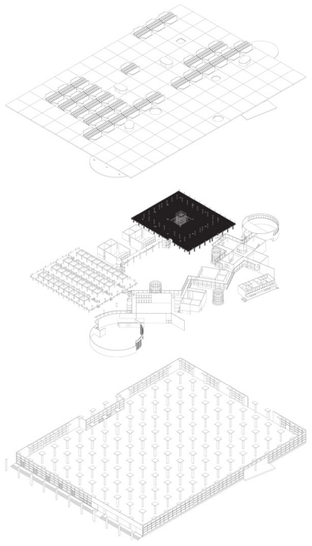
97. ***Market Section Axonometric.*** By Author.



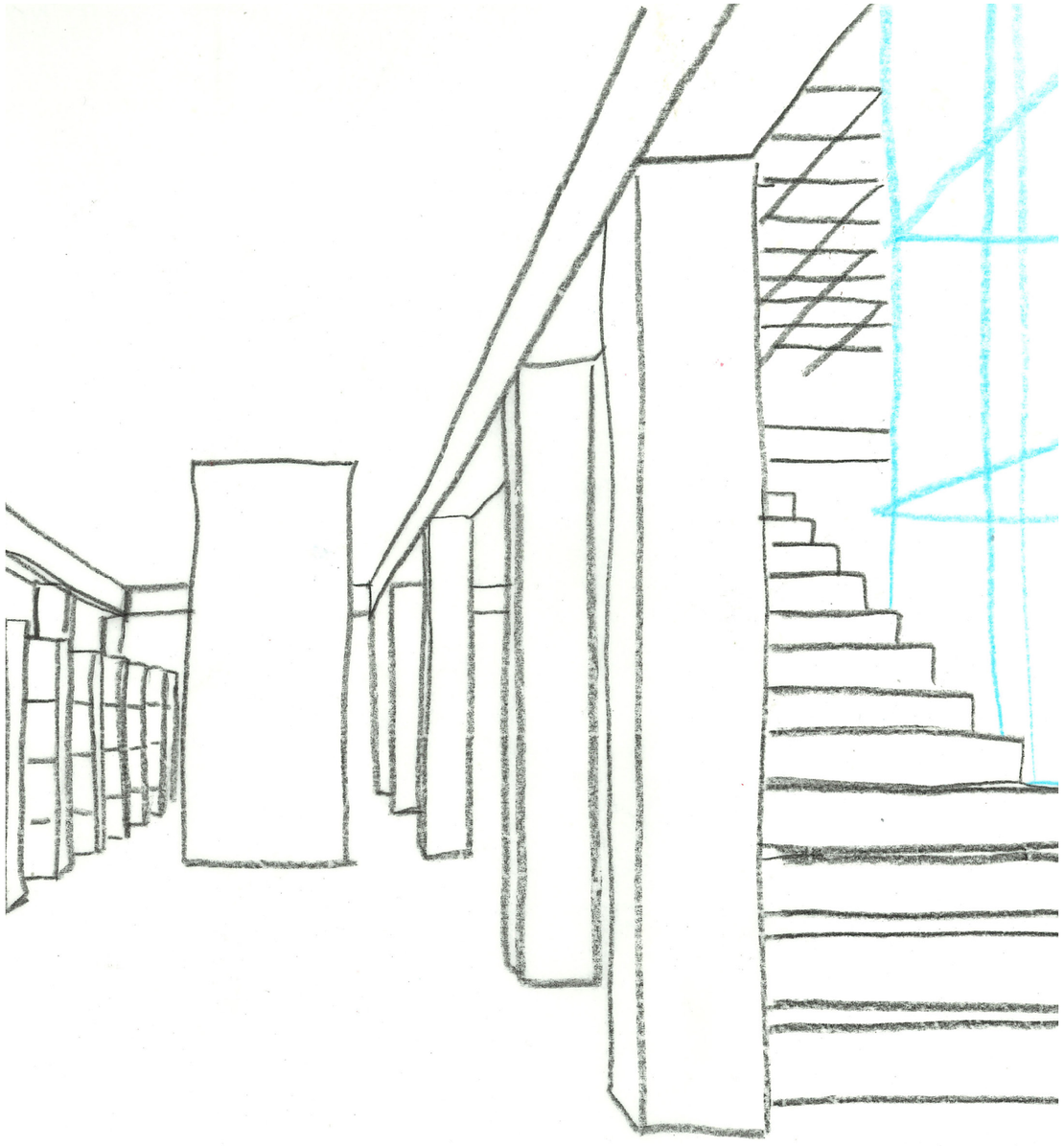
98. ***Market Interior Rendering.***
By Author.

The Archive

One of the main ways in which the proliferation of the Caribbean Sea diaspora in Canada can be preserved and maintained is by collecting materials which pertain to as well as speak to the Caribbean Sea diaspora's lived experiences. The idea of an archive was brought up throughout the research in conversations with Participant 4, as well as Tamara Toledo, and they both expressed that there was a lack of material in Spanish for people to enjoy. While the anthropological dimension of the Caribbean Cultural Commons is present, as culture is involved, it is not a direct focus, but it is a necessary portion of all cultural development.



99. ***Building Exploded Axonometric.*** By Author.



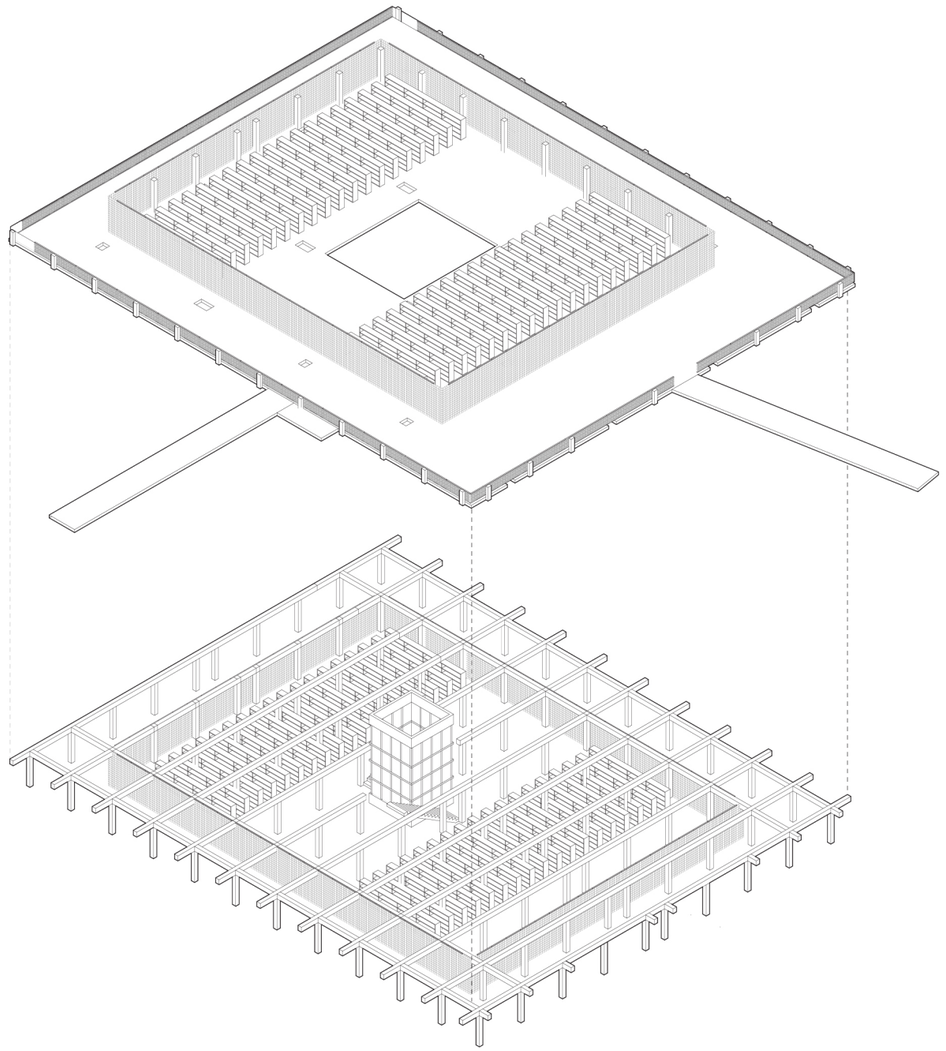
100. ***Archive View Sketch.*** By Author.



101. ***Archive Upper Floor Rendering.***
By Author.



102. ***Archive Lower Floor Rendering.***
By Author.



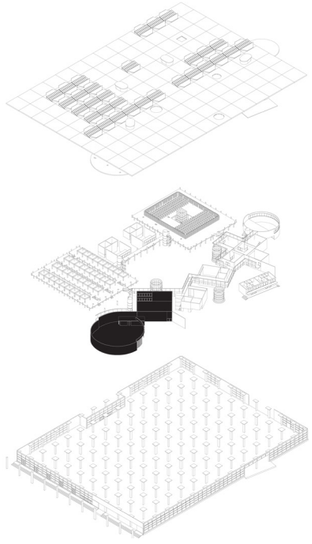
103. ***Archive Section Axonometric.***
By Author.



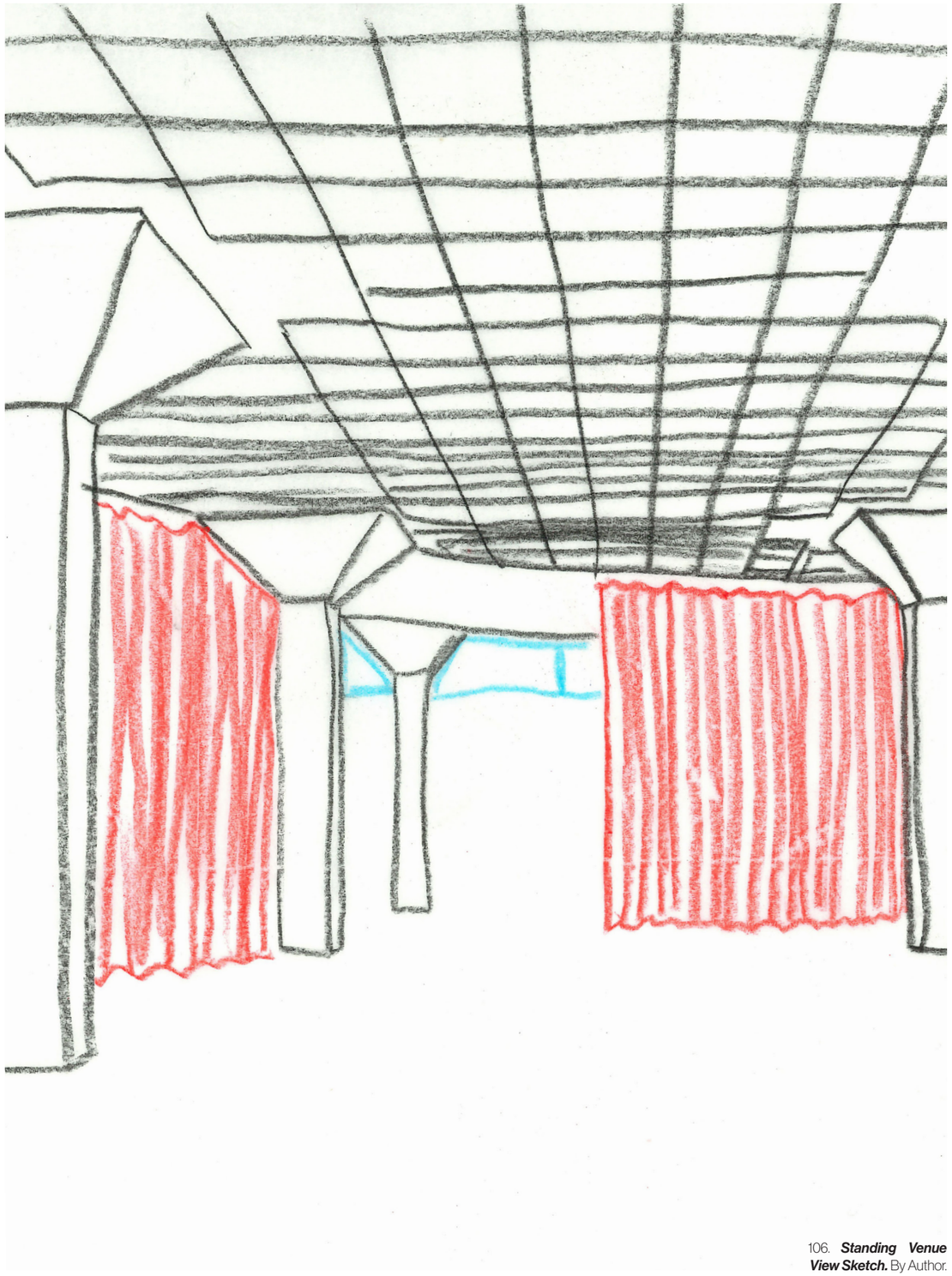
104. ***Archive Interior Rendering.***
By Author.

The Standing Venue

The Standing Venue is located along the western edge of the building to maximize its exposure to the adjacent park and protrudes from the rectangular building modules to increase its visibility and to create a separate entrance from the building's exterior so it can operate independently from the rest of the building's hours. The venue can be connected to the adjacent hall, making it able to expand or contract depending on event size. Events such as large dances or gatherings could occur here, as participants 1 and 2 expressed a need for spaces of this nature. It could also serve as a music venue for cultural festivals or gatherings which focus on oral histories, both ideas which were expressed by Carlos in chapter 3. From a reconciliatory perspective, the venue also has a roof garden atop the circular portion that extrudes beyond the traditional facade with a pollinator garden, echoing Heart Park's Indigenous placekeeping concepts, but integrating them within the building. Cross-programming between Indigenous and Caribbean groups that connect people through food or other cultural means can act as a way to create dialog with Indigenous peoples and do so in concrete and intentional ways.



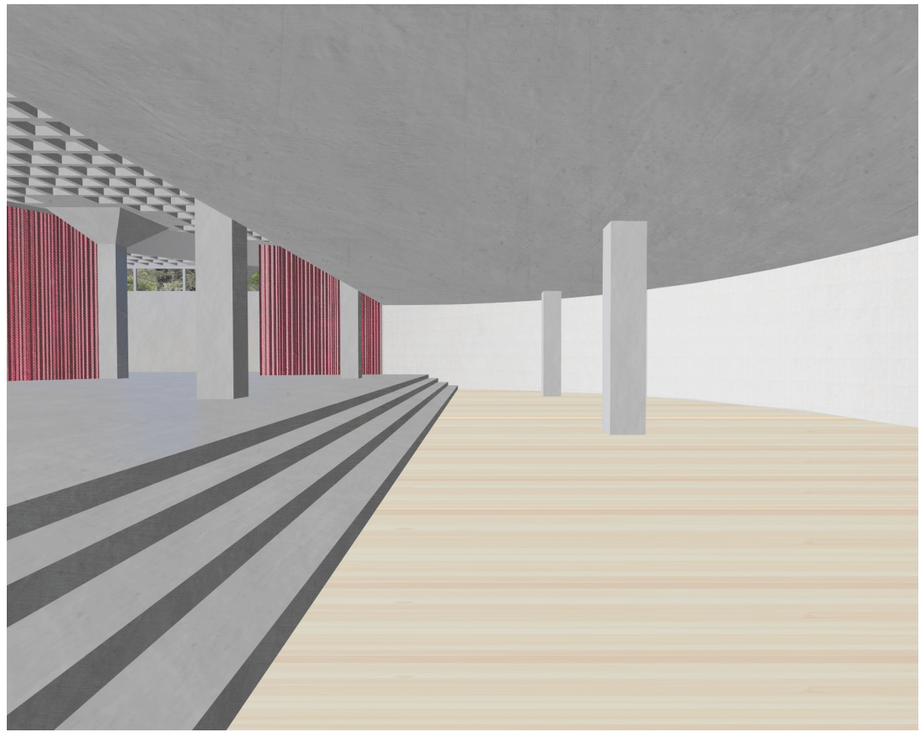
105. ***Building Exploded Axonometric.*** By Author.



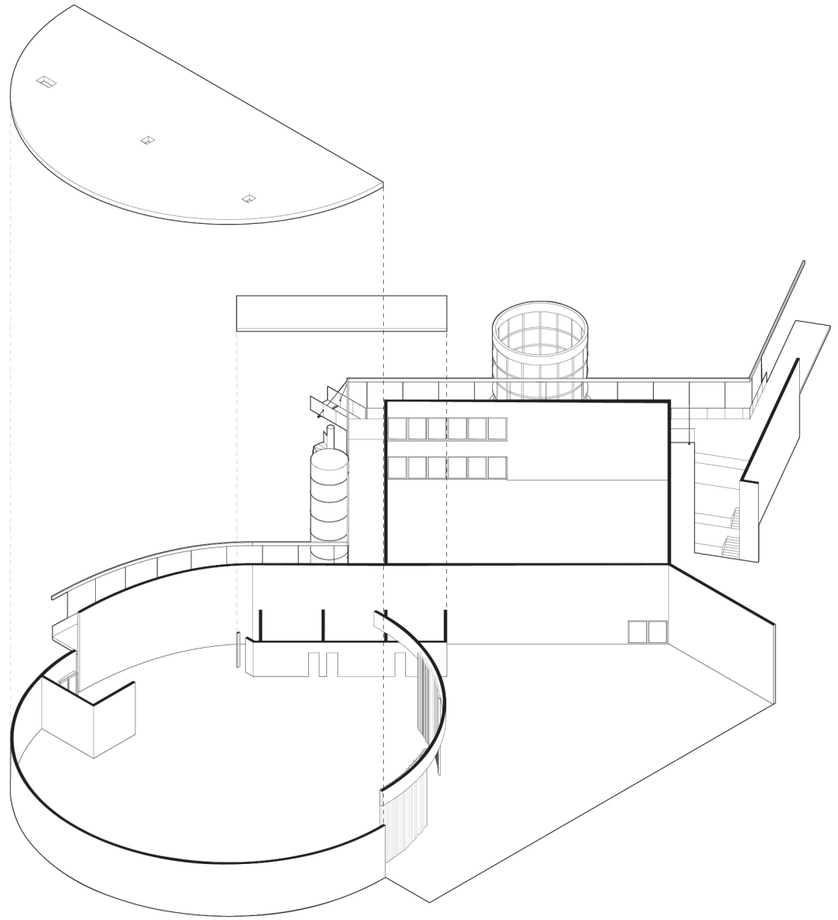
106. ***Standing Venue View Sketch.*** By Author.



107. ***Standing Venue Interior Rendering.***
By Author.



108. ***Standing Venue Interior Rendering.***
By Author.



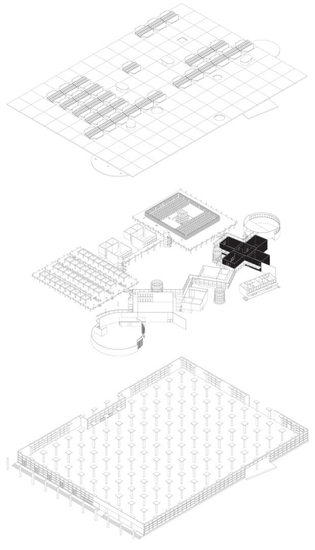
109. ***Standing Venue Exploded Axonometric.***
By Author.



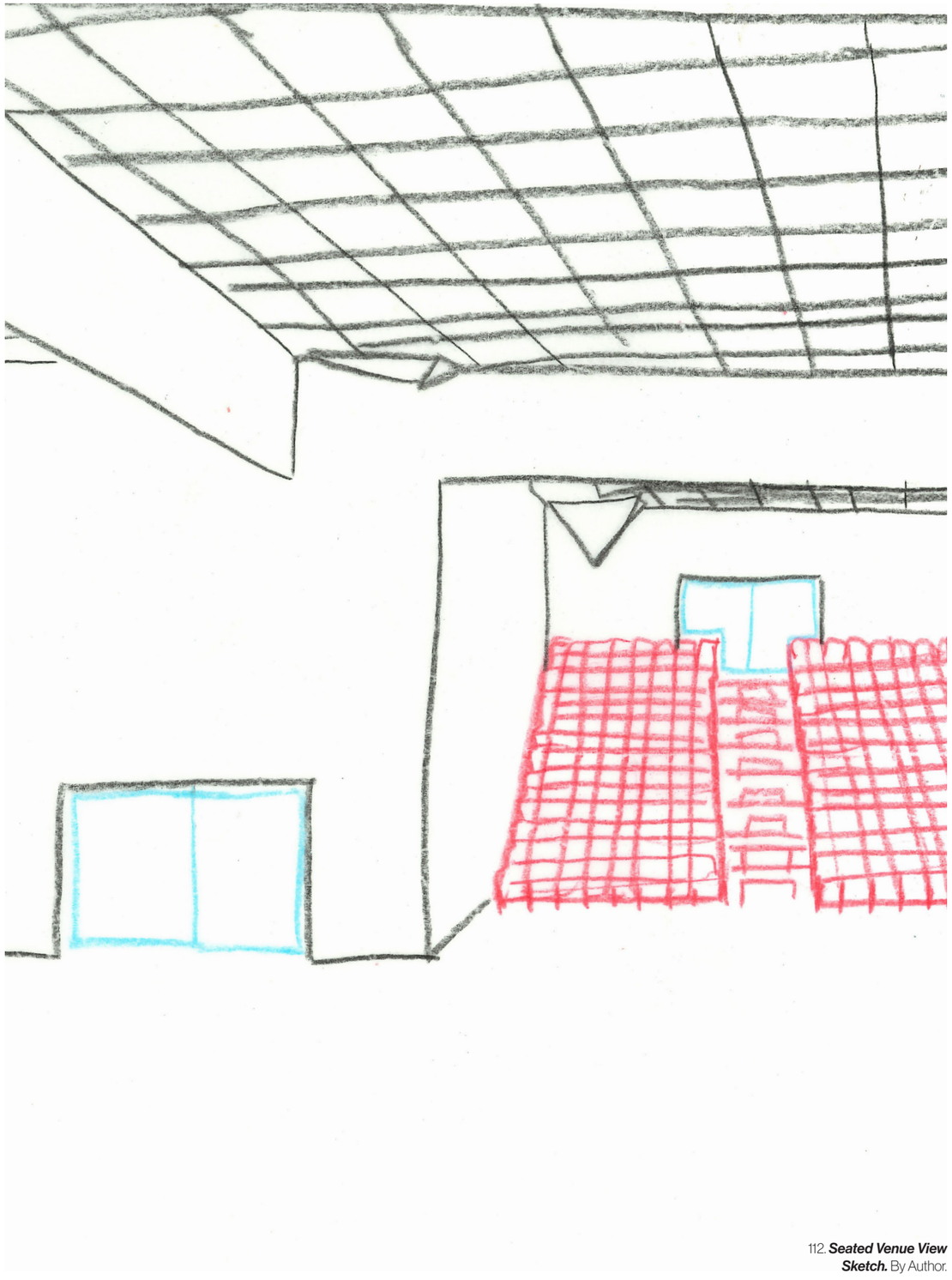
110. ***Standing Venue Interior Rendering.***
By Author.

The Seated Venue

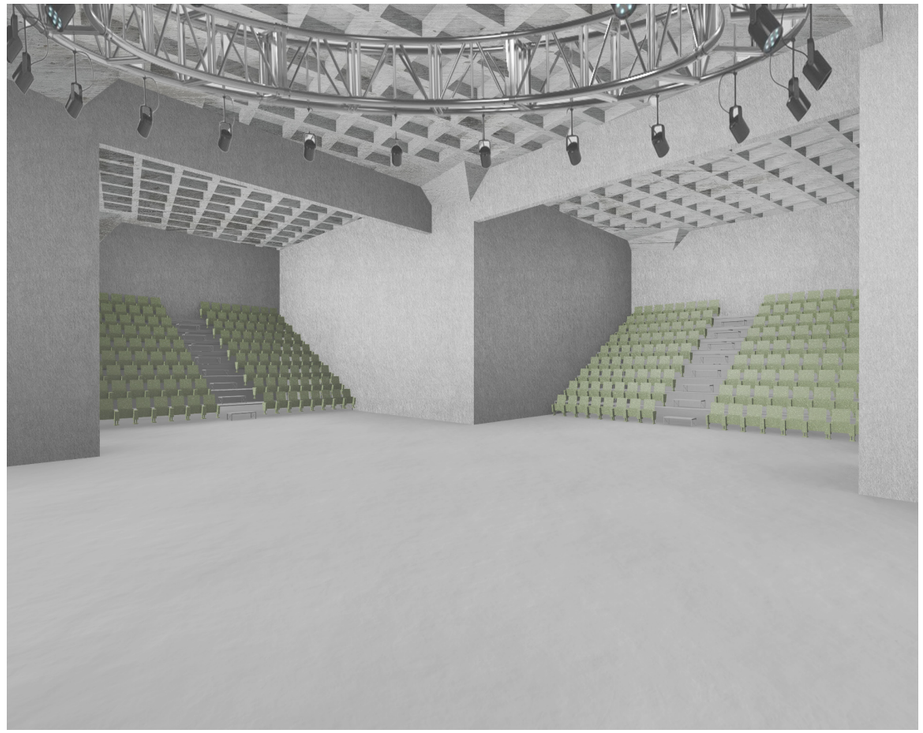
The seated venue consists of four retractable seating sections arranged in a cross shape, allowing them to be used independently or connected to each other by the use of retractable walls. Any combination of the walls can be used in order to have one, two, three, or four sections connected to view the same performance. The mezzanine level also connects to the top of the retractable seating and can be used as another access or egress point for each of the auditoria. Expressed by Tamara and also by Participant 4, a space for people to hold screenings, plays, and other such performances that would enrich the Caribbean Sea Diaspora.



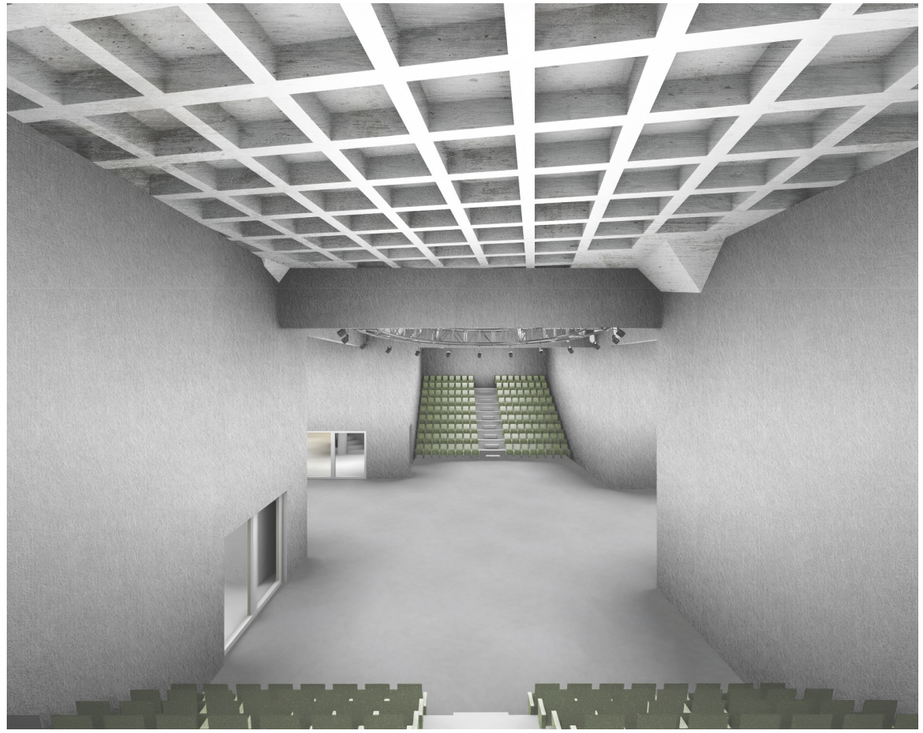
111. ***Building Exploded Axonometric.*** By Author.



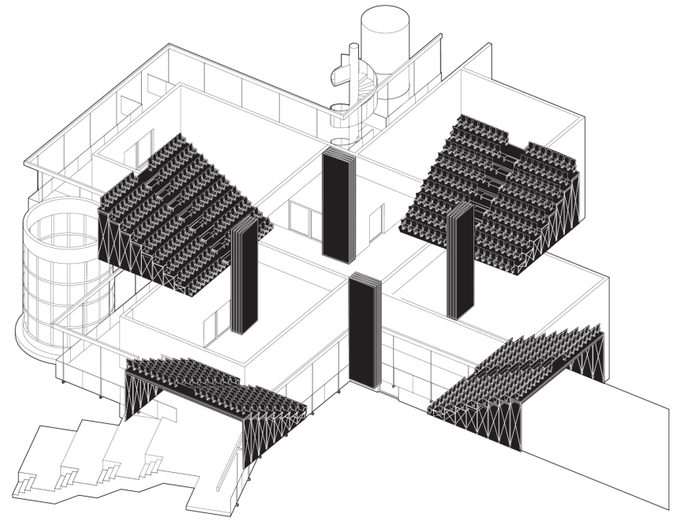
112. ***Seated Venue View Sketch.*** By Author.

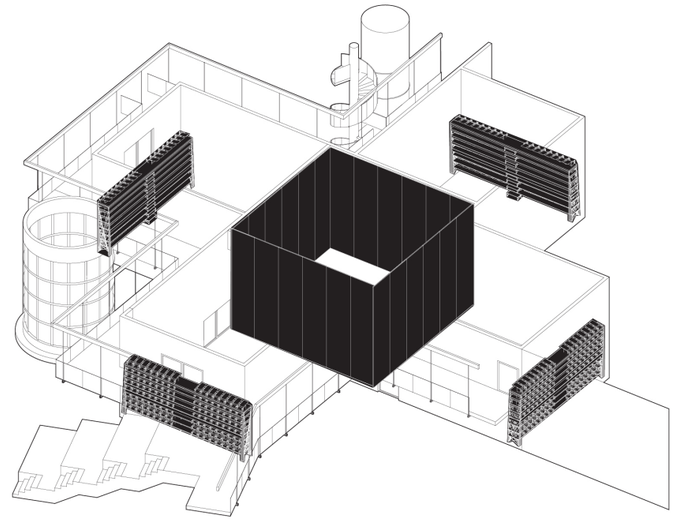


113. ***Seated Venue Interior Rendering.***
By Author.

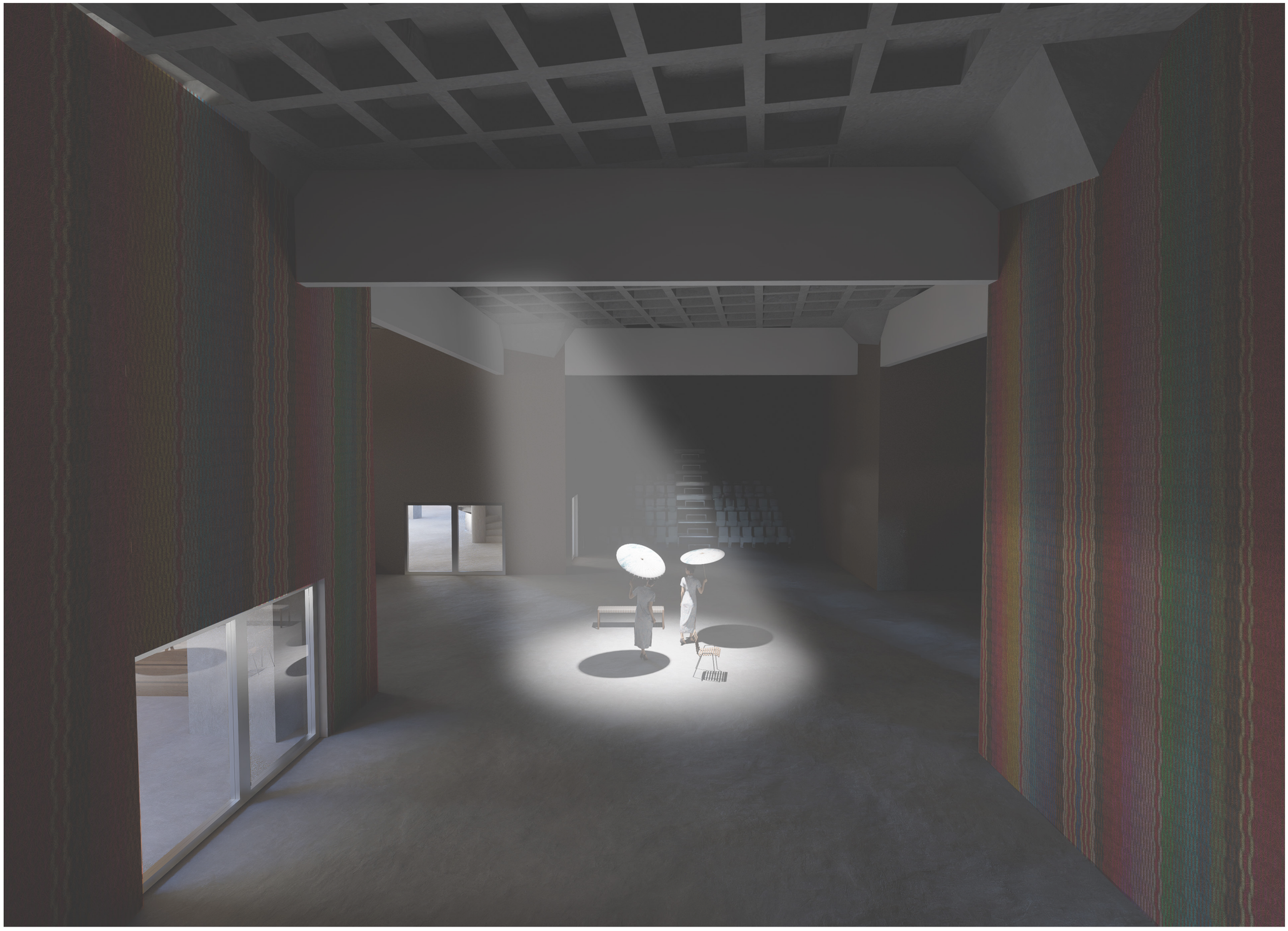


114. ***Seated Venue Interior Rendering.***
By Author.





115. ***Seated Venue Axonometric.***
By Author.



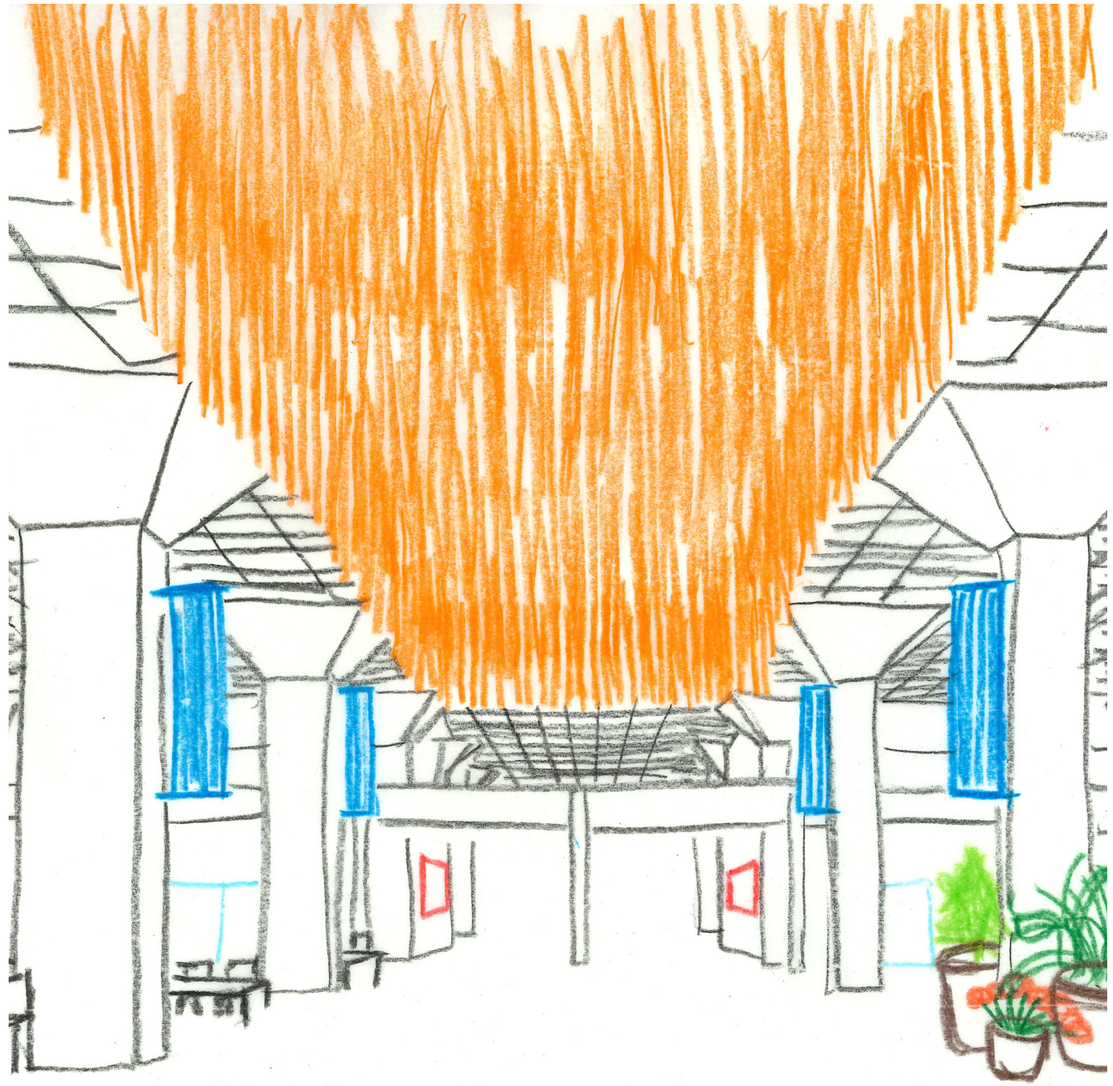
116. ***Seated Venue Interior Rendering.*** By Author.

The Central Common

Metaphorically, the Caribbean Sea is conceived as a field of connection throughout this thesis. Because of this, the centre of the building is kept quite open so that uses can change and evolve as time goes on. The common serves as a place for both sanctioned and unplanned activities. Things can spill over into the commons, whether it be a farmer's market which sets up adjacent to the market, an art fair which nestles itself between the archive and the gallery, or a days-long festival which builds a temporary stage in the centre of the common, the space can be adapted to a variety of different uses. This echoes the sentiments from interview participants 2 and 5, who believe there should be space for activities which are unsanctioned, and for people, especially young people, to have a space to spend time together.



117. ***Building Exploded Axonometric.***
By Author.



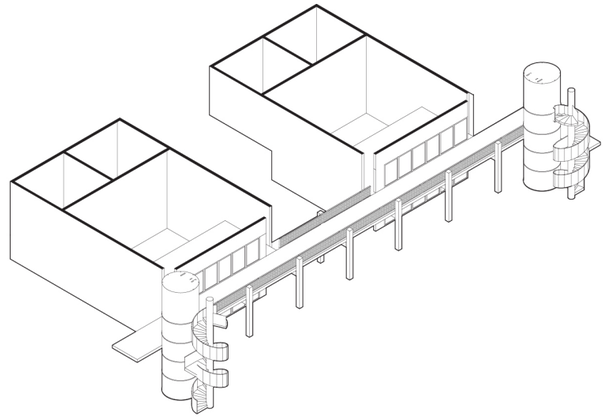
118. ***Central Common View Sketch.***
By Author.

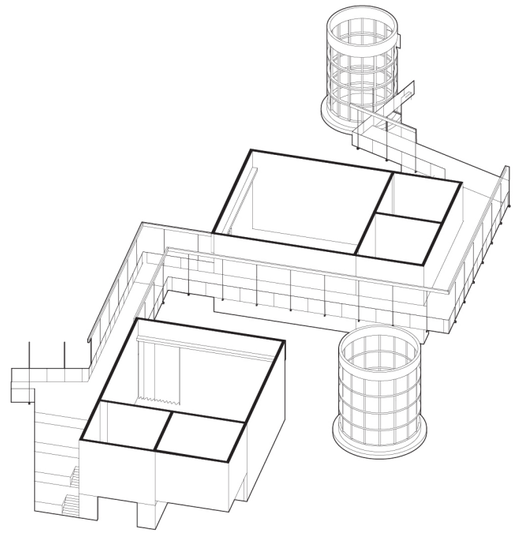


119. ***Central Common Rendering.*** By Author.



120. ***Central Common Rendering.*** By Author.





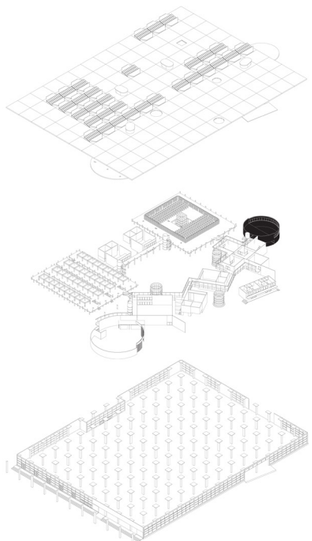
121. ***Central Common Axonometric.*** By Author.



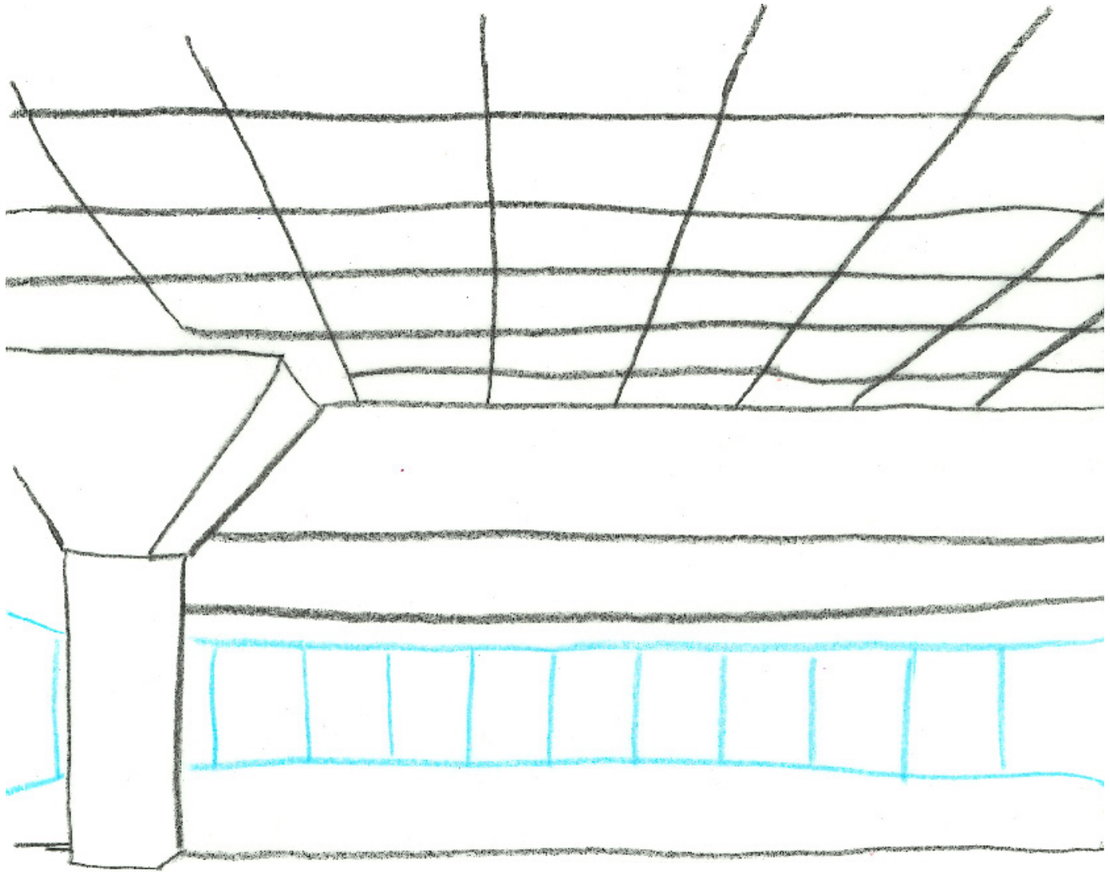
122. ***Central Common Interior Rendering.***
By Author.

The Permanent Gallery

The permanent gallery is conceived as a place where an exhibition that is present in longer timelines can occur, allowing for a designated place of display should the other spaces be appropriated for other uses beyond exhibition space. Joséphine and Tamara in Chapter 3 focused on the idea of display, and allowing a variety of artists and guest curators to enter the centre and expand the horizons of what is possible. This space is conceived to be in conjunction with the artists' studios, as a place of public display for guests of the institution. The volume is a circle, bookending and mirroring the standing gallery on the opposite side of the building in form and material.



123. ***Building Exploded Axonometric.***
By Author.



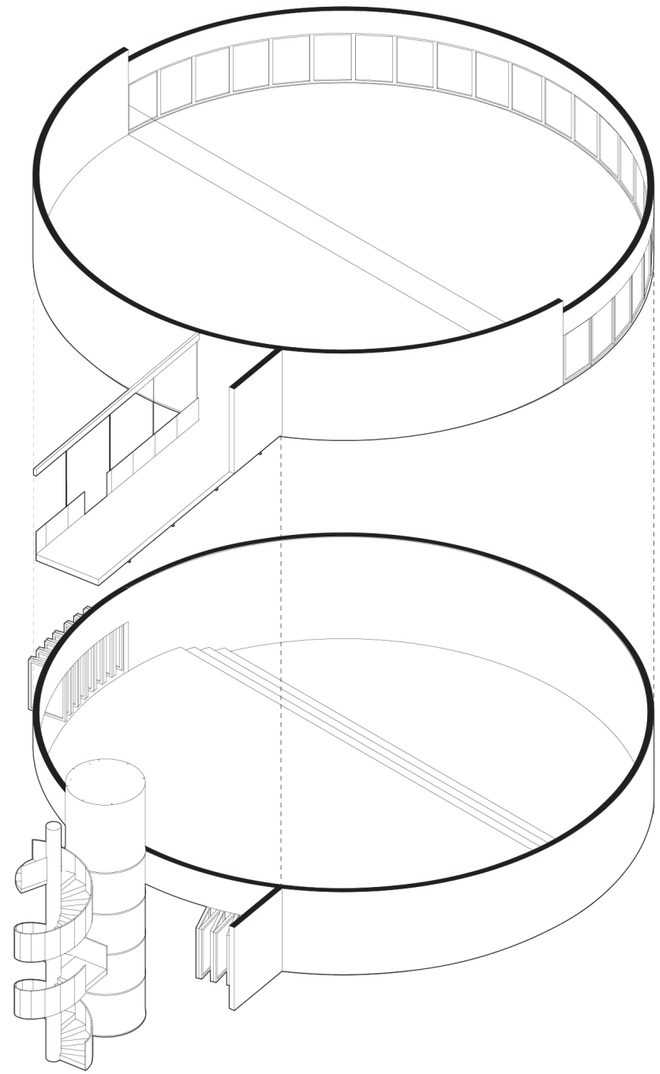
124. ***Permanent Gallery View Sketch.***
By Author.



125. ***Permanent Gallery Rendering.*** By Author.



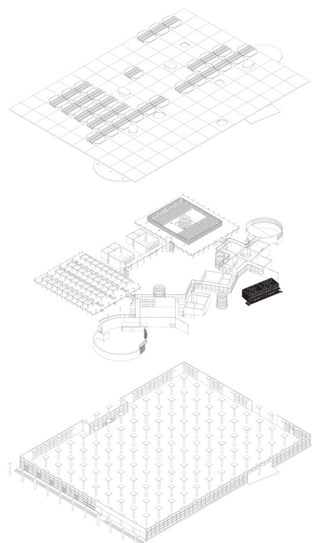
126. ***Permanent Gallery Rendering.*** By Author.



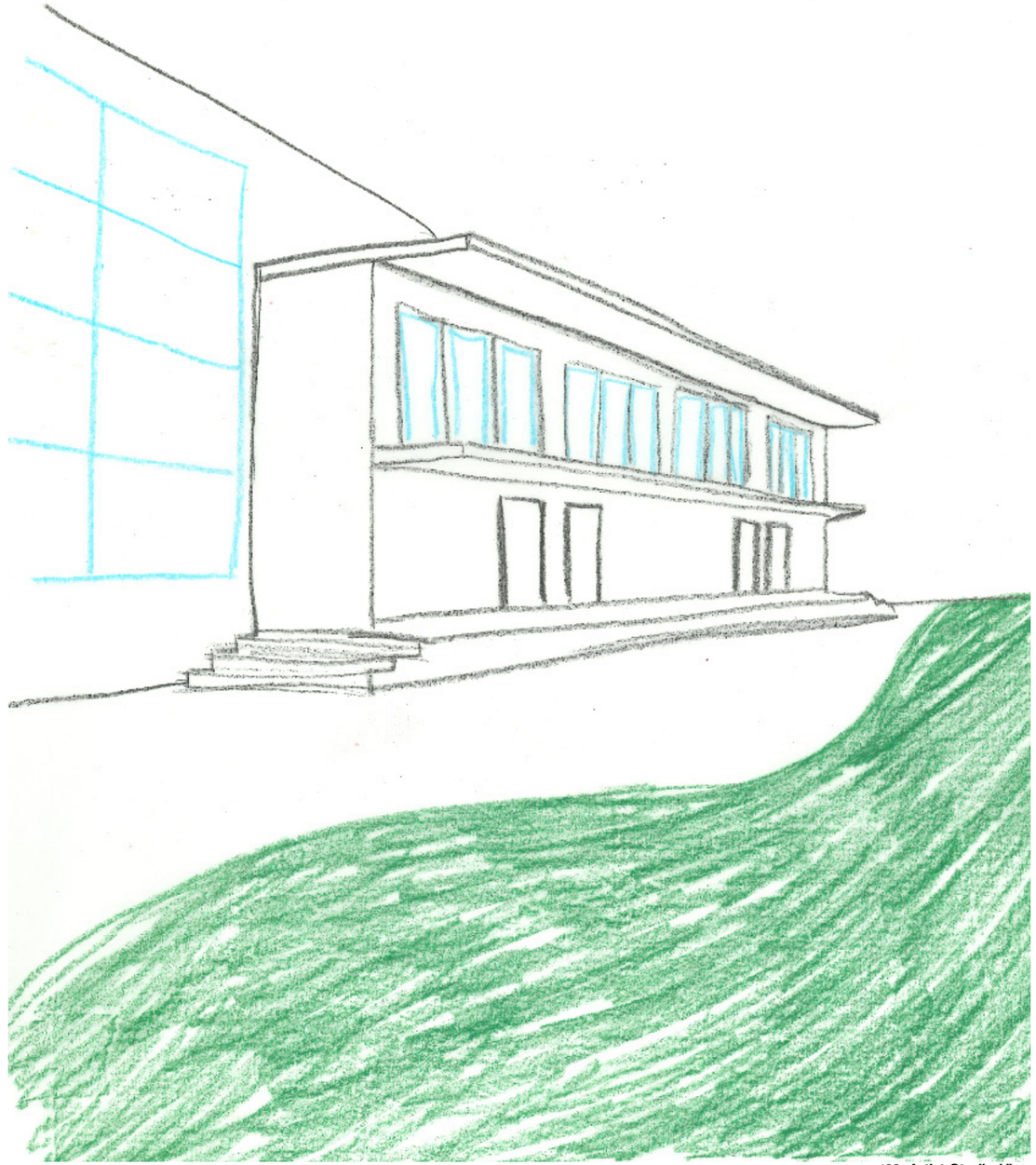
127. ***Permanent Gallery Axonometric.*** By Author.

The Artists' Studios

In order to construct an infrastructure for collaboration and collective agency, artists studios are constructed on the south side of the site, allowing for a place where guests of the institution can work and live, as well as make art that explores and reflects multplicities, as highlighted by Tamara. These small yet impactful places are an integral part of the ways that an institution can be continuously challenged, similar to Joséphine's approach and expansion goals at BAND gallery.



128. ***Building Exploded Axonometric.*** By Author.



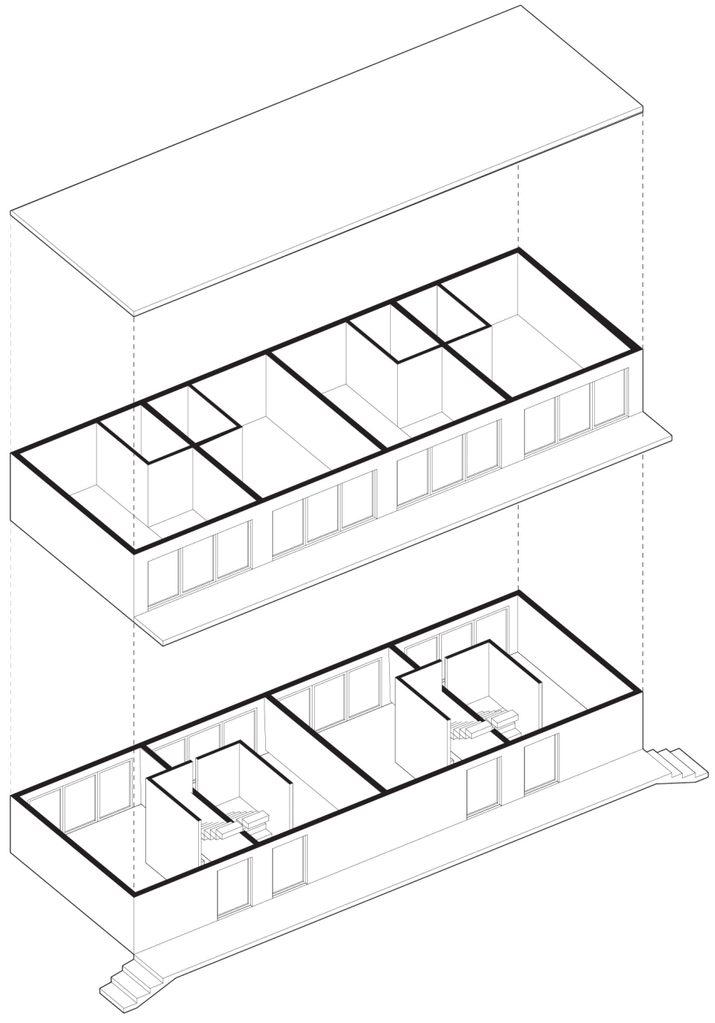
129. ***Artist Studio View Sketch.*** By Author.



130. ***Artists Studio Interior Rendering.***
By Author.



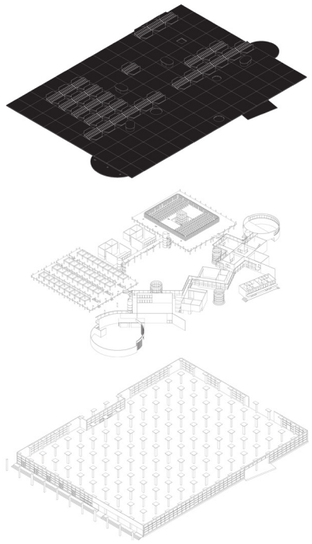
131. ***Artists Studio Interior Rendering.***
By Author.



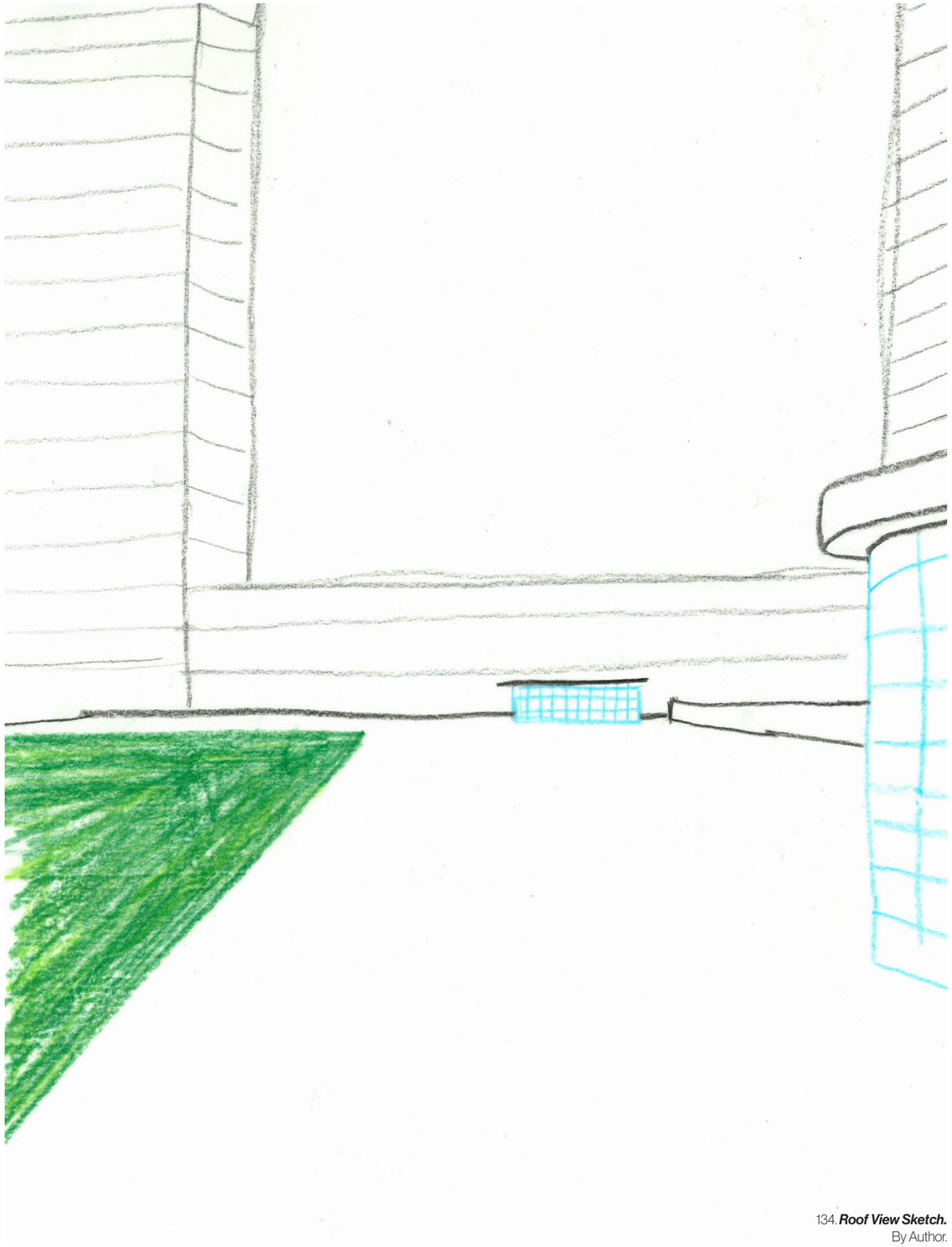
132. ***Artists Studio Axonometric.***
By Author.

The Roof

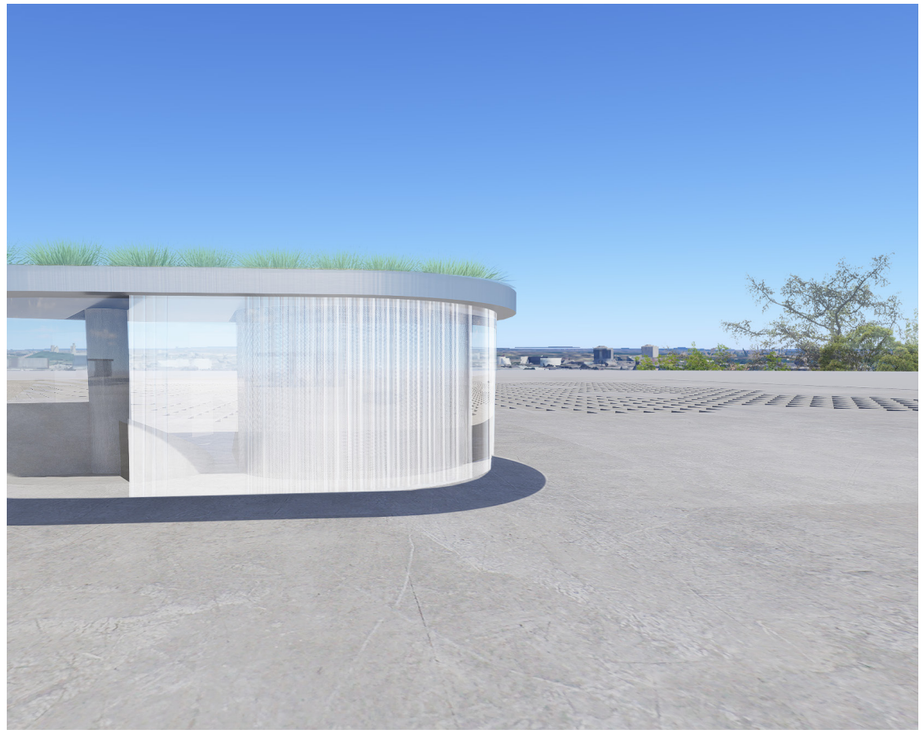
The existing roof structure is a very large and expansive area. As such, the roof area can also be maximized, offering the visitors of the centre and people who will live in the community another amenity they can enjoy. The roof is equipped with an intensive green roof system, which allows the roof to be utilized as an elevated park in some areas. The remainder of the areas which are not covered in a green roof are instead utilized for mechanical systems, skylights to the building below, or in places which would be difficult for people to access. As such, these remaining areas are filled in with photovoltaic panels, offsetting some of the energy the building draws from the grid.



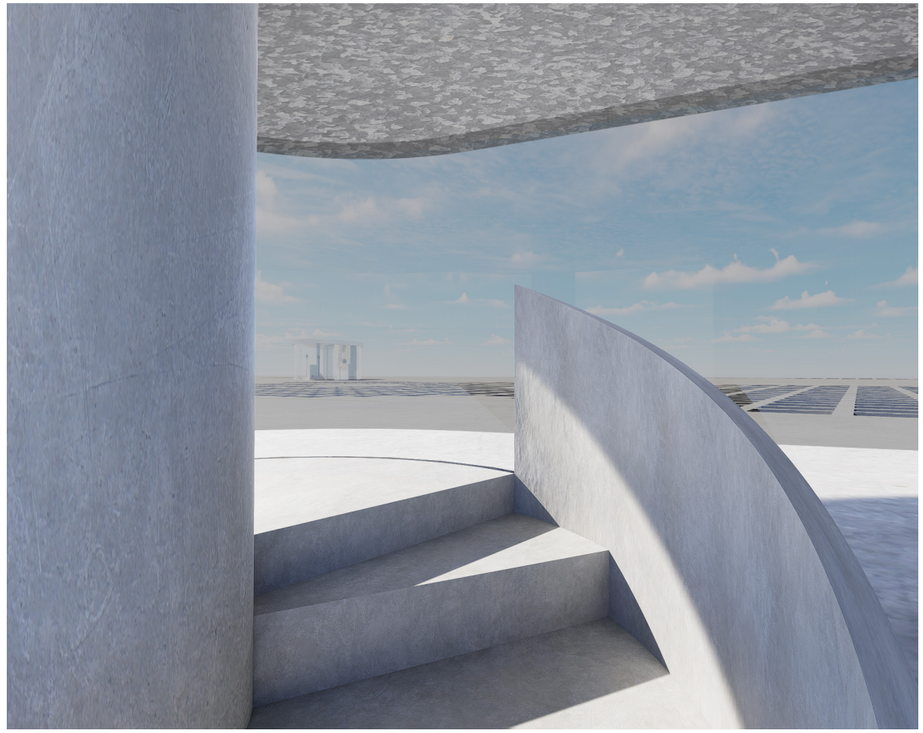
133. ***Building Exploded Axonometric.***
By Author.



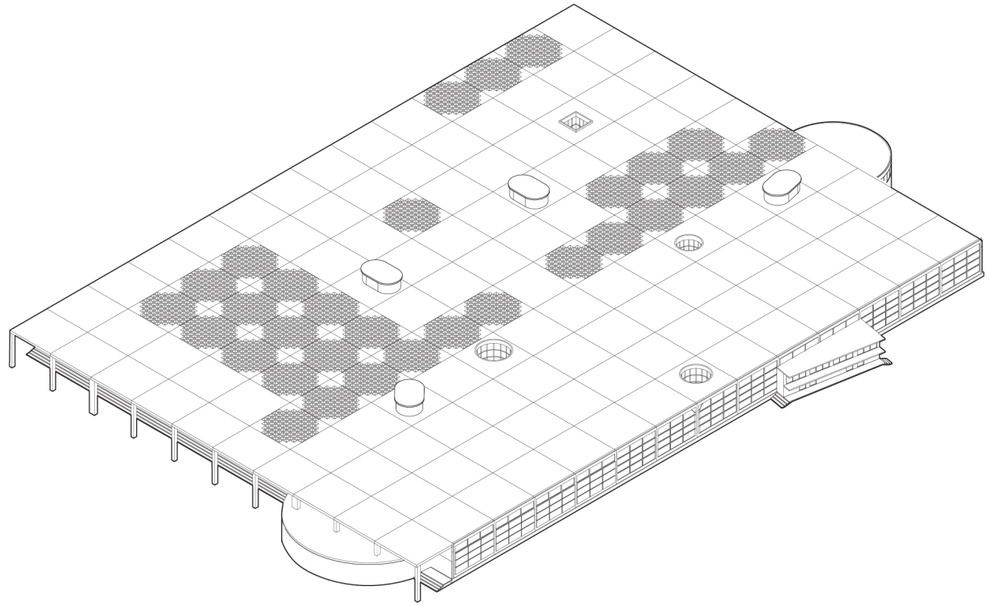
134. ***Roof View Sketch.***
By Author.



135. ***Roof Rendering.*** By Author.



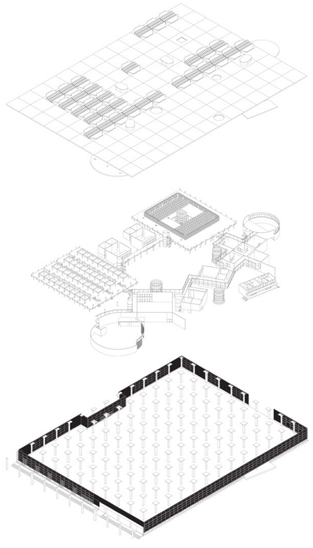
136. ***Roof Rendering.*** By Author.



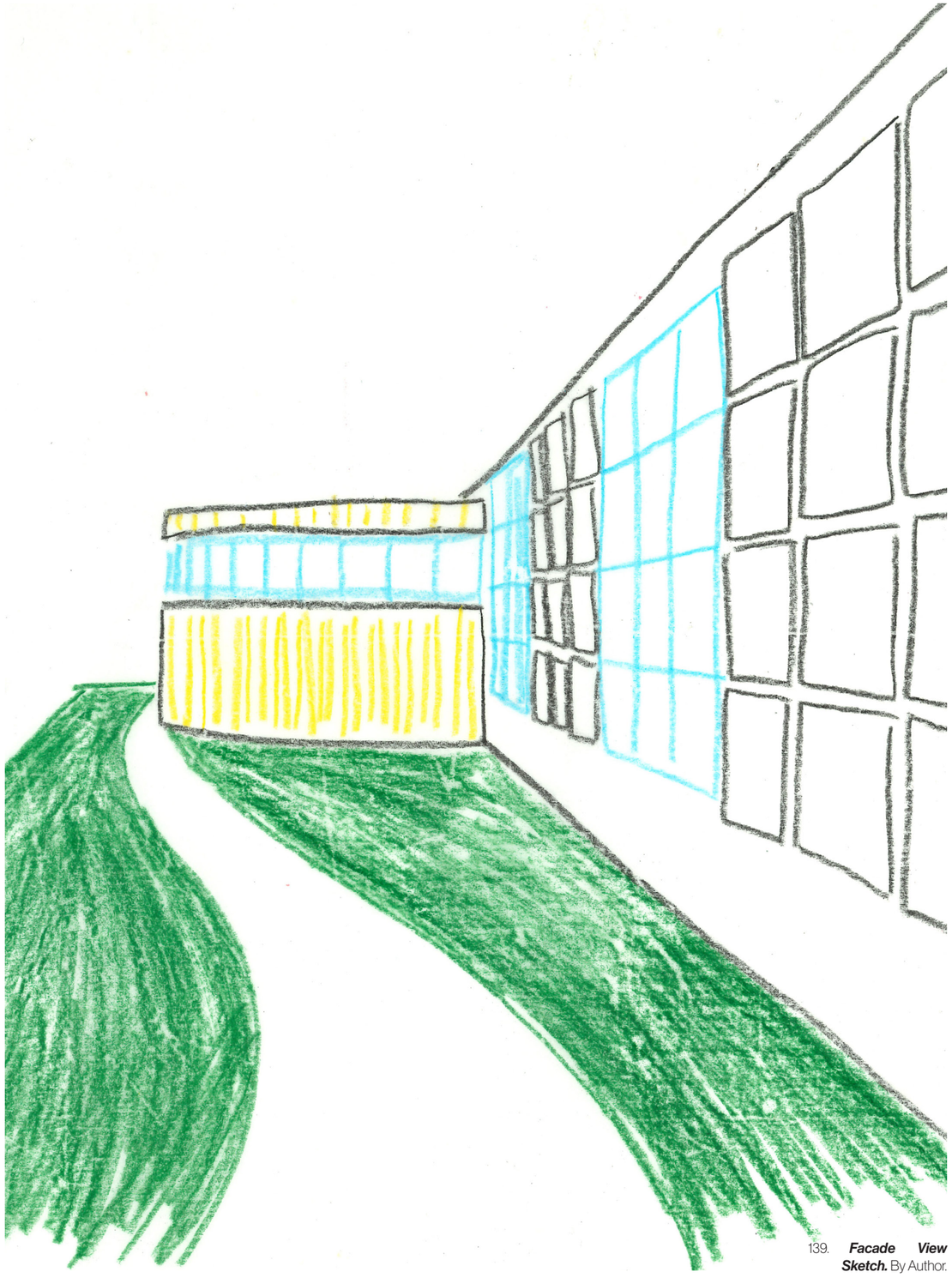
137. ***Roof Axonometric.*** By Author.

The Facade

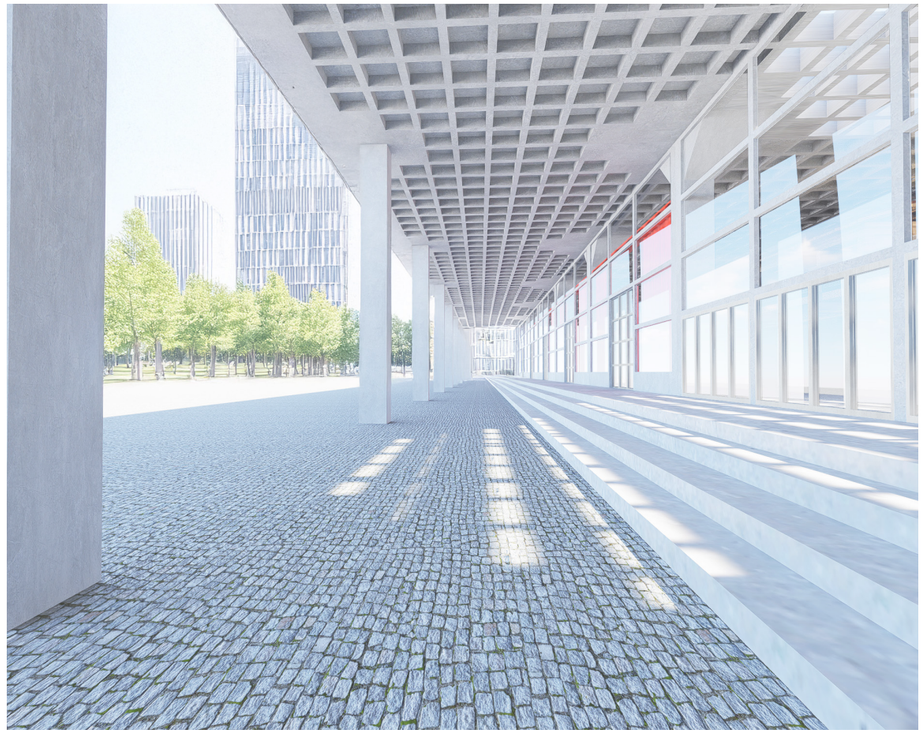
Rhythmically and aesthetically, the façade of the building already possesses a very unique and beautiful industrial aesthetic. The rawness of the cast concrete walls and roof offer an interesting juxtaposition to the warmth of the materials within—clay, wood, and tile. The exterior is hardy, but the interior is soft. As such, the façade interplays with ideas of transparency and opacity, as highlighted in the first chapter. Building users may feel the need to look inward and become opaque, or become more expressive and transparent. The mediation between transparency and opacity is achieved with the use of glazing—the transparent, existing concrete—opaque, and a series of in-between curtains which deal with the intermediate aspects of these two extremes. This echoes Glissant's ideas of transparency and opacity, and gives agency to the user, allowing them to draw or they can be open curtains depending on the needs and uses of the building, however, the curtains themselves can be thought of as a canvas in itself, where fabrics can be attached, embroidered on, patched, and reworked.



138. ***Building Exploded Axonometric.*** By Author.



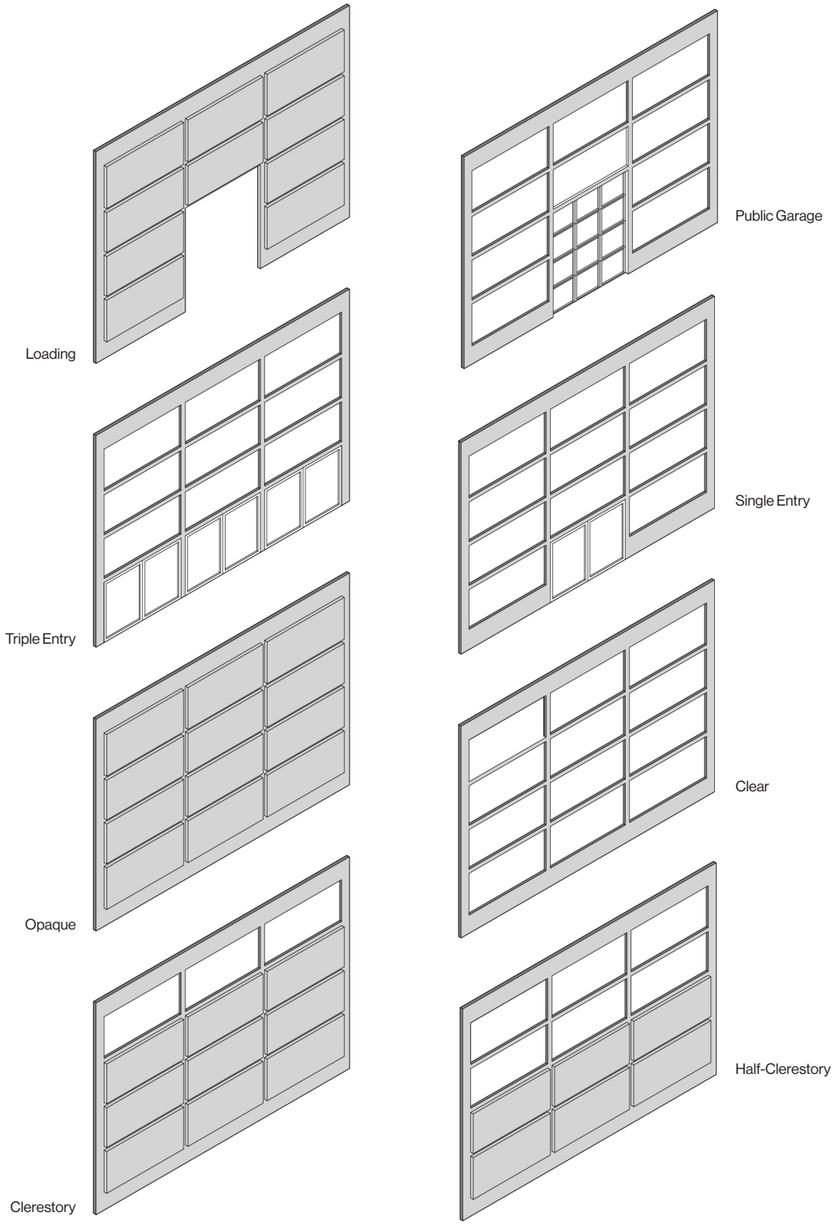
139. ***Facade View Sketch.*** By Author.



140. ***Central Common Rendering.*** By Author.



141. ***Central Common Rendering.*** By Author.

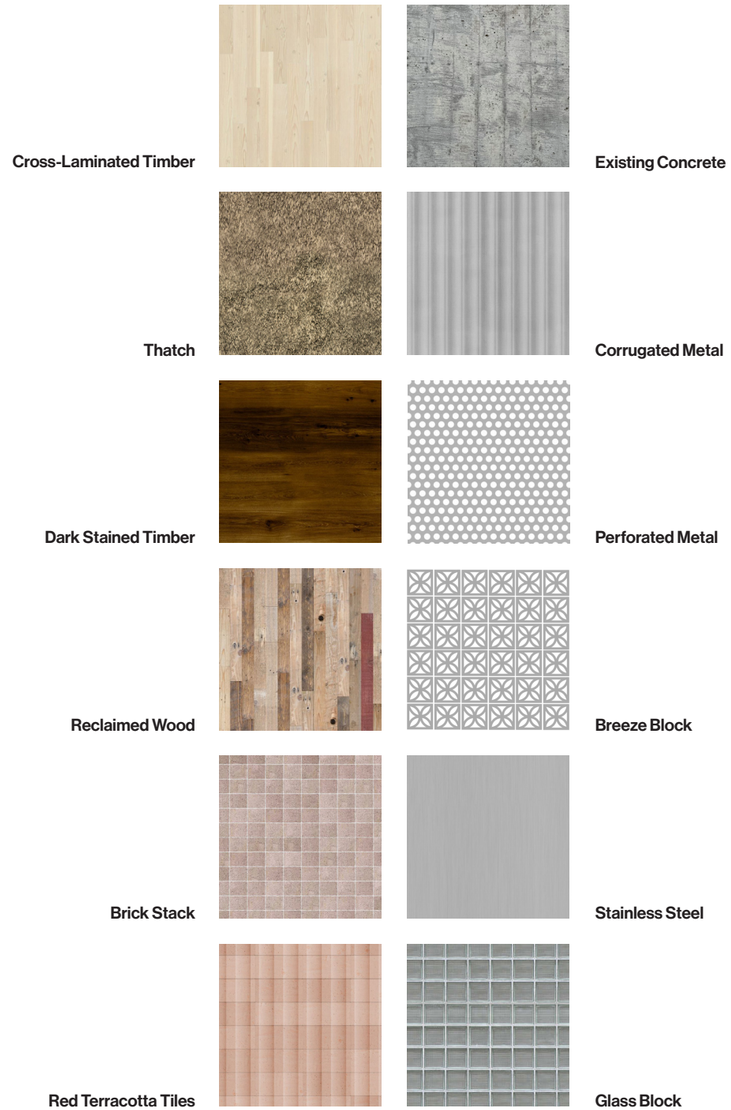


142. ***Facade Types Axonometric.*** By Author.

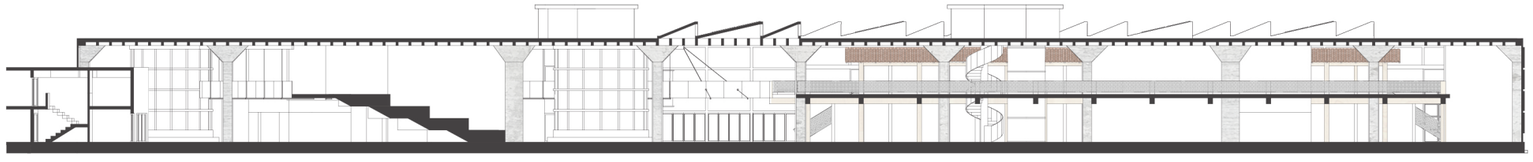
The Materials

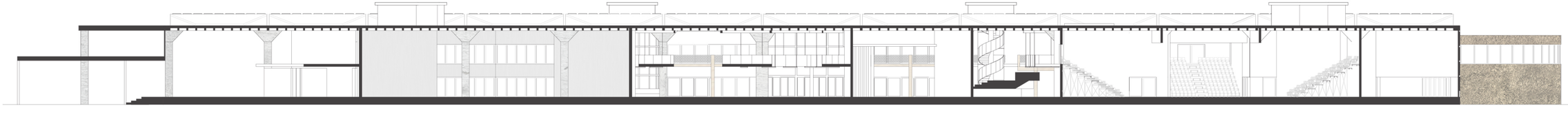
Typologically, one of the most widely shared characteristics of the Caribbean is its response to climate. In turn, the architectural and material responses to the climate are one of the most recognizable characteristics throughout the Caribbean Sea region. One of the benefits of this site is that the concrete construction is quite generous, so it allows for other materials to be seamlessly inserted into the design.

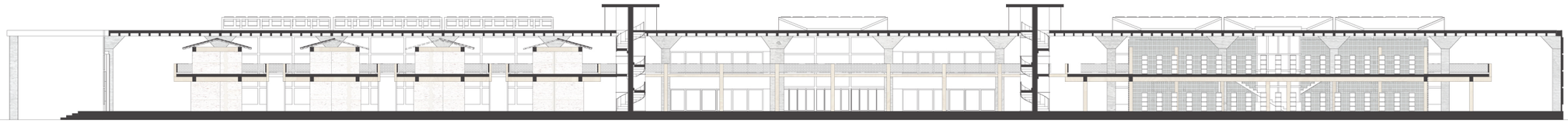
The materiality of the building is an aspect that involved much deliberation. The Caribbean Cultural Commons should hearken and reference the Caribbean and its typologies, though its reproduction in a foreign context should avoid being cliché. Because of this, the focus of the material use relied on the materials themselves and their arrangement was somewhat abstracted in order to avoid a faithful recreation of formal conditions. Referencing the Caribbean Organization Index was integral to this process, as it allowed material and qualities such as thatched roofs of the Indigenous institutions, or the breeze blocks in the Aruba National Archaeological Museum, to be identified and translated into the material needs of the building.

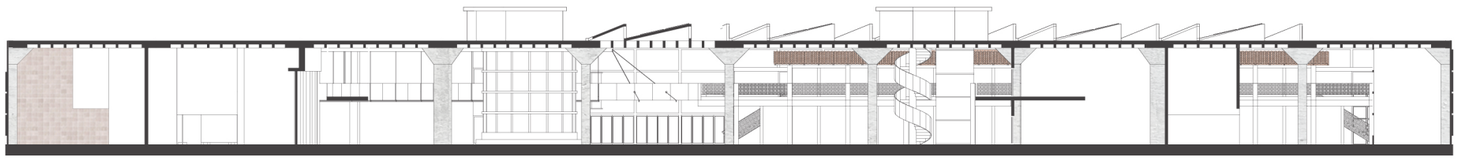


143. ***Material Palette.***
Source: Architextures









144. ***Rendered Sections.*** By Author.

The Landscaping

The exterior landscaping and planting scheme for the Caribbean Culture Commons attempts to bridge the gap between the Caribbean and Canadian contexts while being pragmatic about the planting choices The landscaping references plantings from the Caribbean Organization Index, but does not copy them. Certainly, tropical plants cannot be planted in the exterior, so planting choices must be congruous with Southern Ontario climate. While planting species that are not native to the hardiness scale is not feasible, the strategy taken for the planting choices is to select plants which will thrive at a 5b hardiness, but that possess the vibrancy, interest, and excitement of plants from the Caribbean Sea.

A series of courtyards are scattered throughout the building along the central axes, as well as the centre of the archive quadrant of the building. Courtyards puncture through the structure's concrete roof, allowing daylight to enter, and for landscaping to be inserted deeper into the building's interior.



'Coffee Cups' Elephant's Ear
colocasia esculenta



Salvia
salvia spp.



'Heart of the Jungle' Elephant's Ear
colocasia esculenta



Daylily
hemerocalis sp.



Trumpet Vine
campsis radicans



Bleeding Hearts
lamprocanos spectabilis



Hardy Hibiscus
hibiscus moscheutos



'Jack of Diamonds' Brunnera
brunnera macrophylla



Rose of Sharon
hibiscus syriacus



Foxglove
digitalis purpurea



'Grand Canyon Sunset' Iris
iris germanica



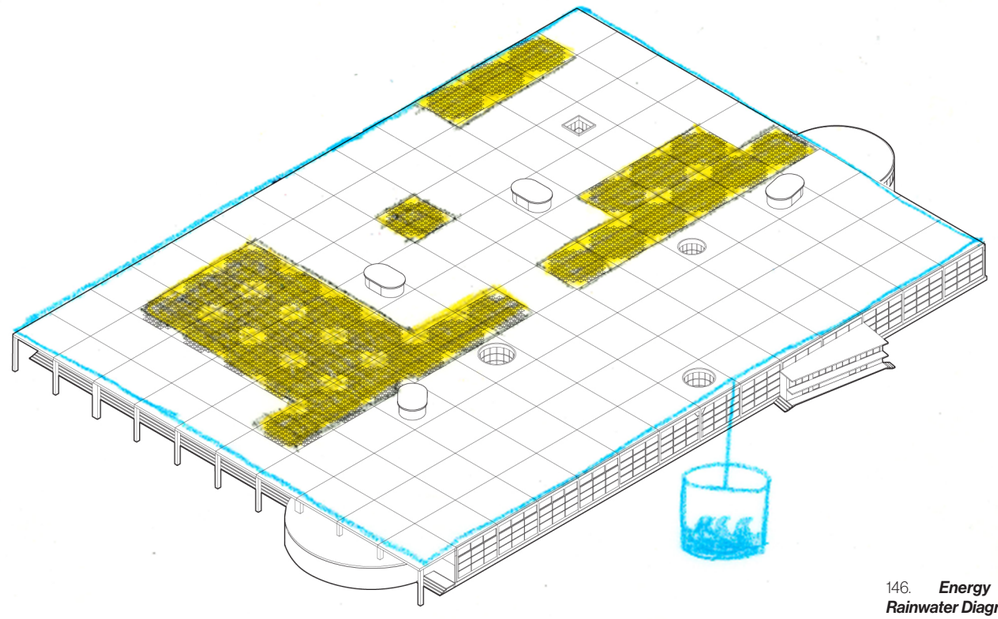
Japanese Forest Grass
hakonechloa macra

145. ***Landscaping Plants.*** By Author.

Energy and Rainwater

The building's large roof allows for an excellent opportunity for photovoltaic panels to be installed. The building's orientation is almost squarely along the cardinal directions, so solar panels can be easily installed, and there are few concerns with shading adjacent to the building as south of the building is the Depot South building, in which there is no indication that elevations will change.

The collection of rainwater is an important part of the building which also presents an opportunity due to the large roof structure. Rainwater from the roof is collected into an existing cistern underneath the building, and this water used for waterline the landscaping, as well as for grey-water toilet flushing.



146. ***Energy and Rainwater Diagram.*** By Author.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

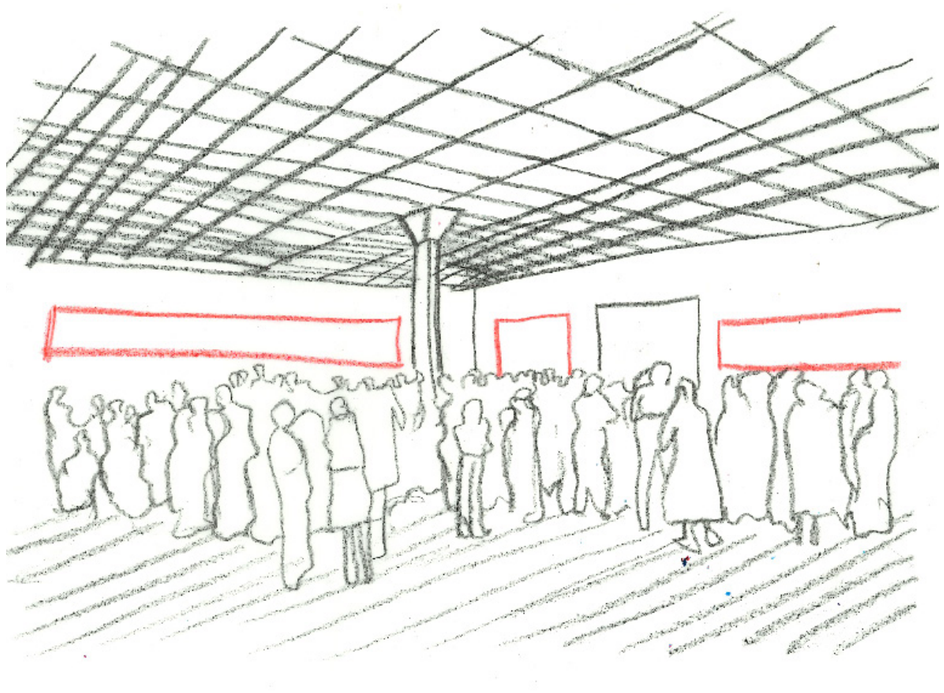
General Thoughts

Culture and identity are very fluid concepts. They are messy, overlapping, and difficult to pin down into a set of criteria or categories. However, this ever evolving and ephemeral quality is what makes them worth studying and safekeeping. The change in perspectives as people grow and shift help us become more aware of the world around us, and in turn more empathetic, understanding, and knowledgeable.

It is my hope that this thesis can act as a starting point for more culturally tailored spaces that while still inclusive, cater to the needs of the communities they are trying to serve first. This is not a way to segregate, but instead a way to create a hub where knowledge of a specific culture can live, whether its traditions are written, oral, or performed. Culture is such an enriching aspect of our lives, and I know that personally, my life has been made better by knowing and being open to other cultures, while still maintaining my identity as a Venezuelan. This ever-changing negotiation requires critical thinking but delivers growth.

In times as uncertain and difficult as the ones we currently face, networks of community can act as a net to catch us when we find it difficult to continue. The Caribbean Cultural Commons is an exercise in materializing this community, so that we may support each other slightly better than the day before.

The need for physical spaces in which people can feel they belong is necessary now more than ever. The digital age is just that—digital, and it can make us lose our sense of community in a physical sense, paradoxically disconnecting us from each other. Returning to physical environments where we can feel as though we are members of something bigger than us—a tradition that will carry on after us, and a connection that will live beyond our days—is what gives our lives meaning.



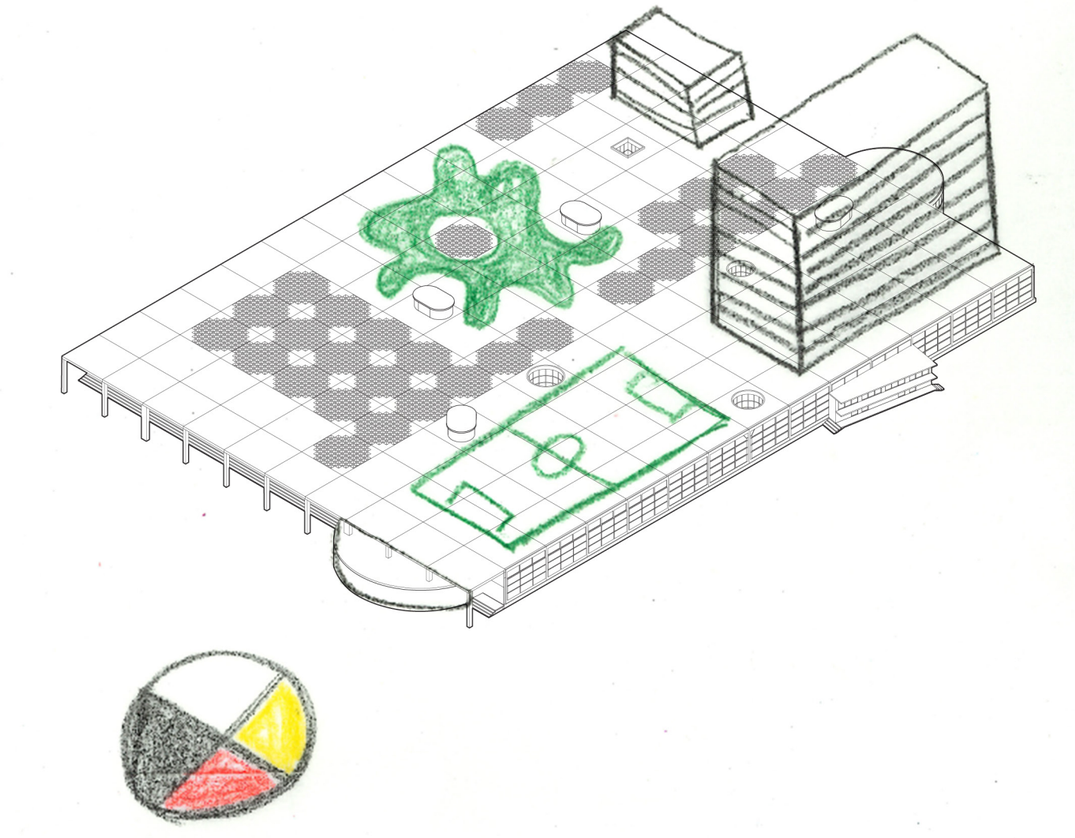
147. ***Image of Community Gathering.*** By Author.

Agency (in) Expansion

The only thing that I can be completely certain about in imagining the future uses of a building of this sort is that the needs of people will change over the years and decades. Culture and identity are inherently fluid, and creolizations between members of the diaspora and those outside of it will inevitably have an impact in decades to come. Our individual multiplicities will change, and the ability for this building to address them necessitated that the adaptability of the spaces in the building were of utmost importance. As Josephine mentions, architecture is a "co-conspirator", and if the building is treated as such, it should be allowed to imagine possibilities that are not conceived of yet. Since the existing building lends itself quite well to this premise, the interventions within attempt to activate and dynamize its interior space without actively prescribing a rigid use within it.

The building design attempts to create spaces that can be easily adapted, changed, or incorporated into other spaces to create larger, more useful, or more efficient spaces. This can be seen in the layout of the auditorium, as well as the construction of the superstructures which hold up the mezzanine floor. Giving participants agency to change things though the years as they see it is an important future-proofing mechanism of the building, as it will allow participants to self-determine the ways in which they would like the community and its spaces to continue.

From a reconciliatory perspective, the Caribbean Cultural Commons also acknowledges colonization from a design perspective and attempts to further connect these groups, acknowledging that in order to positively impact its community it must also establish a dialog with Indigenous people and culture as well.

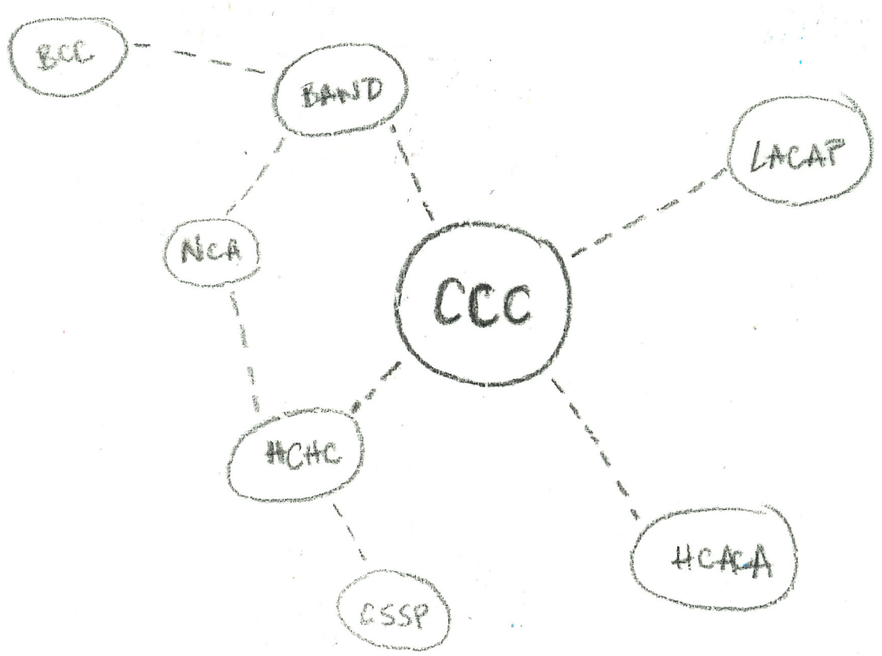


148. ***Potential Expansions Diagram.*** By Author.

Networks

While physical facilities are certainly a piece of the puzzle when it comes to creating a place that will attract people of the Caribbean Sea diaspora, the networks that the building allows to form are the main factor which will make the building one that is lively and worth going to. However, this has to happen in conjunction with the buildout of facilities, and will not be achieved simply by those who will this place to existence. Word of mouth and marketing will play a role to ensure that people from the diaspora are aware that this building even exists, and robust mechanisms for the dissemination of information such as social media accounts, websites, and maybe even apps will contribute to the success of anything which resembles a Caribbean Culture Commons. Existing institutions within the archipelago could also play a role in the governance structure of this building (see fig. 113), ensuring that the institution always remains squarely within the diaspora, and perhaps a steering committe made up of people within these institutions as well as members of the community could ensure that the institution remains attuned with the needs of the community as they evolve.

These virtual mechanisms will act in service of the physical space itself, and showcasing the plethora of events that take place in the building will thus bring more people who are interested into the physical space. Furthermore, the redevelopment of the surrounding Downsview West district will undoubtedly help to make the space more lively at all hours of the day, and this cultural facility is sure to become an amenity for the people who live within the neighbourhood. It is also possible that the archipelago expands even further to the buildings surrounding the Commons, as the facility becomes better equipped and people further appreciate as time goes on. At the end of the day, the Caribbean Sea Diaspora will only be as strong as the people within it who want to maintain it and foster it for future generations. By defining these networks and making them more pronounced within the City of Toronto, a reframing of perceptions about the Caribbean Sea diaspora would entrench them within the fabric of the city, establishing a place that feels closer to home for those who have left it. By seeing the humanity in people and having a place to show what that means, the Caribbean Culture Commons will redefine what it means to be a member of the diaspora.



149. ***Networks Diagram.*** By Author.

Afterword

In the preface to this thesis, painting was introduced not only as a formative personal encounter but as a way of understanding how identity is constructed, layered, and carried forward through time. That encounter with Basquiat's A Panel of Experts revealed painting as a palimpsest: a surface repeatedly worked, obscured, overwritten, and returned to. Marks are added, erased, and re-inscribed, yet traces of what came before persist beneath each new gesture. Meaning accumulates not through purity or completion, but through density, contradiction, and repetition.

This thesis ultimately proposes that the Caribbean Cultural Commons operates in much the same way. Like the painted canvas, the building is conceived not as a finished object but as a layered construct shaped by time, use, and memory. The adaptive reuse of the existing structure foregrounds this condition explicitly. The building already carries the weight of prior functions, material histories, and spatial logics. Rather than erasing these traces, the project allows them to remain visible, to be drawn over and reinterpreted. New programs, materials, and spatial interventions are introduced not to overwrite the past, but to enter into dialogue with it. In this sense, the building becomes a palimpsest of identity, one where previous inscriptions are not liabilities to be concealed, but foundations upon which new cultural expressions can emerge.

This approach reflects a broader understanding of culture itself. Cultural identity, particularly within diasporic contexts, is not static or singular. It is continuously reworked through migration, translation, and encounter. Traditions evolve, languages shift, practices hybridize, and new forms of expression emerge. Like paint layered upon paint, cultural forms may be altered, partially obscured, or reframed, but they are rarely erased entirely. They persist through memory, repetition, and collective practice, provided there is space for them to do so.

The Caribbean Cultural Commons is envisioned as that space: a place where culture is not fixed in vitrines or confined to episodic performance, but allowed to live, adapt, and accumulate meaning over time. By resisting rigid programmatic prescriptions and instead prioritizing flexibility, appropriation, and user agency, the building acknowledges that future cultural expressions cannot be fully anticipated. Just as Basquiat's canvas bears evidence of revision and reconsideration, the Caribbean Cultural Commons is designed to accept change as a fundamental condition rather than a threat to coherence.

The impossibility of total erasure carries ethical weight. The building's layered condition mirrors the enduring legacies of colonization, displacement, and resilience that shape both the Caribbean Sea diaspora and the Indigenous territories on which this project is situated. These histories cannot be painted over without consequence. Acknowledging them and allowing their traces to remain legible is essential to any project that seeks to engage meaningfully with identity and belonging. The Commons does not claim to resolve these histories, but it does attempt to create a framework in which dialogue, co-presence, and shared authorship can occur.

In this way, the project reframes architecture not as a neutral container, but as an active participant in cultural continuity. The building becomes capable of holding contradictions, accommodating growth, and sustaining memory. Its value lies not in permanence as stasis, but in permanence as capacity; the capacity to be reworked, reoccupied, and reimagined without losing the traces that give it depth. By treating the building as a palimpsest, the Caribbean Cultural Commons proposes a model of cultural space where identity is allowed to persist precisely because it is allowed to change.

Bibliography

"1780 Lower Estate Sugar Works Museum in British Virgin Islands." *What's On In British Virgin Islands*, n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.whatsoninbritishvirginislands.com/1780-lower-estate-sugar-works-museum/.

"2021 Census: 2A-R." Accessed October 27, 2025. https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/statistical-programs/instrument/3901_Q8_V2.

"A New Vision for Museums: Anticipating and Activating Change in the Canadian Museum Sector." Reconsidering Museums, 2021.

"About." *Grenada National Museum*, n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://museum.gd/about/.

"About." *National Gallery of Jamaica*, August 21, 2009. https://nationalgalleryofjamaica.wordpress.com/about/.

"About." August 7, 2008. https://web.archive.org/web/20080807182947/http:/www.sdnp.org.gy/wrma/about.htm.

"About LACAP // Latin American-Canadian Art Projects." Accessed October 17, 2025. https://lacap.ca/about-lacap/.

"About Us." *Hispanic Canadian Heritage Council*, July 10, 2014. https://hispaniccanadianheritage.ca/about-us/.

"About Us - Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples." Accessed October 27, 2025. https://spanishservices.org/en/about/.

"About Us – Nia Centre for the Arts." Accessed October 20, 2025. https://niacentre.org/about-us/.

admin. *Harry L. Johnson Museum | Saba Tourism*. June 29, 2018. https://www.sabatourism.com/museums/the-harry-l-johnson-museum/.

Administrator. "St-Laurent Du Maroni - Dark Tourism - the Guide to Dark Travel Destinations around the World." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.dark-tourism.com/index.php/1324-camp-de-la-transportation-st-laurent.

Amuseum Naturalis. "Amuseum Naturalis." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://amuseumnaturalis.com/.

ArchitectureAu. "Critical Relationalism, Constellations, and Community: David T. Fortin on Decolonizing Architecture." Accessed October 17, 2025. https://architectureau.com/articles/critical-relationalism-constellations-and-community-david-t-fortin-on-decolonizing-architecture/.

"Arquitectura de Bellavista « El Museo « Museo Nacional de Costa Rica." *Museo Nacional de Costa Rica*, n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.museocostarica.go.cr/museo/arquitectura-bellavista/.

"Art Center, Port-Au-Prince, Haïti | Aedifica Projects." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://aedifica.com/en/projects/centre-dart-port-au-prince-haiti.

"Aruba Archaeological Museum." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.aruba.com/us/explore/archaeological-museum.

BAND GALLERY. "Black Artist & Arts Professional Network." Accessed October 20, 2025. https://www.bandgallery.com/artist-newsletter.

Beeldende Kunst – surinaamsmuseum. n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.surinaamsmuseum.net/beeldende-kunst/.

Canada Lands Company. "Downsview West District Community Engagement Report." Canada Lands Company, January 23, 2024. https://downsviewwest.ca/resources.

Canadian Centre for Architecture. "Partial View of the Venezuelan Pavilion, Expo 67, Montréal, Québec." 1967. https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/search/details/collection/object/425976.

Canadian Centre for Architecture. *The Museum Is Not Enough*. Sternberg Press, n.d.

Centre, UNESCO World Heritage. "Colonial City of Santo Domingo." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/526/.

CMHC. "Housing Market Information Portal." Accessed October 20, 2025. https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/Table?TableId=2.2.11&GeographyId=2270&GeographyTypeId=3&DisplayAs=Table&Geogra-

ghyName=Toronto#October.

"Curacao Museum Kura Hulanda Curacao." April 14, 2015. https://web.archive.org/web/20150414125431/http:/www.kurahulanda.com/en/museumx.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. University of Minessota Press, 1987.

"Discover the Artistry of Morne Fortune Museum & Art Gallery." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://evendo.com/locations/saint-lucia/castries/attraction/morne-fortune-museum-art-gallery.

"Domaine et musée de la Pagerie | Fondation pour la memoire de l'esclavage." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://memoire-esclavage.org/domaine-et-musee-de-la-pagerie.

EDIFICIO – Museo Anahuacalli. n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://museoanahuacalli.org.mx/museo/edificio/.

"Edificio Patrimonial | Museo Para La Identidad Nacional MIN." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.min.hn/edificio.

Editor. "The Museum of the Haitian National Pantheon · Visit Haiti." *Visit Haiti*, July 21, 2019. https://visithaiti.com/art-culture/museum-haitian-national-pantheon/.

Eisenman, Peter D. "From Object to Relationship II: Casa Giuliani Frigerio: Giuseppe Terragni Casa Del Fascio." *Perspecta* 13/14 (1971): 36–65.

El Biomuseo – Biomuseo. n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://biomuseo.org/en/el-biomuseo/.

"Facilities | Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.mapr.org/en/visit/plan-your-visit/facilities.

Findlen, Paula. "The Museum: Its Classical Etymology and Renaissance Genealogy." *Journak of the History of Collections* 1, no. 1 (1989): 59–78. https://doi.org/10.1093/jhc/1.1.59.

Fisher, Mark. *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology, and Lost Futures*. Zero Books, 2014.

Fitzpatrick, Scott M. "Seafaring Capabilities in the Pre-Columbian Caribbean." *Journal of Maritime Archaeology*, June 11, 2013, 101–38. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11457-013-9110-8.

"Fort Charlotte." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://tourism.gov.vc/tourism/index.php/national-sites-of-svg/fort-charlotte.

"Fort Oranje Eng." *Statia Tourism*, n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://statia-tourism.com/enjoy-fully/culture/fort-oranje/.

Fundación Ortiz Gurdián – Nicaragua, Centroamérica. n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://cultura.fundacionortizgurdian.org/.

"Garifuna Cultural Immersion." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://evendo.com/locations/honduras/intibuca-region/landmark/garifuna-cultural-center.

Glissant, Edouard. *Caribbean Discourse*. University Press of Virginia, 1992.

Glissant, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation*. University of Michigan Press, 2010.

Guinep House – Turks and Caicos Museum. n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.tcmuseum.org/about-the-museum/guinep-house/.

Hillman, Richard S., and Thomas J. D'Agostino. *Understanding the Contemporary Caribbean*. 2nd ed. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009.

Hispanic Canadian Arts & Cultural Association. "Hispanic Canadian Arts & Cultural Association." Accessed October 20, 2025. https://www.hispaniccanadianarts.ca/.

History and Membership ‹ Museum of Antigua and Barbuda. n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.antiguamuseums.net/portfolios/about-the-museum/.

"History of the MAPR | Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.mapr.org/en/museum/about-the-museum/history.

"Jesús Rafael Soto - Museo Soto - Ciudad Bolívar, Venezuela." *Soto*, n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://jesus-soto.com/es/museo-soto/.

Kalinago. n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://kalinago.ictu.gov.dm/barana-aute/.

macAdm01. *Institutional Spotlight: Society of Friends of the Afro-Antillean Museum of Panama (SAMAAP) – Museums Association of the Caribbean*. October 11, 2023. https://caribbeanmuseums.com/institutional-spotlight-samaap/.

"MACcSI." *MACSI*, n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://macsi.org/maccsi/.

"MAMM — 51-1." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://51-1.com/MAMM.

"Mangazina Di Rei, The King's Storehouse." *InfoBonaire*, n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://infobonaire.com/unique-tours/mangazina-di-rei-the-kings-storehouse/.

"Mémorial ACTe." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://memorial-acte.fr/decouvrir-le-macte.

Montserrat National Trust. "Preserving the Past, Protecting the Present & Enriching the Future." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://montserratnationaltrust.ms/.

"Museo Ixchel Del Traje Indígena." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://ixchelm.squarespace.com/museum/.

Museo Jumex. "Arquitectura." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.fundacionjumex.org/en/fundacion/museojumex/arquitectura.

"Museo Marte." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://museomarte.org/quienes-somos/.

"Museo Nacional de Antropología | El Museo." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://mna.inah.gob.mx/el_museo.php#la_institucion.

Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Cuba. "Sede de arte cubano." October 24, 2016. https://www.bellasartes.co.cu/pagina-estatica/sede-de-arte-cubano-0.

Museum of Antigua and Barbuda. "Museum of Antigua and Barbuda." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.wmf.org/projects/museum-of-antigua-and-barbuda.

"Museum of Belizean Art - National Collection Virtual Tour Exhibit." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.salient360.com/moba/index.htm.

"National Museum and Art Gallery - The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts (MTCA)." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://mtca.gov.tt/tourism_facilities/national-museum-and-art-gallery/.

"Our History." *National Art Gallery of The Bahamas*, n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://nagb.org.bs/exhibitions/the-history-of-the-nagb/.

"Our Story - Blackhurst Cultural Centre." *Blackhurst Cultural Centre*, n.d. Accessed October 20, 2025. https://blackhurstcc.org/our-story/.

Park, Brimstone Hill Fortress National. "Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park." Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://brimstonehillfortress.org/history.

"Secretaría de Estado de Cultura." July 16, 2011. https://web.archive.org/web/20110716093211/http:/www.cultura.gov.do/dependencias/museos/museodelascasasreales.htm.

St. Thomas Historical Trust. "Fort Christian." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.stthomashistoricaltrust.org/fort-christian-1.

"Stichting Surinaams Museum | Amazonian Museum Network." Accessed November 21, 2025. http://amazonian-museum-network.org/en/amazonian-museums/stichting-surinaams-museum.

Teatro Teresa Carreño | Ópera Latinoamérica. December 5, 2022. https://www.operala.org/teatro-teresa-carreno/.

"The Barbados Museum & Historic Society." Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.barbmuse.org.bb/.

"The History of Caribana & the Grand Parade." *Museum of Toronto*, n.d. Accessed October 27, 2025. https://museumoftoronto.com/collection/caribana-the-grand-parade/.

"The Museum." *MAMBO*, n.d. Accessed November 21, 2025. https://www.mambogota.com/en/the-museum-2/.

Tjafel, Henri. *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations.* Academic Press, 1978.

Tjafel, Henri. "Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour." *Social Science Information* 13, no. 2 (1974): 65–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847401300204.

TorontoCarnival. "Our Story - Toronto Carnival." Accessed October 17, 2025. https://www.torontocarnival.ca/about-us-section-2/our-story-.

wadmin. "Territorial Museum 'Wall House.'" *Saint-Barth*, May 2, 2024. https://www.saintbarth-tourisme.com/en/territorial-museum-wall-house/.

Appendix



Survey Results

Survey responses have not been edited in any way. Respondents had the ability to not provide an answer. Only responses in which the field has been filled in are recorded.

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

Notification of Ethics Clearance to Conduct Research with Human Participants

---

Principal Investigator: Adrian Blackwell (School of Architecture)

Student investigator: Ricardo Espinoza (School of Architecture)

File #: 47360

Title: Beyond the Frame: Community, Identity, and the Caribbean Sea Diaspora in Canada

---

The Human Research Ethics Board is pleased to inform you this study has been reviewed and given ethics clearance.

Initial Approval Date: 07/18/25 (m/d/y)

University of Waterloo Research Ethics Boards are composed in accordance with, and carry out their functions and operate in a manner consistent with, the institution's guidelines for research with human participants, the Tri-Council Policy Statement for the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2 2022), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA), and all laws and regulations of the province of Ontario (as applicable). Additionally, CREB operates in a manner consistent with the International Conference for Harmonization of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH) Guidance E6(R2): Good Clinical Practice , the International Organization for Standardization of Good Clinical Practices (GCP) as set out by ISO 14155 - Clinical investigation of medical devices for human subjects, Part C, Division 5 of the Food and Drug Regulations, Part 4 of the Natural Health Products Regulations, Part 3 of the Medical Devices Regulations. Both Boards are registered with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the Federal Wide Assurance, FWA00021410, and IRB registration number IRB00002419 (HREB) and IRB00007409 (CREB).

Expiry Date: 07/19/26 (m/d/y)

Multi-year research must be renewed at least once every 12 months unless a more frequent review has otherwise been specified. Studies will only be renewed if the renewal report is received and approved before the expiry date. Failure to submit renewal reports will result in the investigators being notified ethics clearance has been suspended and Research Finance being notified the ethics clearance is no longer valid.

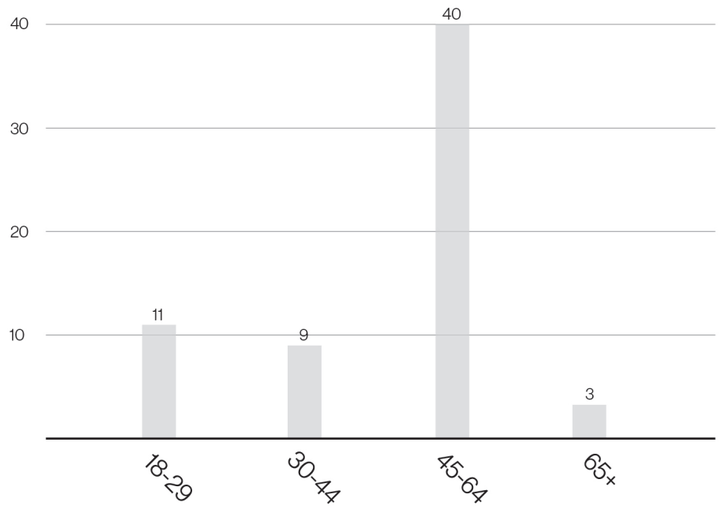
Level of review: Delegated Review

Signed on behalf of the Human Research Ethics Board

Erin VanDerMeulen

Q1

Please identify your age group.



Q2

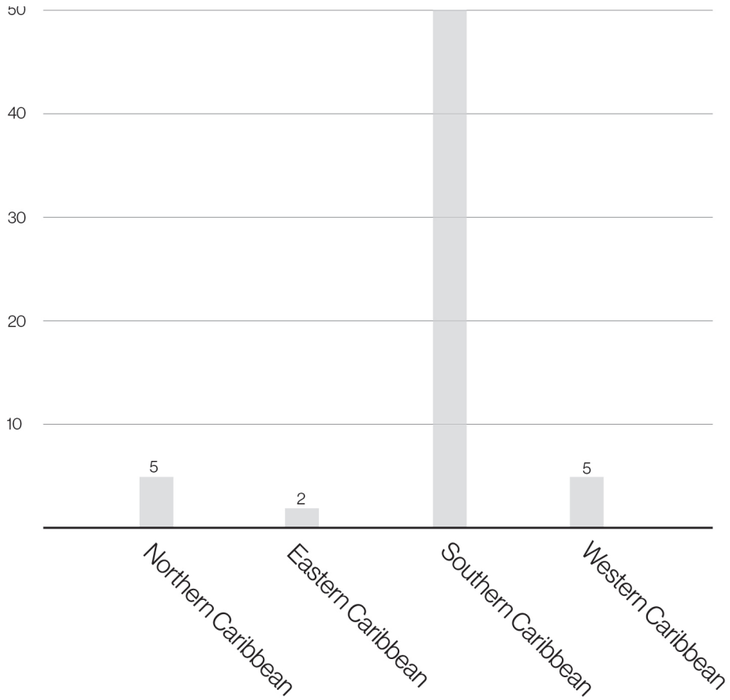
Which country (or countries) do you or your family identify with? If more than one country, please list in order from the country you identify with the most, to the country you identify with the least.

Venezuela
Venezuela, Canada
Venezuela
1000% Colombia
Guyanese (Guyana)
Venezuela
Canada, Venezuela
Venezuela/italy
Trinidad
Venezuela/Italy
Venezuela
1. Venezuela 2. Colombia 3. España 4. Italia 5. Panama
Venezuela
Jamaica
Jamaica
Canada and Jamaica
The Bahamas
México
Venezuela y Canada
Colombia and Curaçao, Netherlands Antilles
Trinidad and Tobago, China
México
Canada, Venezuela
Venezuela & Canada
Venezuela
Venezuela, Argentina
Venezuela
Canada
Venezuela
Venezuela

Colombia, Mexico and Ecuador
Canada, Venezuela
Venezuela, Canada, Spain, Italy, Panama
Canada Spain
Venezuela
Puerto Rico
Colombia
Venezuela, Spain
Venezuela
Venezuela
Venezuela
venezuela
Venezuela
Venezuela
Venezuela
Venezuela, Puerto Rico
Venezuela
Colombia, Canada
Venezuela
MEXICO
Venezuela
Venezuela, canada, Mexico
Venezuela, Colombia
Honduras
Venezuela
Venezuela, Canada, USA
Venezuela
Venezuela, USA & Canada
Venezuela y Canada

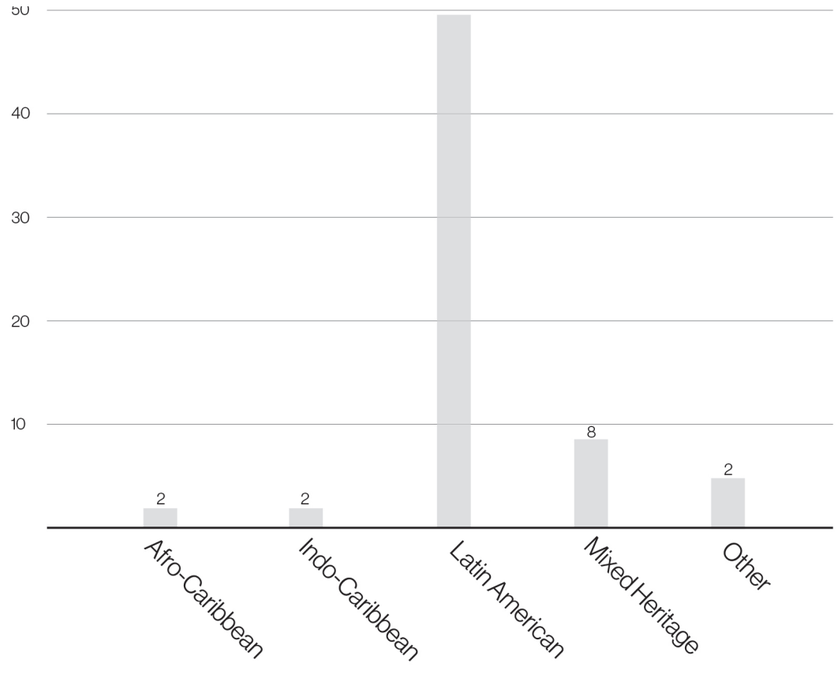
Q3

Which region surrounding the Caribbean Sea do you or your family identify with?



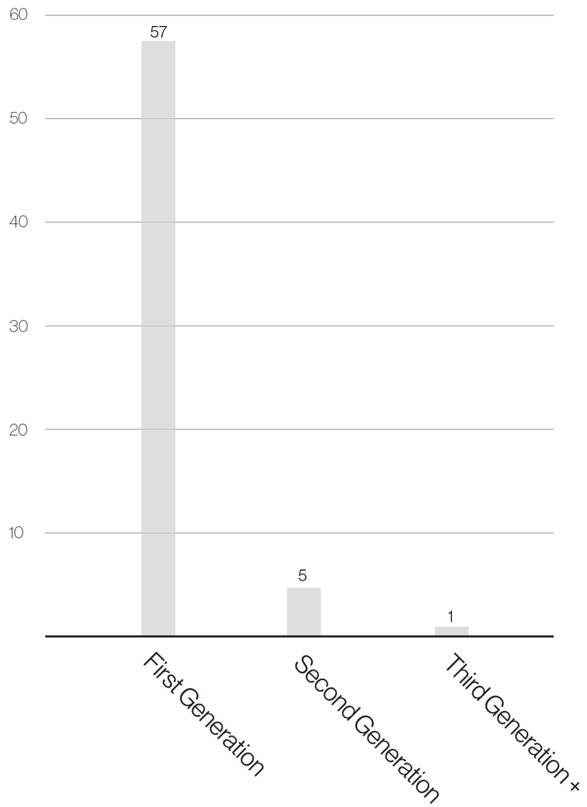
Q4

How do you primarily identify your cultural background?



Q5

What generation are you in Canada?



Q6

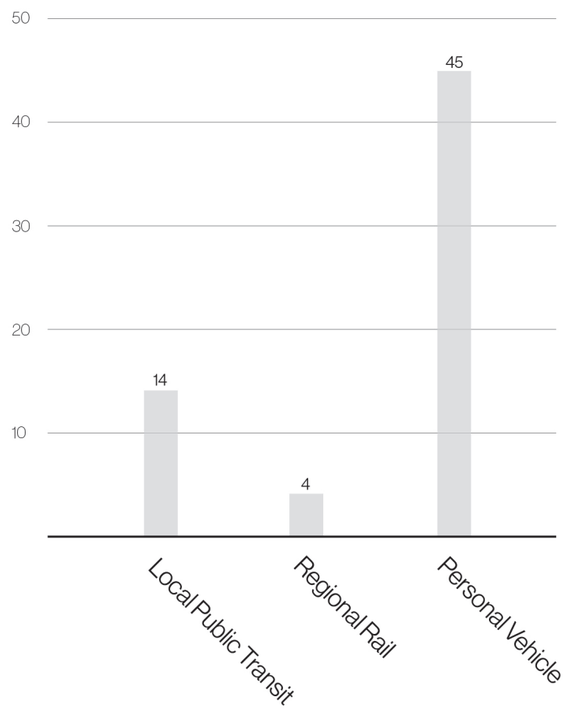
What city/town do you reside in?

Vaughan
Oakville, ON
Burlington
Mississauga
East York
Oakville
Oakville
Toronto
Vaughan
Toronto
Venezuela
Toronto
Burlington
Brampton
Toronto
Pickering
Toronto Ontario
Toronto
Toronto, Ontario.
Oakville (Great Toronto Area)
Toronto
North York
Oakville
Oakville
Oakville
St Catherine's
Oakville ON
Oakville, Ontario
Oakville
Oakville

Oakville
Oakville
Milton
Oakville
Milton
Toronto
Oakville Ontario
Oakville
Oakville
oakville
North York
Oakville
Toronto
Oakville
Toronto
Oakville
Oakville, ON
Oakville
Burlington
Oakville
Milton
Oakville
Oakville
Oakville
Oakville
Oakville, Ontario
Toronto

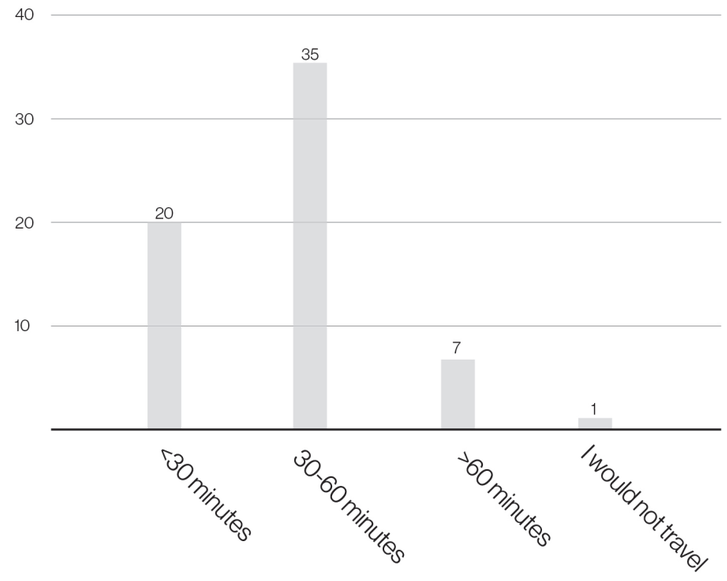
Q7

What is your primary form of travel?



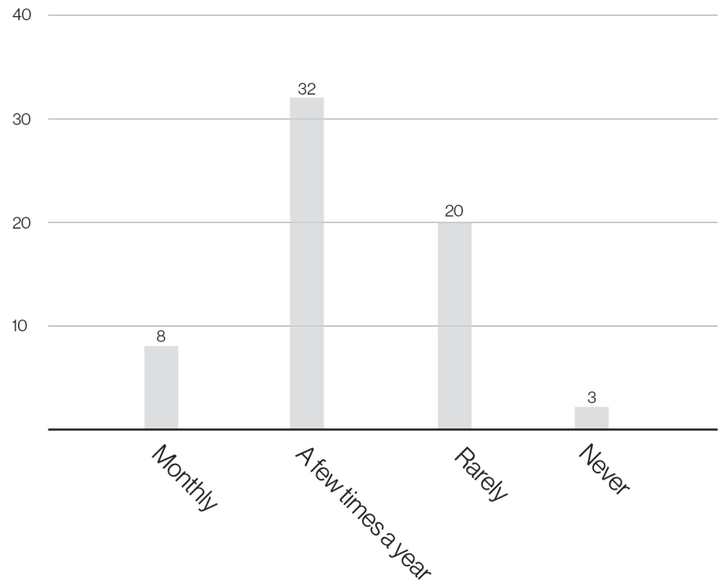
Q8

How far would you be willing to travel to access an arts-based Cultural Centre?



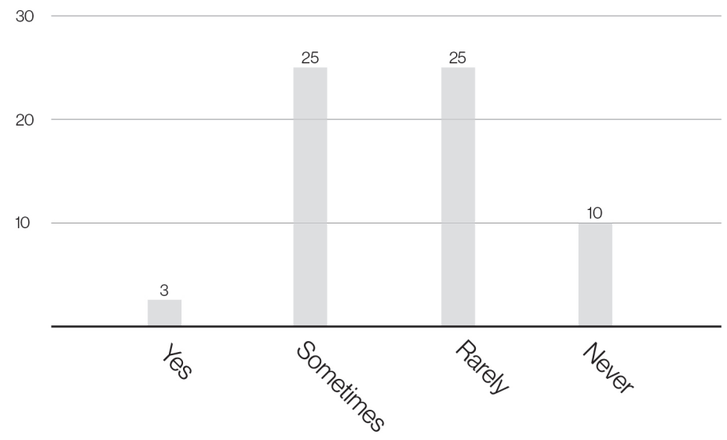
Q9

How often do you attend cultural or community events?



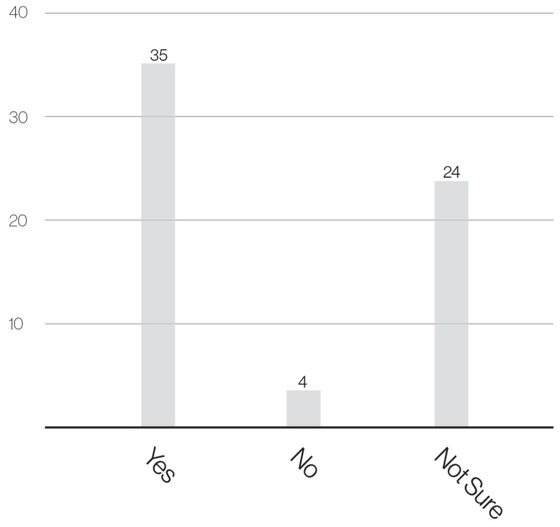
Q10

Do you currently feel represented in Toronto's cultural and civic spaces?



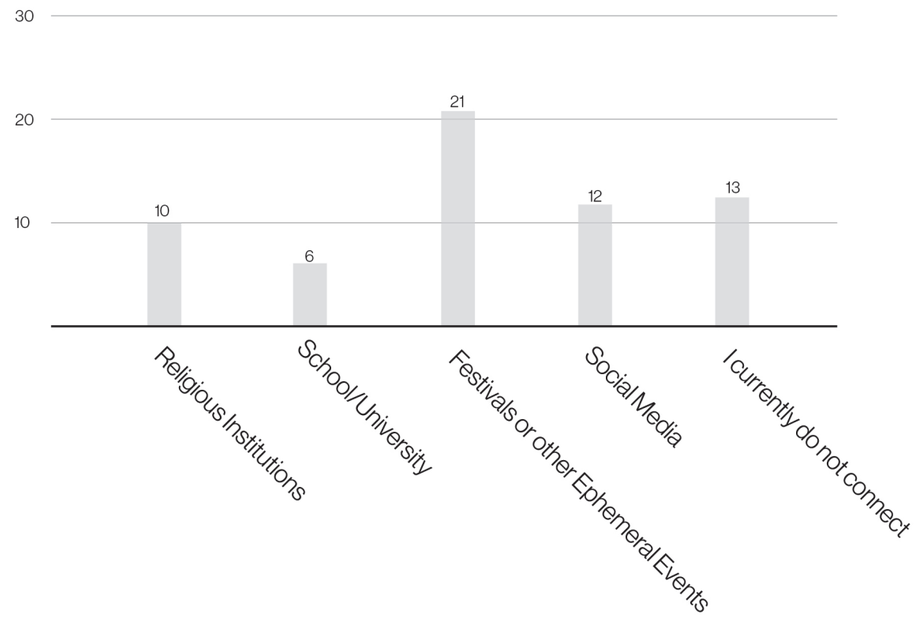
Q11

Have you experienced a lack of spaces that reflect your cultural identity in Toronto?



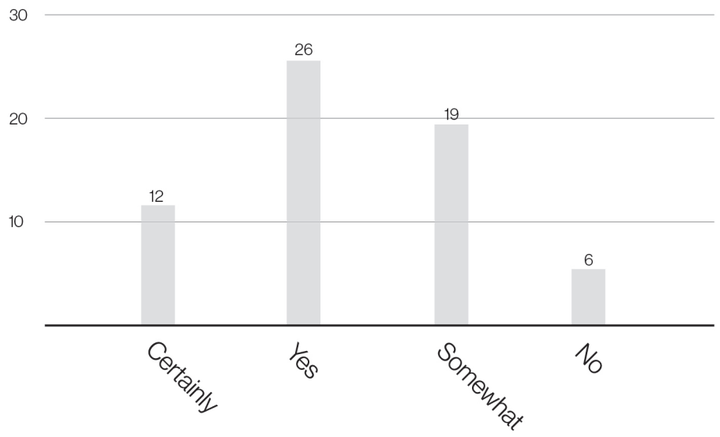
Q12

How do you currently connect with others from your cultural background?



Q13

Do you feel affinities or commonalities with people who share cultural identities with nations surrounding the Caribbean Sea?



Q14

Rank the types of artistic expression are most important to your cultural identity, from most important at the top to least important at the bottom.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Culinary Arts	**36**	11	4	2	2	1	0	0
Dance	2	**15**	**18**	9	6	4	2	0
Visual Arts	1	3	**20**	**16**	**11**	5	0	0
Oral Traditions	4	1	2	**16**	**14**	**10**	8	1
Music	9	**23**	8	2	**13**	1	0	0
Textile Arts	0	1	1	4	6	**27**	**16**	1
Literature	3	1	3	7	4	8	**30**	0
Other	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	**54**

Q15

Are there any non-arts based programs you think could complement the programmingof an arts-based cultural centre?

English classes/ resume building classes / professional development classes

nothing comes to mind

Sports (competition) . As a way to assemble the communtiy and then flood them with the above artistic expression.

Sports and recreational activities

fairs showcasing local small businesses and artisans

Implement startup workshops that mix creativity and business skills so community learn what they need.

Community Wellness Programs: Yoga, meditation, or nutrition classes promoting holistic well-being.

Reading sessions for kids, some traditional games

Any sports organizations.

Education

As senior I think, we should have a Central Community Center, for all the artistic activities, also we can share knowledge, as an Activist Artist.

No

Not sure

Language programs

Dance, Music. Gastronomy

No

No

Don't know

Festivals (just in summer)

Sports

political

Travell plans. Learning a new language. Food days.

I am not sure if hat is the programming today of an arts based cultural centre to understand the gaps

Not sure

Professional networking

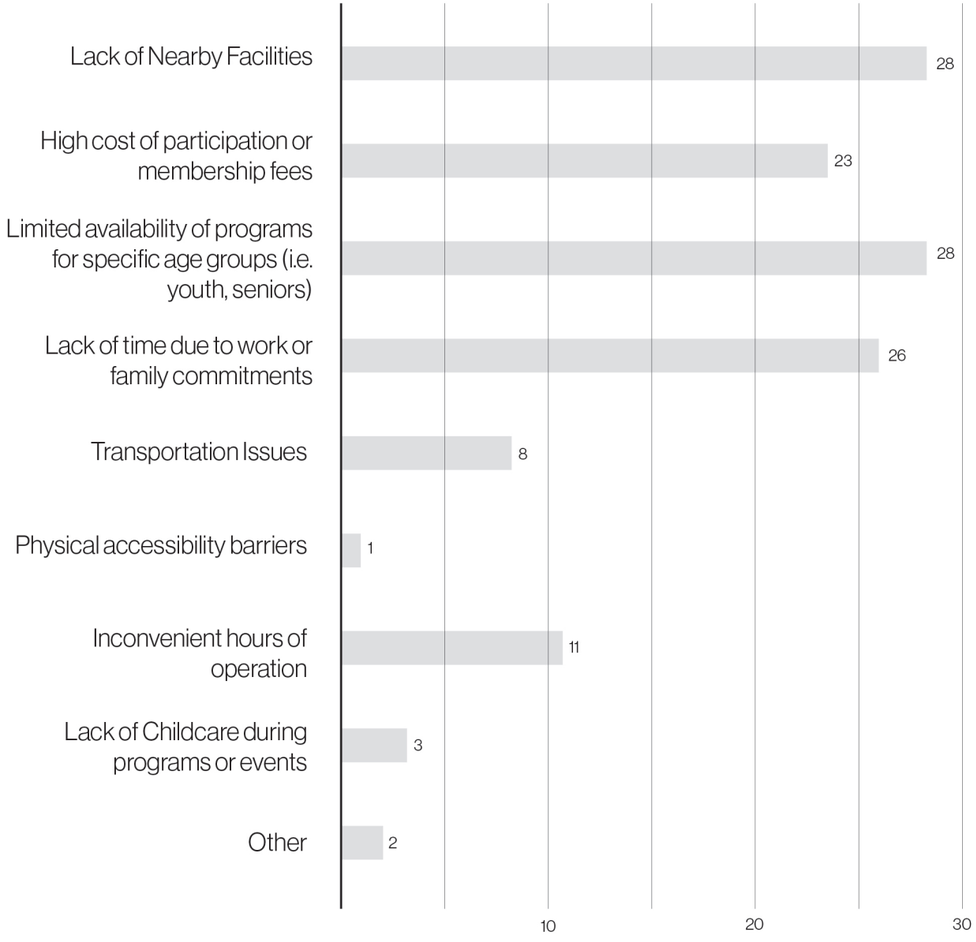
I don't know

Language programs

Un lugar para reunirse a "hablar paja" o "chismear". Es decir, capaz un café

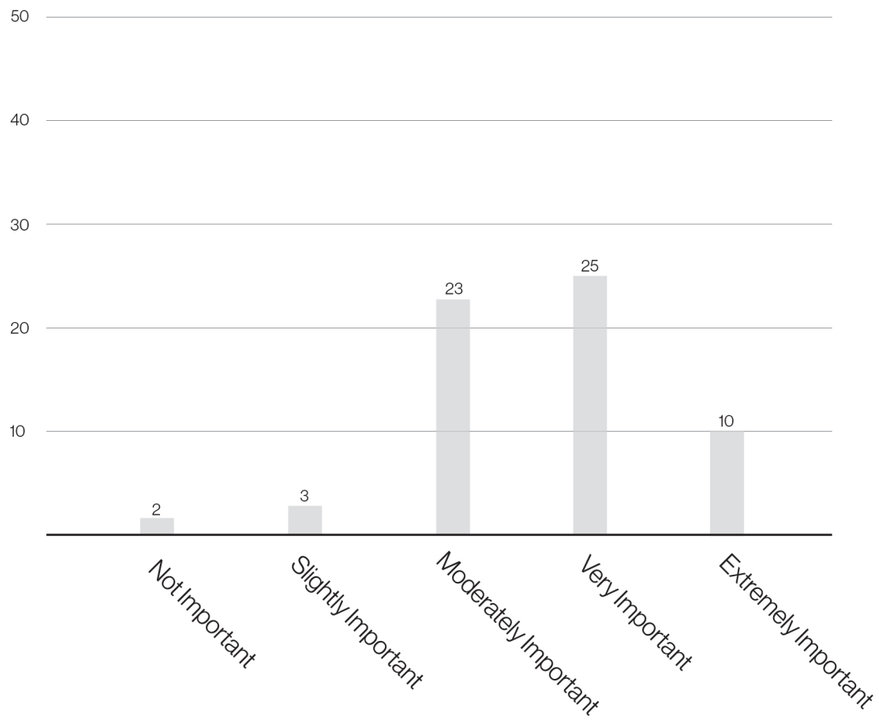
Q16

What challenges do you currently face in accessing community or recreational services?



Q17

How important is intergenerational dialogue to you?



Q18

How do you think that cultural centres can benefit the wider community? Rank from most valuable to least valuable.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strengthen Cultural Spaces	**31**	**10**	6	3	0	3	1	0	1
Providing space for community gatherings	**11**	**28**	5	5	1	3	0	0	2
Promoting Culture through the Arts	3	6	**24**	4	6	6	3	1	2
Offering Educational and employment opportunities	2	2	4	**28**	7	5	6	1	0
Creating local jobs and business opportunities	1	1	4	4	**28**	5	6	4	2
Supporting families with childcare and family programs	0	2	4	5	4	**25**	**10**	5	0
Preserving heritage for future generations	7	5	5	3	3	2	**23**	7	0
Encouraging environmental sustainability practices	0	1	1	0	0	0	5	**33**	**15**
Promoting volunteerism and community service	0	0	2	3	6	6	1	4	**33**

Q19

Please describe a space where you have felt most culturally represented or at home. What made it feel that way?

I got stuck on this question the first time I attempted to complete the survey - I found myself at a loss for an answer that felt adequate, but this is what I have: Likely the spaces where I've felt most at home in an ethnic culture sense have been at the homes of family friends during social and cultural gatherings (Christmases, New Years, etc). Part of what makes these gatherings feel more like home is that not only do we share the same geographic/ethnic/cultural background, but also similar relationships to it. That is, similar immigration experiences, similar distance/closeness to cultural traditions, etc. I know that beyond a shared background, we understand each other's relationship with that background based on the current place it occupies in our lives - even if it's not the same for everyone. The cultural hallmarks of these gatherings are cuisine, music, and dance - which to me are some of the most tangible points of contact with our cultural backgrounds.

A club at school where we would coordinate events targeted towards LATAM students. This was less so a specific place and more so whatever location we were able to come together. Aside from that, my family's home (parents, aunts/uncles), are spaces where I feel most culturally represented.

i think family is a huge part of culture for me and i moved to canada with my mom when i was 12 so all my uncles, grandparents, cousins, etc are back home and christmases were the most culturally represented i think? it was at my grandparents house and just being with all of them (big close family), with the music, the dancing, the food, the company, wow idk how to explain but it felt so magical. and also just being back home feels different than here.

I always enjoy markets aimed at black people lr Caribbean culture. As a way of keeping my dollars in the community and supporting amall business . Theres always an intent to see the uncles and aunts while learning about the numerous ways black entrepreneurers are thriving . Depending on the space , its an easy increase to talk history, politics , empowerment ,games , share musics and annkunce the next time the community will be together. Spanish speaking market place christmas events or gatherings

informal gathering

The trinbago toronto festival as it was a gathering designed to celebrate various aspects of the community.

The music, and familiar foods like empanadas connect me to my roots

I feel most represented in community gatherings with our food, music, Spanish language.

A Latin American mercado, colorful, aromas of tacos, chupe, hayacas, arepas and music as salsa, merengue, cumbia.

Ninguno en especial

Friends and family homes

Little Jamaica or Eglinton West … feels like home because of the shops, food and community members. Hearing the music and the accents. Smelling the foods. Seeing the flags in store fronts.

BAND Gallery, Black Artists' Networks in Dialogue - it feels like home, created by 4 black women.

B.A.N.D Gallery

When The Bahamas embassy had an event

La Iglesia ya que la misa es en Español y hay gran asistencia de Latinos

N/A

Caribana as most people not just the Caribbean gather for it with the music and the costumes

Latin festivals

Among friends

Festivals

I have just felt represented through the food industry. Most gatherings with venezuelan people have happened through other people (networking/social media) but not through a particular place or event.

Fiesta navideña venezolana. Comida, música, interacciones con personas de mi país. Restaurants and stores that offer specific country related gastronomy

Latín Festivals / by music and food

Halton multicultural center

N/a

A Latin market

None

At home

sporting chatting relaxing conversational and communicative space

A group of friends

Latin musical festivals

The music, the language, the space decorations and the people.

At the Latino festivals that take place from time to time in the community

Local schools

N/A

Latin festivals

The Oakville Library

LatinAmerican (Beach) FestivalsRestaurantsMuseums

Un lugar donde se baila música de mi cultura

Survey Participant Interviews

Transcriptions

Participant	1	Venezuela
Participant	2	Jamaica
Participant	3	Guyana
Participant	4	Venezuela
Participant	5	Mexico

Participant 1

Venezuela

RE My first question is: What does community mean to you in the context of your Caribbean or Latin American background?

P1 I think I would say community means a lot, I guess helping each other out. I think about this a lot living with roommates of different cultures than from the Caribbean, I think we're very much open. You know that saying of "mi casa es tu casa", it's very much literal and sometimes I feel like that is very much how it is. I'll have my parents over all the time, and my parents know everything about my roommates, because to us that is how we treat each other and to my family them being able to be here. With my roommates and everything, it's creating community, seeing them in person and being at their house a lot and talking to them.

RE So you would say you bring this sense of community that you've had in your upbringing to new relationships that you might encounter?

P1 Yes, I would say so. I don't know if this is too much spreading it towards something else, but also my fear is almost with overstepping with other cultures because this is a shared space and there is different cultures. I know to me, the community from the Caribbean likes being with each other, all up in each other's business, knowing everything and doing everything together, eating, watching something, whatever. So, it's almost this fear of overstepping sometimes that I see with other cultures, especially living with them.

RE I understand. So as you know, my thesis deals a lot with culture and identity, and the thesis is suggesting a design for a place where people of Latin American and Caribbean culture can go to feel at home and welcome. And so, I'm wondering to you personally, what kinds of programs or services or events would make you feel most connected to a space like that?

P1 Definitely. I think the main thing is a place for people to be themselves in in terms of culture, because again, the fear with my

culture is mainly like overstepping, whether it be in terms of noise or being in someone else's space. I think it can be just as simple as having a space where you can get to do the things you're used to doing; that would be very beneficial. I think very much in terms of being loud. It's not only in terms of the volume we speak at, but we also like to listen to music a lot. We're always listening to music and it's very much not calm or subtle music. It's very loud and very expressive. I also love to dance, so even a space where you can get to do that without restrictions and where you get to dance and to share with others, that's kind of what comes to mind, maybe with food as well. I would love a space to come together and catch up, like we did growing up. The family we found once we came to Canada, especially as young kids, we'd meet up every weekend, do an activity like a picnic, because that was our way to get connected with our culture again and to see each other and talk and eat, I guess is mainly the thing too.

RE So, from what you're saying, it seems to me that for you living in Canada means that there's difficulty in accessing spaces where you feel as though you can express your culture in the way that you would in the country that you're from.

P1 Yes, I would say so, yeah.

RE Are there any stories, traditions or cultural elements that are missing or misrepresented in public life in Toronto? It can be folklore tale that you feel resonates with you, or a piece of clothing, a specific color that you associate with home…

P1 Well, being from Venezuela, I think we're not that famous here in Toronto. There's not that many of us. So, I think the first thing that comes to mind is food. There's not a lot of it, and you're always kind of craving it and there's no place to find it. Also, in terms of general like Latin culture I always tend to come back to dance, but to go and dance and celebrate—not to generalize—but here in Canada, the culture of going out is more around drinking; and not that in Latin America it's not, we also drink, but it's also about dancing. And I think there's not that many spaces where you get to go dancing with Latin music that you get to see a lot.
Also talking about the Caribbean, Venezuela doesn't come up that much as well. I've noticed Mexico comes up more than we do, and I know they are also part of the Caribbean, but it's an interesting thing Mexico comes up and in a lot of contexts. It's the most famous, I would say, out of the Latin American countries.

RE Yeah, I mean, the tradition of food I think is super important, especially in Venezuelan culture, and Caribbean culture more broadly. When you get invited to someone's place, there's always something to eat. You're taught that you're never supposed to

show up empty handed, you're always supposed to show up with something to eat wherever you show up. I think that's thing that if you're getting together with friends and maybe if they're from another culture, it's not something that's immediately obvious. So, I think that's valuable. And then my last question is, if this center could accomplish one thing for your community, what should it be?

P1 I think definitely a place where you can feel like you're back home, I would say. I've been in Canada for over 12 years now and I don't think I've ever felt at home in a place, versus when I go maybe to Miami or Madrid, where you get to see a lot more Latin culture, and you get to find these spaces where there's a lot of people from Venezuela or the Caribbean and then you really feel at home. I think that sense is kind of missing here. It's almost like you're not fully from here, but you're not fully from there either. I feel like a lot of people could relate to that. That lack of community could also be helped with a space that makes you feel like you're back at home, if that makes sense.

RE Yeah, for sure. Would you say that you think culture is more with people or with place, or a combination of the two?

P1 I would say it's largely about people rather than place. Sometimes you see Caribbean festivals or something like that around here in Toronto. And there's not that many Venezuelans because there's not that many of us here. And even tough it's fun and there are things in common, and I may think "oh yeah, I remember that" or "this is similar to this thing I know" it never gives that feeling of how it used to be. It's funny, I get so excited every time I listen to someone with a Venezuelan accent, because you never really hear that. It almost feels a little bit nostalgic, even though you don't know this person and you're not actually even talking to them. But yeah, I would say like, like people is definitely what makes culture.

RE Right on. That's all my questions, so thank you.

Participant 2

Jamaica

RE My first question to you is: what does community mean to you in the context of your Caribbean or Latin American background?

P2 Oh, gosh. It's everything. It's my identity. It's where I have my deepest, closest friendships. It's my DNA, you know? It's absolutely everything to me. It gives me the confidence that I need to hold my head up high and walk these streets and contribute to society. I don't know what I'd be without it.

RE For sure. Could you elaborate a little bit on that? I know it's all-encompassing, so there's a lot of aspects that go into it, but maybe could you talk to me about one that's important to you as an immigrant who is away from the country that you were born in or grew up in, or however it may be. Is there anything that you feel that you still have here in Canada?

P2 I mean, I didn't have much of a choice. I came here as a child, so I think one of the things I took with me was that I was ahead educationally. Our system was a little bit more robust education-wise, even in early childhood, so I was ready to hit the ground running, but right away the walls went up and stopped me.

One of these walls was "Oh, you're from Jamaica. We now need to put you in an English as a second language class." And I just remember that one of the few times I had two parents advocating on my behalf saying "no, he already did that and you're going to put him forward where with the other kids." So, it was quite interesting early on to find that I was being told I needed to be put back and they would negate everything that I had learned. They said: "We're not even going to test you. We're just going to automatically presume that one, you don't speak English and two, you're behind, so we're going to have to put you back."

So that was an interesting learning experience that right away you had to prove yourself. You always have to prove yourself that I do speak English. I speak it very well and my country that I came from, it's the same. Yes, we have different dialects and such, but we also code switch very well, so no, you're not going to keep me back.

RE On that similar vein, are there any stories, traditions, or cultural elements from your culture that you think are either missing, or may be misrepresented in Toronto right now?

P2 I'll jump to the misrepresentation first, because I think there's a presumption that when we gather en masse that it can't be anything good, that it's going to turn into violence or it's just too loud and can't be any good. It's a silencing thing that happens to our communities. We can't really gather in large groups and not have it be a celebration without people thinking nothing will go wrong. We're never really given the benefit of the doubt and such. I also set out to prove that wrong in my own life and organizing.

RE Yeah, and I think maybe towards the missing section, you've already been taking matters into your own hands in the sense that you've identified that something was missing and you decided to create a space for people to be able to get together.

P2 Yeah, that's one of the lessons I learned: nothing's going to be handed to you on a silver platter. If you really want something done, you got to do it yourself. You really have to create it yourself and so that's what I've been doing as time goes by, not waiting for somebody to create something for you. We just go and do it ourselves and get it done, and if it's able to get funded somehow or what have you, that would happen after that. But I don't wait for bodies to create things on our behalf, because we'll be waiting forever. It just won't be done.

RE That leads me pretty well into my next question, which is like, you know, thinking about physically, if there was a space for this type of these types of activities, artistic activities and gatherings of bigger sizes and stuff like that; what kind of programs or services or maybe events would make you feel connected to a space of that sort?

P2 Oh gosh. I mean, the biggest one for me is Caribana, a.k.a. Toronto Carnival. It's overwhelmingly positive when you see what we're able to do en masse. You know, it's also very interesting how millions of people could be in one end of the city. You go to another end of the city, and you'd never know anything's happening where, where the million of us is gathering. I take a lot of solace in attending these events organized for our communities.

RE Definitely. My last question would then be: if this centre accomplished one thing for your community, what could it be or what should it be?

P2 Oh gosh, well, our youth need a lot of help. Our youth need a physical space that they can touch and feel and see examples of what's possible. There's nothing like the ability to have a physical spot that you can say "this is mine. It's open to me. I can get there and it's there and I know the hours. I'm always gonna be welcome. I don't have to pay a fee. Nobody's gonna be judging me negatively." And I hope it could be a place where they can get all kinds of support, whatever they might need. And hopefully it also includes an intergenerational piece in it as well. Because—oh my gosh, what did they call me the other day? —I'm an elder. I nearly died. But I get it. I'm not even 60 yet, but my experience is valued, and when called on now I have to step up, as much as I'd like to leave everything for the younger ones to come up with, it's not fair.

I don't like repeating cycles. It's like, why would you want to make somebody behind you go through the same things you did when you've got solutions and possibilities? You still want them to make their own decisions, but I like the idea. that if somebody was able tell me back in the day something as simple as saving a dollar a day, I'd be like "are you crazy? What's a dollar going to do?" But sure, enough you save a dollar a day and then next thing you know you look in the thing and it's like, "oh shoot, it's been 12 months. Look at that." I'm hopeful that this center would, you know, be sort of an all-encompassing place where we can learn life skills together and not repeat our mistakes but repeat our successes instead. I'm all for virtual programming, but yeah, we need the physical too.

RE I totally agree. OK, well, that's those are all my questions. So yeah, thank you very much for participating in this interview.

P2 Sounds good. I appreciate you.

RE Thank you very much. I appreciate you too.

P2 All right. Take care. Bye, bye.

RE You too. Bye.

Participant 3

Guyana

RE My first question would be: what does community mean to you in the context of your heritage?

P1 I don't know if I should say space already, but it's a space where you can learn, share and reinvigorate what your culture means to you. A lot of times, because I'm first generation Guyanese Canadian, it's rediscovering cultures that I wouldn't have a first-hand feeling with because I wasn't born in Guyana. But because Caribbean experiences are often shared, I get always something new from a different country anytime it's a Caribbean based event. I appreciate that even if I go to a Trinidadian event or a Bajan or a Jamaican event, there's still similarities that you can share, but there's still so much community and knowledge that you can learn from the people that are there. It's always a shared space of open arms; it always feels like a warm hug and a family reunion. I love spaces and events that reaffirm that feeling.

RE Is that something that you feel even when it's not somebody from your own culture? Do you feel akin to somebody from the Caribbean rather than just people from Guyana?

P3 Every time. I'm always surprised if it's distinctly not Guyanese, that obviously there's similarities, but people are always so welcoming and that's just like my culture. People are more inclined to help walk you through something that may be new to you as opposed to shun you away because you don't belong from where they originally started, and I appreciate that. As we're phasing out of summertime, every weekend was basically a Caribbean country saying, "hey, we're celebrating, come celebrate with us."

RE That's amazing. On that topic, I'm wondering if there's any part of culture that you see here in Canada that is either missing or misrepresented in the public life in Toronto. And this can be, you know, mischaracterizations that you might have seen or any cultural elements that you feel maybe are lacking in the city.

P3 Probably, but I'm not the person to go into detail because I can only go so far with what I expected a Jamaican party to look like, for example. I'm happy to go because I get to learn something new, but someone that's distinctly from that island may have more opinions about whether things happened the way they were supposed to. Ultimately, I think the Caribbean mantra is that as long as we're out, as long as we're liming, as long as we're having a good time, we'll make the best out of a bad situation. Maybe I'm not the best to ask if logistically everything was perfect because it never is, but in terms of someone that I don't have first time experience of what it was like on the island, but what it was like in the country, I take every opportunity to get something as a way of learning more about my culture and the larger culture as a whole.

RE I get that. I'm wondering in terms of being Guyanese though, is there anything that you've noticed that is different?

P3 Some of the events that I used to go to when I was a kid, and a teenager no longer exist now. I don't know if that's because of the city or because of the infrastructure and the organizations building it. But I remember when I was younger there were where way more resources, and places, and events to find and enjoy with uncles and aunts. Now that I'm an adult and I can find those spaces myself, they're harder to find. I don't know if that Yellow Pages or that Green Book no longer exists the way it used to because it was getting passed down through family members and it turned into like a family reunion, especially Guyanese people, but for the Caribbean you have to chase it, it's not always on the calendar. Other than Caribana, which is no longer called Caribana, everything on the map is kind of disjointed. I find it harder to find these events, and I usually find out about them matter-of-factly or through hearsay, whereas before it was kind of baked in and I always knew something was coming up. I would say the connection of letting people know what's happening and where it's happening is a disconnect, and probably a problem for me if we're talking about issues that I wish were fixed.

RE Definitely, yeah. I think that brings me pretty, nicely on to my next question, which is: if you could envision a building for culture of the Caribbean, what kinds of programs and services and maybe events would make you feel most connected to a space like that?

P3 It doesn't really matter what you're having, it just matters that you're having it. There are two main things though. I think that food should always be represented, so I hope your kitchen and your shared space of taste and smells is lively for each individual cultural group. Each country has such distinct and delicious foods that always end up uniting people. Music's always a second thing, so I would hope there would be some sort of stage or some sort of

sound to help invite people in, but as long as it's a shared space, that people know they can always go there, the event will kind of turn itself. Having a headquarters, I think is the biggest hurdle to jump, because once you have it and people know that you can always come here, it doesn't matter what flag you're waving. They're going to keep coming to that spot.

RE For sure. My last question to you is: if the centre could accomplish a single thing really well for your own community, what should it be?

P3 I always believe food and representation is probably the biggest thing. You'll fall in love with the country based on what you eat. And because Latin and Caribbean culture is so invested in their food and there's so many similarities you could literally have cook offs or bake offs where different countries are putting their renditions on different dishes and just walking through that someone that's never had a chance to visit those countries would have such an explosion of identity and culture. I'm salivating now, thinking about how many different countries I could potentially taste in one spot. That's the dream. And then you find once the food's there, people are coming regardless, right? It's easy to add onto that, but if you make sure your kitchen is set and people can always eat there and they're eating from authentic sources, they'll find that connection to home and you can always add on that easily, I think easily.

RE Yeah, I totally agree. Those are all my questions.

P3 Sounds good. I really hope this works out for you. I really hope that this vision gets to be fully realized, and you get to see what in your head you dream of seeing. Because based on these questions, just to have a building that connects all these people is amazing, right? And that typically doesn't happen all the time. It's usually segmented, but you know. Cultures, communities, and people need gathering. If you give them a space where they can just be themselves and enjoy laughs, sounds and tastes, I think you're ahead of the curve. I wholeheartedly hope this works out for you. Just remember: We love food. Just keep giving us food. If you got food under lock, then you got community.

RE Thank you so much. I totally agree, and I appreciate your encouragement.

P3 That's it, man. Take it easy.

Participant 4

Venezuela

[Español]

RE Mi primera pregunta es: ¿para ti, qué significa la palabra "comunidad" en el contexto de tu origen Caribeño o Latinoamericano?

P4 No sé, a veces las comunidades son físicas y en otros casos son relaciones o similitudes culturales. O sea, yo puedo tener mi comunidad de la gente que vive en mi calle, pero también puedo tener mi comunidad de, no sé de los que jugamos, béisbol. No sé si realmente es esa definición de comunidad. Puedo tener mi comunidad, que es la gente que que estudió conmigo, que son diferentes, porque ahí la gente que vive en mi calle puede ser muy diferente, a lo mejor unos sí, otros no juegan béisbol conmigo, otros estudiaron, otros no.

Pero estamos en un entorno que nos vemos todos los días y tenemos cosas que son similares — sea nuestro nivel socioeconómico, seguramente compartimos tragedias. El día que se fue la luz en toda la calle, por ejemplo, son gente

[English]

My first question is: for you, what does the word "community" mean in the context of your Caribbean or Latin American background?

I don't know, sometimes communities are physical and in other cases they are relationships or cultural similarities. I mean, I can have my community of the people who live on my street, but I can also have my community of, I don't know, those of us who play baseball. I don't know if that's really the definition of community. I can have my community that is the people who studied with me, who are different, because the people who live on my street can be very different — maybe some do, others don't play baseball with me, some studied, others didn't.

But we are in an environment where we see each other every day and we have things that are similar — probably our socioeconomic level, we probably share tragedies. The day the power went out on the whole street, for example, those

con la cual compartes la vida y gente con la cual intentas tener logros. Creo que eso sería para mí el sentido de comunidad.

are people with whom you share life, and people with whom you try to accomplish things. I think that would be, for me, the meaning of community.

RE Claro, como dices, la cultura tiene un aspecto de de actividad, algo que se comparte, y la comunidad se puede encontrar en metas communes como el deporte, la música, el trabajo, cosas así. Como inmigrante, ¿Cómo encontraste tus comunidades aquí?

Of course, as you say, culture has an aspect of activity, something that is shared, and community can be found in common goals like sports, music, work, things like that. As an immigrant, how did you find your communities here?

P4 Bueno, principalmente por relaciones, o sea que que conocí a alguien y ese alguien me presentó a este otro alguien y así la cosa se fue armando y en la medida en que esos esas relaciones cómo circunstanciales después fueron transformándose en comunidades, o al final termina uno seleccionando con cuál de esos uno se lleva mejor, y con cuál tiene más similitud, con cuál comparte los mismos valores o las mismas inquietudes y eso va armando grupos comunitarios. Básicamente, yo creo que al principio es un tema de supervivencia y el latino o el caribeño no está hecho para hacer estar solo. Estamos hechos para vivir con un gentío alrededor, que en la mayoría de los casos es la familia. La familia es tu fin de semana, es el Día de la Madre, es el cumpleaños, es hasta viajar. Más allá de eso están los amigos que se agregan. Esa es nuestra manera de sentir que estamos vivos, es con gente alrededor, y con el ruido, la bulla, hasta el bullying también.

Well, mainly through relationships — I mean, I met someone, and that person introduced me to someone else, and that's how things started coming together. And as those relationships that were circumstantial began transforming into communities, in the end you end up choosing which of those you get along with better, with whom you have more similarity, with whom you share the same values or concerns, and that is what builds community groups. Basically, I think at the beginning it's a survival thing, and the Latin or Caribbean person is not made to be alone. We are made to live with lots of people around, which in most cases is family. Family is your weekend, it's Mother's Day, it's birthdays, it's even traveling. Beyond that there are the friends who get added. That's our way of feeling alive — with people around, with noise, with racket, even with bullying too.

Me recuerdo que en una de esas reuniones grandes de mi familia yo ya iba de regreso a mi casa, yo decía, "Coño, esta gente no la veo más en un año por lo menos" porque venía más golpeado que como me había ido, pero se trata de esa interacción. La gente busca interactuar y no necesariamente de manera "nice", se dicen cosas como: "¿Cómo andas con ese carro tan feo?" o "Es la tercera vez que te veo con esa camisa." Todas esas interacciónes que al final para sobrevivir en Canadá, uno busca, sobre todo porque por más que, el idioma es una barrera, igual la gente no tiene ese nivel de interacción. Por ejemplo, el bullying que suele pasar en nuestra cultura, ese hace falta. Hace falta el chiste. Hace falta el burlarte de alguien para para reírse y en Canadá, si no es con latinos, no puedes tener ese nivel de comunicación. Y eso es una vaina para nosotros como la música, o sea, es una cosa básica, o sea, Cómo te comunicas? ¿Cómo dices un chiste? ¿Cómo te te ríes? ¿Cómo entiendes cuando el otro no está bien, pero aún así, sabes qué palabra decir?

I remember that after one of those big family gatherings, on my way back home I would say, "Damn, I won't see those people for at least a year," because I left feeling more beaten up than when I had arrived, but it's about that interaction. People seek interaction and not necessarily in a "nice" way — people say things like, "How are you driving that ugly car?" or "This is the third time I see you in that shirt." All of those interactions, which in the end, to survive in Canada, you seek out — especially because even though language can be a barrier, people here don't have that level of interaction. For example, the bullying that usually happens in our culture, that's something we miss. We miss the joke. We miss teasing someone to laugh. And in Canada, if it's not with Latinos, you can't have that level of communication. And that's something for us like music — it's a basic thing. How do you communicate? How do you tell a joke? How do you laugh? How do you understand when the other person is not okay but still know what word to say?

No sé cómo se llama ese esa relación directa que hay entre el lenguaje como medio de comunicación cultural, se yo yo con 2 palabras que diga cualquier persona en Venezuela puede saber de qué nivel socio económico era, dónde más o menos vivía, que a qué colegio o a que universidad fue, cosas asi.

I don't know what that direct relationship is called, the one between language and culture as a means of communication — with just two words that any person in Venezuela says, I can know what socioeconomic level they were, where they roughly lived, which school or university they went to, things like that.

RE Claro. De lo de lo que hablas, me viene el sentido que es algo de que no se entiende facilmente. Digamos, es algo muy fluido, no es algo que exista concretamente y es difícil de describir.

Of course. From what you're saying, I get the sense that it's something that can't be easily understood. It's something very fluid, not something that exists concretely, and it's hard to describe.

P4 Sí, porque yo creo que es muy natural, muy orgánico, muy informal. No me imagino una comunicación ya a otro nivel. Es como una comunicación de trabajo, o corporative. No creo que alguien busque sentido de comunidad en eso. Una relación corporativa es algo en lo que te va a dar un trabajo, pero seguramente tu relación con tus compañeros de trabajo no va a estar a ese nivel.

Yes, because I think it's very natural, very organic, very informal. I can't imagine communication at another level. It's like workplace communication, corporate. I don't think anyone looks for a sense of community in that. A corporate relationship is something that gives you a job, but surely your relationship with your coworkers won't be at that level.

RE Más o menos en ese asunto, quiero saber si hay alguna historia, alguna tradición o algún elemento cultural que que tú sientes que falta o que está mal representado en Toronto.

Along those lines, I want to know if there is any story, tradition, or cultural element that you feel is missing or misrepresented in Toronto.

P4 Te voy a ser honesto, a veces los festivales latinos y esas cosas así no me gustan. Generalmente mucha gente haciendo mucha bulla y bailando o gritando o comiendo frituras, qué sé yo, pero hay algo que yo he buscado que no he encontrado, y es el español.

I'll be honest with you, sometimes Latin festivals and those things, I don't like them. Usually it's a lot of people making a lot of noise, dancing, yelling, eating fried foods, whatever. But there's something I have looked for and haven't found, and that's Spanish.

O sea, por lo menos en las en las bibliotecas hay muy poca bibliografía en español. Yo me he leído casi todos los libros que están aquí en mi biblioteca local. Una vez averigüé para ver si había algun editorial que se moviera en español en el área y no hay, había una en Montreal y no sirvió para mucho.

I mean, at least in the libraries, there is very little bibliography in Spanish. I've read almost all the books in my local library. Once I even tried to see if there was a publishing house that worked in Spanish in this area and there isn't — there was one in Montreal, but it wasn't much help.

Yo no sé si realmente el mecanismo principal es el idioma, porque incluso ni siquiera es que tiene que ser específicamente Venezolano. Por ejemplo, me encantaría ver un cuentacuentos o una obra de teatro o cosas así, que fueran cubanas, qué sé yo, o panameñaa, de Costa Rica, o Mexicanas, ¿Entiendes? Que yo pudiera decir, "wow, mira esta obra."

I don't know if the main mechanism really is the language, because it doesn't even have to be specifically Venezuelan. For example, I would love to see a storyteller or a play or things like that — Cuban, Panamanian, Costa Rican, Mexican, whatever, you know? Something where I could say, "Wow, look at this play."

Por lo menos mi impresión es que en el crecimiento de las ciudades no se incorpora la cultura. Como si, alguien dijera: "vamos a poner esta ciudad. ¿Qué debe tener una ciudad? Debe tener un colegio, o un walk-in clinic o un supermercado," pero no existe un teatro teatro pequeño. No hay un lugar de concierto que sea pequeño o que no sea necesariamente un bar. A lo mejor tú vas a un bar y puedes escuchar una banda tocando ahí, pero eso no es parte de la organización de las ciudades, y si entonces tú quieres ir al teatro tienes que irte a Toronto y ya son obras bien comerciales, entonces es difícil que tú puedas ver algo modesto, alguna compañía de teatro de Argentina y se que se presente en un lugar de 150 personas eso yo creo que no existe y a lo mejor existe en Toronto, pero fuera de ahí, ni soñar.

At least my impression is that the growth of cities doesn't incorporate culture. As if someone said, "Let's set up this city. What must a city have? A school, a walk-in clinic, a supermarket," but there isn't a small theater. There isn't a small concert venue that isn't necessarily a bar. Maybe you go to a bar and hear a band playing there, but that's not part of the city's planning. And so if you want to go to the theater you have to go to Toronto, and those are very commercial plays — so it's hard to see something modest, like an Argentine theater company performing in a 150-person venue. I think that doesn't exist, and maybe it does in Toronto, but outside of that? Forget it.

RE Te entiendo y eso también es una de las cosas que que estoy tratando de explorar y avanzar un poco, porque lo que he encontrado es que hay cosas para la comunidad, pero están todas muy desconectadas.

I understand you, and that's also one of the things I'm trying to explore and push forward, because what I've found is that there are things for the community, but they're all very disconnected. We all work in

Todos trabajamos isolados, entonces mi argumento con este proyecto es tener un lugar que centralize todas esas iniciativas que existen, que son positivas y que deberían ser cómo, ser exploradas

isolation, so my argument with this project is to have a place that centralizes all these existing initiatives that are positive and should be explored.

P4 Claro, porque las manifestaciones culturales generalmente son bien cliché. O sea, es en la calle un poco de gente bailando salsa y ya. Y que está bien, pero eso no es todo, ¿Entiendes? Me encantaría ver algo como un tipo que publicó un libro en Santiago de Chile y el tipo podría venir a un lugar y lo presenta, y la gente pudiera interactuar. Ese tipo de cultura no existe. Piensa que si aquí tú mismo decidieras montar un grupo de teatro, ¿dónde te presentas? Te vas a tener que presentar en un bar, porque creo que es lo único que hay.

Right, because cultural events are usually very cliché. It's like a bunch of people dancing salsa in the street, and that's it. Which is fine, but that's not everything, you know? I'd love to see something like a guy who published a book in Santiago de Chile, and he could come to a place and present it, and people could interact. That kind of culture doesn't exist. Think about it: if you wanted to set up a theater group here, where would you perform? You'd have to perform in a bar, because I think that's all there is.

RE Todo eso me me lleva a mi última pregunta: si este centro pudiera lograr una sola cosa para tu comunidad, qué debería ser?

That brings me to my last question: if this center could accomplish one single thing for your community, what should it be?

P4 Guau, no sé. Yo creo que el inmigrante este, el inmigrante, busca varias, cosas, pero una es que lo que deja atrás lo romantiza en la mayoría de los casos.

Wow, I don't know. I think immigrants seek several things, but one of them is that they romanticize what they left behind, in most cases.

Y lo que tiene adelante o lo que tiene en el hoy, evita entenderlo. Me parece a mí que mucha gente sigue viviendo en ese pasado romántico que ya no existe. Sea el país que sea, porque todos los países cambian. Pero en el presente no se incorpora tampoco. Yo dejé de atender

And what lies ahead, or what they have today, they avoid understanding. I think a lot of people keep living in that romantic past that no longer exists. Whatever the country, because all countries change. But in the present they also don't participate — it's not that

eventos culturales que eran en español y ahora voy solo a eventos culturales en inglés. No es que no voy a ninguno, pero yo creo que ese lugar tendría que lograr llamar la atención de alguna manera para que yo pudiera saber que está pasando. A mí me resulta complicado porque a veces si me meto en en, en un chat o en Facebook o en algun grupo virtual de venezolanos, me voy a enterar solo cuando viene, alguien que le interesa a ese grupo. Y a lo mejor me interesa, pero a lo major no, y me gustaria saber no solamente si un venezolano viene. Lo más difícil es que el lugar logre hacer esa conexión con la gente de alguna manera.

I stopped attending cultural events in Spanish and now I go only to events in English. It's that I don't go to any. So I think that place would have to be able to grab people's attention in some way so that I could know what is happening. It's hard for me, because sometimes if I join a WhatsApp chat, or Facebook, or some Venezuelan group, I'll only find out when someone is coming that interests that group. And maybe it interests me, maybe it doesn't, but I'd like to know not just if a Venezuelan is coming.
The hardest thing is that the place has to find a way to make that connection with people somehow.

Me imagino que desde el punto de vista físico del lugar, no puede ser concreto, ¿entiendes? ¿Sabes dónde se presenta el ballet? No sé cómo se llama esa sala en Toronto.

I imagine that from the physical point of view of the place, it can't just be concrete, you know? You know where the ballet performs? I don't know what that hall is called in Toronto.

RE ¿El Four Seasons?

The Four Seasons?

P4 Ajá, Exacto. Tú ves ese lugar por fuera y podría ser el Ministerio de Salud. Por dentro la sala es muy bonita y todo eso, pero afuera…

Yeah, exactly. You look at that place from the outside and it could be the Ministry of Health. Inside the hall is very beautiful and all that, but outside…

En realidad, yo voy a ese lugar y casi que entro con los ojos cerrados y una vez que estoy dentro los abro y digo, "oh, guau, qué bonito. Vine a un concierto, qué maravilla." Pero ¿cómo harías para que un lugar fuera atractivo físicamente, como para que yo fuera? Obviamente no van a haber unas palmeras en la entrada porque no puede haber unas palmeras, pero

In reality, I go to that place and I almost go in with my eyes closed, and once I'm inside I open them and say, "Oh wow, how beautiful. I came to a concert, how wonderful." But how would you make a place physically attractive enough so that I would want to go? Obviously there aren't going to be palm trees at the entrance — there can't be palm trees —

la arquitectura no puede ser edificio de concreto, y entonces yo digo "eso no tiene nada que ver conmigo." Va a ser difícil que tenga unas tejas, pero, pero bueno, yo no soy arquitecto.

but the architecture can't be just concrete where I say, "This has nothing to do with me." It might be hard for it to have clay tiles, but anyway, I'm not an architect.

RE Bueno, ese es parte del problema del diseño, creo yo, porque para sentirte parte de ese edificio, tienes que identificarte de alguna manera con él. Y esa sea es parte de la exploración que que estoy haciendo ahora.

Well, that's part of the design problem, I think — because to feel like you're part of a building, you have to identify with it in some way. And that's part of the exploration I'm doing now.

P4 No sé si hayas visto que en Caracas había esta habían instituciones en Caracas que eran en casas que eran en estilo colonial, o lugares de concierto que cuando tú entrabas a ese lugar el piso todavía era hecho de—cómo se llama eso?— adoquines.

I don't know if you saw that in Caracas there were these institutions that were in colonial-style houses, or concert halls where when you went in, the floor was still made of — what do you call it? — cobblestones.

Una cosa así, que tú sientes que estás entrando a a tu casa, y eso es una cosa que debe hacer así en Venezuela, en Costa Rica, en México, que tú entres y digas "me siento en contacto y no he hablado con nadie, no he escuchado nada."

Something like that, where you feel like you are entering your own home, and that's something they must do in Venezuela, Costa Rica, Mexico — where you go in and say, "I feel in touch and I haven't even spoken to anyone, I haven't heard anything."

Tiene que ser una cosa que sea realmente atractiva para para lo que es la cultura de uno. A mí me llama la atención Europa que y le decía a alguien el otro día que hay una vaina que me ha encantado de Europa, y es que en Europa no les importa, no les importa gastar dinero en cosas que no van a servir para nada. Ni siquiera de hablar de las cosas que ya tienen muchos años y tú sabes, que si tú ves la estación de tren de

It has to be something really attractive for what our culture is. Something that strikes me about Europe — I was saying to someone the other day — is that in Europe they don't care, they don't care about spending money on things that aren't going to serve any practical purpose. I'm not even talking about the things that have been there for many years, but you know, if you look at the Milan train station, you say,

Milán, tú dices “verga, no era necesario”, ¿Entiendes? Pero bueno, aún hoy en día tú vas y ves cosas y dices, coño, esto en Norteamérica se hubiera resuelto con mucho menos, y no tendría nada de atractivo.

“Damn, that wasn’t necessary,” you know? But still today you see things and say, “Damn, in North America this would have been solved with much less, and it would have no charm at all.”

La vaina es un choque porque no hay nada, no hay nada que se parezca, a nadie le interesa ver para atrás, o sea, como que todo es moderno. Para mí eso es lo que podría decir, que es lo más importante.

It’s a shock because there’s nothing, nothing like that here, no one is interested in looking backward — everything is modern. For me, that’s what I’d say is the most important thing.

Te lo puse fácil, te lo puse fácil. *[Se ríe]*

I made it easy for you; I made it easy. *[Laughs]*

RE Sí facilita. Bueno, pero sí muchísimas gracias, honestamente, por hablar conmigo hoy.

Yes, very easy. But really, thank you very much, honestly, for talking with me today.

P4 Buenísimo. Por lo menos alguien está manejando para allá. Te felicito, me encanta. Cualquier cosa que necesites me avisas.

Great. At least someone is driving this forward. I congratulate you, I love it. Anything you need, let me know.

RE OK, chevere, muchas gracias.

OK, cool, thank you very much.

P4 Un abrazo, cuídate mucho.

Take care.

RE Un abrazo, igual. Chao.

Same to you. Bye.

P4 Chao.

Bye.

Participant 5

Mexico

RE So my first question to you is: What does community mean to you in the context of your Caribbean or Latin American background?

P1 Sure. Well, I guess I can look back. When you immigrate, especially if you're thinking about community, especially the context of your country of origin, I'd say 100%. The biggest part of that is family. I think that's just very forward facing. It's also, the time that you primarily interact with community in the Latin American context. Secondary to that is all the Latin American friends bordering on family, let's say. It's even common to just call them your aunts, your uncles, family friends that you've made here, I think it's mostly just social gatherings, social events to do with family, you know the famous dinner get-together, or a Friday night dinner, weekend barbeque, something like that. Public type get-togethers I think it's the core part of community. I didn't really have a lot of Latin American friends growing up, so I mostly experienced community in the context of Latin America through my parents, and I think that's actually pretty common.

Even in Latin America, the community involves a lot of people of a lot of different ages, and maybe this is just because my parents and my family are Latin American, but I don't think that that is as pronounced in Canadian culture. I feel like it's a lot more sideways age-wise. So, I don't know if you had anything specific that you wanted me to touch upon further on that, but that's generally what it means. I think I hear that community in the Latin American context.

RE For sure, yeah. That kind of leads me to my next question, which is: is there any stories or like traditions or anything cultural That you feel is like missing or misrepresented in the City of Toronto?

P5 Sure. Right. Well, since there's a couple of different parts to your answer, I'd like to start first of first with Mexican food, or the misnomer of Mexican food. Generally, I think Toronto is better than most cities for Latin food, just because I think there's a lot of

Latin communities here. But of course, there is the, you know, Tex-Mex effect, we'll say. It's normal for things to kind of morph to suit more of the people that of a certain community. I'm sure there's been a lot of really authentic Caribbean or Latin restaurants that probably haven't done as well because they have been sticking really strongly to their roots and being unmoving in that way. So, I think it's normal for food specifically to morph, although obviously I lament it a little bit. Sometimes you do want real tacos if you want to say it that way, but all in all, I think Toronto specifically is well represented in the food department.

For the second part of your question regarding anything that's community based or any cultural events or places that I think are missing, personally I have only recently really intermingled my own social life with my Latin culture, and I think. I never felt I was missing anything. But I do think what was the closest I got to feeling like, "wow, this is something that's really, interesting and that I might have wanted to be a little bit more part of my life." We had a club España is what they're called. They're everywhere in most places where there's a big Spanish—specifically from Spain—Spanish community. I suppose you could call it a community centre, and it was a gathering place for a lot of the people. Most of the members I'll say are probably on the older side.

I think in Mexico specifically, there's a lot of big clubs like that and I think there can be a parallel because people coming in from Spain, a lot of families, decided to come to Mexico or during the Civil War. And so, there's a lot of pockets and I think that's normal. You can see it in Toronto with a lot of different ethnicities, but in Mexico specifically, there's a lot of specifically Spanish clubs and it's something that I saw here that they tried to replicate with a much smaller community and unfortunately it seems like they were always petering out and they would close out for a few years and they would try to open it back up and I think a big hurdle to them keeping something like that alive was the interest of younger people.

I really liked it in the beginning because I got to experience a lot of the foods that I would have when I was a kid. Even in Mexico, my family was friend with a lot of Spanish immigrants, and so it gave me a lot of nostalgia. And I'm guessing that's what a lot of people feel when they have cultural centres here. And I think what it might have been missing, or at least in my experience, that specific club that we went to here once we moved in Toronto. The reason that it was struggling is that young people weren't coming in. It kind of turned into an old people place and thing, and it kind of died out. And I'm not sure how you would fix this because I think objectively is just a good thing for the community to have. But yeah, I do believe that that was really, interesting place of culture

that again, I feel petered out because the interest just wasn't there. I mean for the young people, and I'm not sure how you'd fix that.

RE Yeah, no, I think that's super interesting. I also grew up going to a similar place in Venezuela, in Caracas, it was called Hermandad Gallega. And that place had that similar vibe with restaurants and other things like sports facilities and so on. It was just a place where you already knew that people you were friends with were going to be, and I think that's something that I'm also trying to achieve in the building that I'm trying to design, to make it a place where, if you don't really know where to go, there's always going to be something going on here. So, you can always come here and there'll be something to do. So yeah, I think that's a sentiment that I've also felt and that I that I want to try to foster, in that way.

P5 Yeah, that's actually a really interesting take on it. But if the experience of going to that community center would have been a little bit more like the default third place like you're talking about. You don't have somewhere to go, and you just want to go somewhere to pass the time where you know you're going to see people that you're interested in being around. Well, it would certainly be a lifeline to places like that instead of having only special occasions, which was really where the group came together to shine fully. But again, that's probably a lot more susceptible to petering out than a place where family goes and there's places for everybody to hang out. Not just "let's go and to watch this Flamenco performance from the club dance team" and inevitably you end up having to dress up. And when you're a kid, you're like, oh, I don't want to do this. I want to, you know, play video games instead. Or it becomes a little bit more of a chore instead of it being primarily an interesting place to hang out, secondarily a place to experience culture. In my experience, kids don't necessarily know the value of experiencing and being engrossed in the culture until maybe it's a little too late and you're like, "wow, maybe I should have taken more advantage of this when it was available."

RE Yeah, that's definitely true. And I mean I felt that way as well, moving here and being pretty young, but still understanding that I was losing something without really knowing what it was at the time. I don't think I really got it but still somehow understanding that there was something that I wouldn't have anymore. I guess looking back, I think that's part of why I wanted approach it this way too, because I wanted to see if there was any way of like getting any of those things back, you know what I mean? Cause I think when people immigrate anywhere, there's a bit of an acceptance that you must suffer a lot of the time. I don't know if you've thought this way too, but you kind of just accept that things will be different and you don't really do anything about it. When you do have the option, if you really did want to create a place like

this, there's ways for people to do so. But I think part of it is just that people in the back of their minds accept this "I will never have that" mentality, without ever trying to get it back. So that's why I'm trying to do it now, if you get what I mean.

P5 Yeah, of course.

RE Okay, cool. My next question, and we're kind of talking about it already, but thinking about the physical space that this place would be in, what kinds of programs or services or events would make you feel most connected to a space like this? What would make you want to go that you currently don't have access to?

P5 Well, that's interesting. I think I can probably tie into this answer about I want this place to be, but imagining somewhere that I want to go to I think is about having a place that's for everybody. What I mean by this is I think that anywhere where you want culture to actually flourish, there's a lot of recreational activities that younger people need, things like dancing and socializing; and a lot of recreation, especially for young adults and teenagers, happens later at night. If somehow that was legitimized in some way, I think it would help a lot in being able to properly embrace the culture, especially as Caribbean and Latin American culture in general.
I have kind of a weird example of this. I remember having this thought, strangely, after a prom that I went to in Saint John's, Newfoundland, where it was such a big contrast between what we had here in Ontario, and what they had. They had rented out a community centre space from, I believe it was 10:00 PM to 3:00 AM or something like that, for high schoolers. I could not imagine a high school here in Ontario, especially a public Catholic high school here in Ontario, saying, "yes, we're going to make something that's going to be fun and it'll be in the evening, like till 3:00 AM, For our high schoolers to jump around."

They had rented out the whole swimming pool in this recreation centre. So, we had some time where he could jump in there. They had food catered, there was dance halls, they had like a hypnotist come in, things like that. It wasn't a sterilized or damped down version of "let's do something for the kids." It was actually something that a teenager would want to go to. And I thought that was amazing because it kept them out of trouble. I don't know if you know anyone from Newfoundland, but East Coasters are notoriously big party people. And I think it was such an intelligent idea to legitimize doing something like this at a school sanctioned event where obviously there's going to be no alcohol, because it's relatively tightly controlled when you're coming in, but it was actually something that people would want to do; and so instead of prom happening and then everybody leaves at 10:00 PM to go, probably drink a little bit too much at home, they were able to do

something fun and interesting that was more controlled, that was again legitimized and I think it kind of legitimized the authority that the school had because it said to me, “we know you guys are teenagers and we know that you guys want to do something fun. This is this is a big event. Please come do it with us.”

I think especially around the city, now that I live in downtown Toronto, whenever you see groups of teenagers the prevailing sentiment about everybody on the on the street is kind of like, “oh, what are these guys doing here?” And I think that would be something really important to do if you really wanted a Community Center to speak to younger people, which again, I think is a very big piece if you need the long-term success of anywhere that’s cultural. You need the buy-in from young people, it needs to be something that they want to administer, right? Because it’s never going to live a very long time if you’re just having. older people, I’d say. Of course I’m generalizing here, but you need the buy in from young people, I think. And that means they need to administrate it and that they need to be able to do, within boundaries, what they want to do.

RE Definitely. And then I guess I can jump into my last question, and maybe it overlaps with the with what you just said, but if this place could accomplish one thing super, super well for the community, what should it be?

P5 Yeah, I mean, I think you got it spot on with what you said. I think the biggest part of a community center is that you really want to legitimize young people and what they like to do. And I mean, you can look around at the US more than here, I think they are having problems with the deterioration of their cities and generally delinquency and safety issues are bigger problems there. If you want a city to thrive, I think you need to eliminate the antagonization of young people, and the alienation of their needs. I think that’s what kills a lot of cities. If you’re not in New York or I guess even Toronto, cities that are financial hubs of relatively large wealthy countries where you can just sustain it with, rich people coming to downtown and spending all their money, any normal city has working aged people that need to stay alive and thrive. I think everyone needs community, and a big cornerstone of that is legitimizing young people and what they want, and to give them spaces where they can feel like they’re going to inherit something from this, you know what I mean?

RE Yeah, definitely. Amazing. Well, those are those are all my questions. So yeah, I mean, just want to say thanks for speaking to me.

P5 Yeah, no problem.

Organizational Interviews

Transcriptions

Joséphine Denis
Carlos Bastidas
Tamara Toledo
Rodrigo Barreda

Interview with Joséphine Denis

Director of Curatorial Initiatives, Black Artists' Networks In Dialogue (BAND)

RE How do your exhibitions/programs reflect or challenge the cultural or social identities of your visitors?

JD I wouldn't say necessarily 'challenge'. I think at the core of what we do—the exhibitions, the programming—is really to see the differences but also similarities as both vectors of connection. And so, if they challenge anything is maybe by encouraging to see the nuances and specificities that exist, and the plurality of identities that exist within our communities by focusing solely on black artists, locally, nationally and internationally. What that challenges us to do is to make sure that we're not boxing everyone into one way of thinking of identity. I think maybe curatorially for me that would be the challenge; to always dig deeper into how we can present artists in a way that reflects them, in a way that can be conveyed collectively but that also is grounded in that specific person and context.

RE What are some ways that you've been trying to tackle that? Could you maybe give me an example of a recent artist that you've been trying to portray their specific point of view, and how that has looked for you?

JD We just opened a show in Paris, with five artists from the Caribbean and the African continent, and we did it at the Canadian Cultural Centre which is within the Canadian Embassy. And so, to enter into that space you have to go through all of the security measures that are in place because it's an embassy, and for a lot of these artists that was a really symbolic moment because they went through this embassy when they were applying to enter Canada. So now being part of that space as artists that have such ease of access into that space, where they're now recognized by security, having that intimacy with the anxiety [around immigration procedures] and now that space becoming a place that they were claiming became quite interesting and moving for them. In terms of the specificity of the artists we're looking at one right now, Michaëlle Sergile, who uses a lot of her familial archives if photography and then tries to interpret them through architectural ways of placing those photographs.

[Josephine points to a plinth with Sergile's artwork]

You can't really see it, but this is a photo of her mother and her cousins, and basically, she's using elements of the environment such as the architecture in the background, as a way of grounding that image in a local history and an architectural history as well. When you look at the work, she's completely darkened the faces, and with that [gesture] there's this ability for you to project onto those faces and make them more familiar. But then for her it's also a way of layering them and being like: "even if you saw their faces, you wouldn't know as much about them as I do." What she does is really to try to use architecture that is specific to Haiti but that you could find throughout the Caribbean as well, like those [brise-soleil] blocks that you see along the top of the image, that are often in the balconies of houses in Haiti, as a way of adding to the context of that space.

RE What strikes me from what you're saying is that you want works to be specific but at the same time you want them to be accessible for people.

JD Yeah! And I think that there's no stressor around that. In terms of accessibility, it's also—if you want to say 'challenge'—then it's giving the responsibility to the viewer to meet the artists halfway.

RE On that vein, how do you begin to parse the themes you're trying to display in a space like this? How do you decide on the content and how to display it?

JD Well, it depends if it's a solo exhibition or a group exhibition. With a group exhibition as a curator I have total authorship at the beginning of what the concepts and the research framework will be, and when you do solo exhibitions it becomes a lot more collaborative, because the artist has a series of work that they're already thinking about, and so your role is to amplify that, to broaden the context and enrich the message. In terms of what you decide [to display], it's obviously about what serves that narrative and what you think represents that artist the best as well. You're trying to serve them too; you want the exhibition to push their career forward, so making sure that the work is strong [is important]. I think for me also, generally the artists that I am interested in are ones that are able to synthesize so much in one work—talk about place, history, cultural identity—and Black artists that are able to subvert expectations of representation by looking more inwards, looking at what an internal portraiture can be.



150. ***Artwork by Michaelle Sargile.*** Photograph by Author.

RE In terms of the space that you have right now—you're currently renovating your permanent exhibition space [on 19 Brock Avenue]—I'm wondering if you could also speak to me about what the design process for that space was like. Was there something you discovered along the way that you felt enriched the programming or community aspects of the gallery?

JD This is a very unique project because the decision to buy a domestic house and turn it into an art museum was very intentional, because of the history of Black folks that have created their own museums out of their houses that exists not only in North America, but in the Caribbean, where people see the value of the objects that they have in their archives and try to make it accessible to whoever. And so we didn't want to completely erase that sense of home that was part of that architecture because it is residential. But going from that to a more commercial space, which also involved transforming the zoning and whatnot, was a challenge because we were growing in a way where we weren't just buying something bigger, we were really trying to maximize the footprint that we already had.

It's been an interesting process because it's also [involved] thinking about creating an exhibition space that has everything you need that is accessible, multifunctional, that has museum-grade HVAC systems and lighting and whatnot, while also ensuring that it remains sustainable in terms of the maintenance of the building. So, it was very pragmatic at first. We want to keep this house, we want to make it better, and a better reflection of the artists' work. I think that when you're working in a space that isn't necessarily made to exhibit in there's charm in that, there's character in that, but there's also unfortunately not the best environment for the work to shine. I know the architecture firm [Diamond Schmitt Architects] did a lot of research, watched a lot of movies and had a lot of discussions around what it means to be in a Victorian house first of all, and then what it means to exhibit in a place that is so focused on community. I don't know, something enriching about this particular process…

RE I guess I'm wondering whether there was any sort of community consultations, or any input from external groups or members that don't necessarily have a financial stake—

JD I don't think there were any formal community consultations.

[JD confirms with a colleague that no formal consultations were done]

But this is a thing here that is quite different from major institutions is that people have access to us and we have access to our community extremely directly and intimately. There are so many informal conversations that you have where you are intimately familiar with

what your community needs, you're not detached from that. You see where we work, you can walk towards us and meet us, and we have conversations. Artists work in our spaces when we're not there, they take over the backyard [of 19 Brock] and paint there, so we already had a sense of the different creative ways that people were using the space, because it wasn't a space made necessarily for that. So, we saw how people were claiming space and wanted to use that as an inspiration. For example, we knew we needed a studio space for artists to make, we didn't have that. So, we dug out the basement and now there's going to be a space for that. We also have traveling artists who are interested in creating within the space. Our garden is very important, but we didn't necessarily have an entryway that was very public, so we made an extension to ensure that was happening.

Being in the house for three years without renovating and knowing that we would always renovate was in itself a study. The house was bought in 2016 and renovations started in 2022. During COVID people loved the fact that we did public art installations on the fences because that gave them a place to go during their walks. Throughout the seasons, and throughout those years it was incredible to see how people claimed that space, and what people came to us for.

RE And so that in and of itself, we can call a sort of 'trial period', where you know you're going to renovate the space was all the consultation you needed because you were getting that firsthand feedback from the groups that you were trying to serve.

JD Yeah. And for us that physical experience of that space was a lot truer to how people within our community give feedback rather than to sit them down and ask them things, for us that's not really a way of asking people. It's more about inviting them in and seeing how they respond.

RE I know it might be hard to pin down since you are having these conversations so fluidly, but I'm wondering if there's a specific time where you're seeking that feedback more intentionally.

JD I wouldn't say 'seeking', but we do a lot of intergenerational programs and exhibitions, so we have elders that definitely had a hard time accessing that space, so we knew from the beginning that the space had to be fully accessible. People who weren't part of the community, or that didn't know that BAND was open to everyone, the fact that the door just looked like the door to a home made people unsure about whether they could come in. We would get a lot of questions about "Is this open to everyone?" Even if we left the door open, even if my co-director Claudia who's been there—I never worked in that space when it was open but she

did—she would say that she would walk out and let people know that this was open to everyone and people would still hesitate. So we're going to move the entrance from Brock [Avenue] to Noble [street] on the side to make it wider and completely take down the fence there, so that there's more of that obvious invitation to enter.

RE I think that's a really interesting way of thinking about how you're going to operate the space, and I think a lot of the time people don't get to do that because buildings get built speculatively and you don't necessarily know what's going to go there in the future.

JD But it was still a challenge for the architects because it's not a huge footprint because you want to add things like an elevator, but you don't want to lose exhibition space. So where do you put it? So, the architects really came up with a design where the mechanical is at the top of the building and there's this design that makes it look really beautiful and decorative, but really, it's just hiding the mechanical. Knowing that this is the space that we had and knowing that we wanted the skeleton of the original house to remain, those are things that you're working with.

RE I'm also wondering if you consider the gallery itself as a space that you can sculpt to drive your point further along with your artwork, and the ways that you do that.

JD Yeah, in terms of displaying of works that already exist, the space determines that. You can't ignore the architecture of a space. You have to be in conversation with it, because it's holding up everything. It really is. And everything counts: the lighting, the height, how much space you have between a work and yourself and another person, all of that is part of the experience of the viewer, so curatorially you study architecture and art history for a reason. It's because they go together. Museums were conceptualized as white boxes because of ideas around white purity and cleanliness and elitism, so you were very grounded in that, you can't ignore that. I think for us [19 Brock] is a very experimental space, because the skeleton remains a house, so the space is much smaller than our temporary space right now. You're going to be in spaces that are much narrower and smaller, and you can see that as a limitation, because you think "what if I want to have an artist come in and do something that's twelve feet grand?" Because some artists like that as a challenge, but I think here that challenge will be to reorient people in a space. How can I as a curator make them aware of that intimacy in the space? That will always be how we invite artists in, not to just use the walls, but to really use the space in as many creative ways as they can.

On the second-floor gallery we've opened up the attic so that it becomes a double-height space, so there I really see installations,

sculptures, things that are hanging. I'm also thinking about how you can hang two-dimensional artworks like photographs on the slopes of the ceiling. When you're in a space that small, the architecture is like your co-conspirator. We're going to have a staircase that goes from the basement all the way to the top, and I want to invite artists to do site-specific murals or installations on those walls. You're using spaces that you wouldn't usually think of as exhibition spaces, but that's not my priority. My priority in a space like that is to invite the viewer to imagine "How do you live with art?" In the Caribbean, that's so important, it's everywhere, it's how you live. Our wealth is this surrounding and bursting of visual culture, so I want to remind our own communities of that by putting works in places where you might think of them as 'in-between' spaces, but it's not, it's everywhere.

We're also thinking of doing a Winter Pavilion, which is inspired by the Serpentine Gallery's Summer Pavilion series, so there's going to be a terrace on the roof, so we want to invite Black artists to come and extend that space in the winter, and what does that look like in terms of light, and comfort, and warmth. It's going to look quite experimental, we want the artists to play and push the space. Thinking of the different ways that artists can use space, and something I didn't mention is that we won't have spaces that are fully dedicated to offices. That is based on this idea that we're working and present in the space as it is, and people have access to us in that way. When the basement becomes available, which is going to be a maker space, then we'll use that for meetings, but we're not thinking of this idea of a closed office where you can't see us and you can't hear us. We're fully opened up, because we want to rethink the way that people relate to labour.

RE It seems like there's an element of subversion, and at the same time an element of democratization. You spoke on accessibility a lot, and it not only seems like it's from an able-bodied or non-able-bodied perspective, but also accessibility in terms of your ability to understand and see people, and for people to have access to each other.

JD Yeah, exactly. We're fully redoing the entrance to be completely open, and you'll have direct access to the building. Small things like that I feel are not just for our community but also for everyone to engage with our community. We're super excited about it.

RE I also wanted to ask about the future of BAND, since you're coming into the new space, could you speak about the experimentation a bit more and what that would look like in terms of subverting that space?

JD Yeah, along with all the things that I mentioned before about the site-specific installations and commissions in the staircase, we want to also let others experiment with the space. Our name is Black Artists' Networks in Dialogue, so we also want to tap into those networks, how do we sustain them and invest in them. Because of that we're thinking of having organizations that are in the Caribbean, Europe, and the African continent to take over the space for a whole season. That for us is replicating an idea you're talking about that the Caribbean is a shared space. Our gallery is also a reflection of that idea. We're pouring a lot of resources and ourselves into it, but ultimately it is to be shared. We don't mean for it to be a space where we invite you and we tell you what to do, we actually want to take a step back and let others interpret the space. That also helps us open up our own context, talking about that relational aspect of it, we want to ensure that the networks that we tap into also get to broaden by being in our space.

RE In terms of programming, have you hosted events beyond exhibitions that tap into the network aspect you're talking about?

JD Yeah, we do live arts, like theatre and film screenings, people have used our space as a stage where they remake plays where they take over a room. Also programs that are focused on dance, meditative programs that are focused on healing the mind and the body. We do culinary arts, so we'll have dinners where we ask chefs and culinary food historians to come and tie in cultural and artistic expression to food and the way that is tied to our cultures as well. We are also going to host Caribbean- and African-focused farmer's markets; so there's a gazillion things.

RE I really appreciate this holistic approach that you have towards your gallery programming because it's very representative of culture, it's all-encompassing.

JD Yeah, exactly. That is actually how it happens in real life. We don't want to simplify or reduce culture for it to fit the space simply because it was thought of for a different purpose. I'm sure the way we're thinking about it now will change in the future, and that's the whole point of having people take over. We want to see how they will use the space because it might be way different than how we think about it. It's about being constantly open to what the community needs and how they claim the space, and we see that as enrichment.

Interview with Carlos Bastidas

Executive Director, Hispanic Canadian Arts and Cultural Association (HCACA)

[Español]

RE Lo primero que quería saber es si me podías explicar un poco de las iniciativas que ustedes están haciendo ya para mantener la cultura a través de su asociación.

CB Sí, muy buenos días. Yo soy el director ejecutivo de la Asociación Hispana de las Artes en Canadá, nuestra casa base es en Mississauga, Ontario, estamos residenciados acá en nuestra oficina, aunque hacemos proyectos en todo el Greater Toronto Area y también hemos empezado a hacer proyectos en todo Ontario, y vamos creciendo hacia toda Canadá. Se fundó en el año 2010, ya vamos para 15 años de servicios, es una organización sin ánimo de lucro y estamos realizando desde muchos años un festival latinoamericano de música y artes, gratis para toda la comunidad ya desde hace muchos años, y así nació la iniciativa y de ahí creció para dar otros servicios como talleres mensuales de artes plásticas a los niños. Esos se dan en centros comunitarios y en bibliotecas; sitios donde sean accesibles. También celebramos en octubre nuestro mes, todos los años hacemos eventos el mes de la herencia latinoamericana, y siempre hacemos eventos ese mes, por ejemplo este año tenemos programado una exposición de pintura de dos pintores muy reconocidos, una pintora mexicana y un pintor ecuatoriano, y todos los años hacemos así exhibiciones en varias galerías de la ciudad. También estamos apoyando muchas iniciativas a través de Ontario, por ejemplo la feria internacional del libro, es una feria que es del libro en español que se realiza en Ottawa en octubre y también nosotros somos uno de los patrocinadores para esa feria, y patrocinamos también muchos de los grupos hispanos que están comenzando localmente como grupos de teatro, danza, etcétera.

[English]

The first thing I wanted to know is if you could explain a bit about the initiatives that your organization is already undertaking to maintain culture.

Yes, good morning. I am the executive director of the Hispanic Canadian Arts and Cultural association, our headquarters is in Mississauga, Ontario where we have our offices, though we undertake projects throughout the Greater Toronto Area and we have also started to do projects Ontario-wide, and we hope to continue to grow to a Canada-wide organization. We started in 2010; we are coming up on 15 years of offering services to the public. We are a not-for-profit and for many years we have planned a Latin American music and art festival which is free for the whole community and has been going for many years, and that is how this initiative was born, and from there it has grown into other services such as monthly plastic arts workshops for children. These are held in community centres and libraries; sites where they are accessible. In October we also celebrate Latin American Heritage month, we hold many events in that month, for example this year we have organized an exhibit of two very acclaimed painters, one from Mexico and one from Ecuador, and every year we hold exhibits in galleries throughout the city. We are also supporting many initiatives throughout Ontario for example the International Book Fair, which is a fair that revolved around Spanish language books that takes place in Ottawa in October. We are also one of the sponsors for that fair, also sponsor many other Hispanic groups which are starting out at a local level, such as theatre groups, dance groups, and so on.

RE Entonces están bastante involucrados en varias partes de cultura, en obras de teatro y de música; entonces mi pregunta sería cómo deciden el próximo paso que tomar en ese sentido? ¿Ven que el festival es el evento que ustedes organizan que trae la más gente anualmente y de ahí expanden a otras cosas?

So you are quite involved in a lot of areas of culture—in theatre, dance, and music—so I am wondering how you decide on the next steps to take in that aspect? Is the Latin American festival that you organize the event that brings the most people into the community, and then you can expand further from there?

CB Correcto, así como estás diciendo. El festival es el evento con el que empezamos y el que trae más gente, y de ahí nos expandimos a hacer otros tipos de eventos, pero siempre los hacemos en colaboraciones con gente que son expertos en las áreas. Por ejemplo, los que son expertos en pintura son los que nos colaboran en exhibiciones

Correct, it's exactly as you say. The festival is the event that we started out with and the one that brings in the most people, and from there we have expanded into other types of events, but we always host them in collaboration with people that are experts in those fields. For example, those that are experts in painting are the ones

de arte, los que son expertos en teatro, como el grupo Mississauga Players, ellos nos colaboran con la parte que hace el teatro; los que son expertos en el libro, escritores, con ellos hacemos colaboraciones para la feria nacional del libro, etcétera. Tú no puedes ser experto en todas las áreas, y así es que operamos.

with which we organize art exhibits, theatre experts, like the Mississauga Players, are the ones that collaborate with us to host theatre-based events, those that are experts on books, we will collaborate with them for events such as the National Book Fair, and so on. One can't be an expert in every area, so that's how we operate.

RE De lo que veo en su página web, son un equipo bastante pequeño, con solo dos empleados permanentes.

From what I can see on your website you have quite a small team, with only two full-time staff.

CB Sí, totalmente. Somos dos personas trabajando como empleados, pero el equipo es muy grande en cuanto que detrás de eso tenemos una Junta Directiva que está formada de voluntarios de la comunidad, y también manejamos semestralmente cuatro estudiantes que hacen la pasantía de Humber College con nosotros. Esos estudiantes estudian cosas como marketing, planificación, y servicios a la comunidad y damos espacio para ellos para que completen sus pasantías con nosotros. Obviamente el equipo es pequeño porque no queremos gastar todos los recursos en salarios y no prestar servicios a la comunidad porque todo se fue en salarios, pero el equipo que es asalariado maneja todo este otro equipo de gente.

Yes, totally. We are two people working as full-time employees, but the team is actually, very large. We have a Board of Directors that is made up of volunteers and other members of the community, and on a semester basis we also host students that do co-op terms with us from Humber College. These students are in fields like marketing, event planning, and community service, so we give them the opportunity and the space to complete their co-op terms with us. Obviously, the team is small because we do not want to waste all our resources on salaries instead of offering services to the community, but the salaried team members are the ones that oversee overseeing these other groups of people.

RE Claro, entiendo. Lo que me pregunto es que estos eventos deben tomar un gran esfuerzo en planificar, entonces quería saber cómo era el proceso con un equipo pequeño para planear un evento de ese tamaño.

I understand. What I am wondering about is that these events must take a great amount of effort to plan, so I wanted to know what the process was like with a small team to plan events of that size.

CB El proceso es muy fácil en cuanto a que si tienes experiencia de planificación de eventos, tú subcontratas al equipo resto. Todos los departamentos que hacen un evento son subcontratados para el momento del evento. Cada evento que se hace se generan unos 40 o 50 empleos temporales durante el curso del festival. Este es un modelo que se usa mucho aquí en Canadá también, los festivales de jazz en Ottawa y Toronto hacen lo mismo; esos festivales también tienen un par de empleados permanentes pero es un festival que mueve un millón de personas al año, lo mismo con los festivales en Waterloo y Kitchener donde estás tú; no vas a tener empleados contratados todo el año para un festival de un par de días.

The process is very simple in the sense that if you have experience with planning these events, you can subcontract the rest of the team. All the departments that help in making the event are subcontracted for the event itself. Every event that we do generates somewhere around 40-50 temporary jobs throughout the course of the festival. This is a model that is widely used here in Canada, events such as jazz festivals in Ottawa and Toronto do the same thing, those festivals also have a couple of permanent employees, but these are festivals that move like a million people a year, same as the festivals in Waterloo and Kitchener where you are; you're not going to have employees hired the whole year for a festival that is only a few days.

RE También tenía una pregunta sobre su local en Mississauga.

I also had a question about your storefront in Mississauga.

CB No es un local, nuestras oficinas están en Mississauga. Tener un local significa gastos en alquiler y mantenimiento. Nuestras oficinas quedan en Port Credit, y tenemos una colección de instrumentos y una oficina pequeña. El espacio se usa solo como oficina porque es muy pequeño como para tener eventos para la comunidad.

It's not a storefront, but our offices are in Mississauga. Having a storefront means expenses such as rent and maintenance. Our offices are in port credit, where we have a collection of instruments and a small office. The space is only used as an office because it is too small to hold events for the community there.

RE Esa era mi pregunta, si han usado ese espacio para eventos.

That was my question, if you had used that space for events.

CB En la oficina no, pero en el piso de arriba hay una galería de arte, y esa galería sí la hemos alquilado para eventos, se llama Galería Pazan.

Not at the office, but the upstairs floor of the office has an art gallery, and we have used that gallery for events. The gallery is called Galeria Pazan.

RE Eso me lleva a mi próxima pregunta, porque en la página web hablan sobre la visibilidad, y que una de sus metas es avanzar la visibilidad de la gente latinoamericana y caribeña, entonces quería saber si has tenido alguna experiencia personal que hizo darte cuenta de una falta de visibilidad en Canadá.

That takes me to my next question, because on your website you speak about visibility, and one of the goals being to advance the visibility of Latin American and Caribbean people, so I wanted to know if you have had any personal experience that made you notice a lack of visibility of Latin American people in Canada?

CB Sí, hemos tenido ocasiones cuando gente que organiza otros festivales de música nos preguntan si conocemos grupos hispanos de jazz, o un mariachi, o baile venezolano, o cumbia colombiana, y obvio que esos grupos existen pero falta visibilidad. Entonces por eso hemos creado una iniciativa que está ahí en la página web, que es un Directorio de Artistas. Ya tenemos registrados como 150 artistas de varias categorías diferentes que incluyen música, teatro, danza, otras artes, administración de eventos, y ha sido un éxito total porque los artistas se registran totalmente gratis, nos mandan su estudiografía, fotos y contactos, y el Directorio ha ayudado mucho a esos registrantes que les lleguen trabajos porque son descubiertos más fácilmente por personas que necesitan esos tipos de artistas para sus eventos. Ha sido un recurso excelentísimo para que los artistas puedan ser más visibles.

Yes, we have had occasions where people that recognize other festivals have asked us if we know Hispanic jazz groups, or mariachi bands, or Venezuelan dancers, or Colombian cumbia players, and obviously those groups exist, but there is a lack of visibility. Because of that, we have created an initiative that is there on the website, which is an artist directory. We already have about 150 artists that are registered in various categories that include music, theatre, dance, art, event administration, and it has been a total success because the artists that register can do so completely for free, they send us their work, pictures, and contact information, and the directory has helped its registrants defined work because they're more easily discovered by people that need those types of artists for their events. It has been a very excellent resource so that artists can be more visible.

RE ¿Se han dado cuenta que les ha dado más visibilidad y oportunidades a esos artistas en realidad?

And have you noticed that in reality it has helped give visibility and opportunities to those artists?

CB Sí, totalmente, muchos de ellos me lo han dicho anecdóticamente que gracias al Directorio les han llegado muchas posibilidades de trabajo, y otros grupos los han llamado para contratarlos, entonces sí es algo que está funcionando para los artistas que participan.

Yes, totally, many of them have told me anecdotally that thanks to the directory they have landed many gigs and work opportunities, and other groups have called to hire them, so we know that it is something that is working for the artists that participate.

RE ¿Hay algún desafío que encuentras que ha sido difícil en mantener esta iniciativa? ¿Tienes algún consejo para un grupo pequeño que está empezando, o algún desafío que has superado que ha hecho a la iniciativa más fuerte?

Is there any challenge that you find has been very difficult in maintaining your organization? Do you have any advice for a small group that is just starting out, or a challenge that you have overcome that has made the initiative stronger?

CB Totalmente. Grupos pequeños que están empezando nos han llamado y nosotros totalmente les hemos dado asesoría en cómo empezar, pues la información es pública. La información y recursos están allí, información de cómo aplicar para un subsidio, de cómo se registra una compañía sin ánimo de lucro, todo eso está disponible en internet y es público, solamente damos asesoría y orientación para que ellos lo hagan, y exitosamente varios de esos grupos ya han arrancado y estamos apoyándolos no solamente con asesoramiento, pero también los apoyamos con los artistas que están registrados en nuestra base de datos.

Totally. Small groups that have just started out call us and we have totally given then consult on the ways in which to start, but the reality is that all of that information is public. All the information and the resources are there, information such as how to apply for a subsidy, how to register a not-for-profit company, although that is available on the Internet and is public, we only consult and Orient them so that they can do it themselves, and many of those groups have already successfully taken off and we are supporting them not only with consultation, but we also support the with the artists that we have registered in our database.

RE ¿Usted siente la necesidad para un espacio físico? ¿Cree que los programas con los que está haciendo son suficientes para proliferar la cultura latinoamericana en Canadá, o un espacio físico permanente ayudaría a esa causa?

Do you feel the need for a physical space? Do you believe that the programs that you are undertaking are enough to proliferate Latin American culture in Canada and would a physical space that is permanent help that cause?

CB Definitivamente un espacio físico ayudaría muchísimo. Desafortunadamente requiere de mucho capital para ese tipo de proyecto, pero sí sería muy positivo.

A physical space would definitely help a lot. Unfortunately that kind of project requires a lot of capital, but yes it would be a very positive thing.

RE Y si pudiera soñar que tienes un espacio, sin que el dinero fuera un problema, ¿qué tipos de programas piensas que serían beneficiarios para tener en un edificio permanente?

And if you could dream that you have a space, with money being no object, what types of programs do you think would be beneficial to have in a permanent building?

CB Por ejemplo, una de las cosas que sería muy beneficiosa serían clases permanentes de folclore latinoamericano, enseñanza para chicos jóvenes de danza, clases de música folclórica donde los chicos aprendan música andina y a tocar cosas como la zampoña, la quena, y el cuatro venezolano, el tiple colombiano, los tambores caribeños, una clase de arte con temas latinoamericanos… el cielo es el límite.

For example, one of the things that would be beneficial would be permanent folklore classes that teach youth about Latin American folklore, things such as dance and music classes that are also based in folklore that teach kids to play Indian music and play instruments such as zampona, kena, and the Venezuelan cuatro, Colombian tiple, Caribbean drums, An art class with Latin American themes... The sky's the limit.

RE Me parece muy interesante que en lo que dices me suena que hay un aspecto de la cultura que es algo físico, algo que se hace con las manos. Quizás uno se identifica con unos grupos más que los otros, pero que hay una idea de practicar y perfeccionar la cultura, como un ritual.

It's very interesting to me that what you're saying sounds like there's an aspect of culture that is physical, something that you do with your hands. Perhaps one identifies with one group more than the other, but there's an idea of practicing and perfecting culture like a ritual.

CB No necesariamente. Obviamente en la cultura hay creatividad, que eso no es algo que se puede prevenir, pero lo que sí estoy diciendo es que muchas de nuestras costumbres que tenemos en Latinoamérica son pasadas oralmente, hay mucha tradición oral entre abuelo a padre, de padre a hijo… por ejemplo, cuando empiezas a tocar un instrumento empiezas de niño, sobre todo con respecto a la música folclórica, eso se aprende con tradición oral. Entonces hay mucho espacio para creatividad y comunicación en ese intercambio. Ahí es donde nace la creatividad. Y la práctica hace la perfección.

Not necessarily. Obviously in culture there is creativity, and that is not something that you can foresee, but what I am saying is that many of our customs that we have in Latin America are passed down orally, there's a lot of oral tradition between grand father and father, from father to son... For example, when you start out playing an instrument you start as a child, especially regarding folklore music, it's something that is learned almost entirely through oral traditions. So, there's a lot of space for creativity and communication in that exchange. That is where creativity is born. And practice makes perfect.

Interview with Tamara Toledo

Director and Curator, Sur Gallery and Latin American Canadian Art Projects (LACAP)

RE The first question that I had was how you would characterize Sur Gallery and LACAP's role in the cultural landscape of Toronto. What would you say the role of the organization is?

TT I think that LACAP and the work that LACAP has developed throughout the years and specifically Sur Gallery for the past 10 years has played a pivotal role in disseminating the work of Latin American art artists as well as the culture of the diaspora. It has served as a platform, but also advocacy for the diaspora in the context of Canada. Sur Gallery is the only space that showcases Latin American art from the region and of the diaspora in Canada. So, in that sense, it's unique, and it is essential to towards, you know, developing some sense of belonging for the diaspora in the context of Canada.

RE In terms of the diaspora, there's been a lot of immigration waves throughout the past 50 years and beyond, so there's this idea of a network of the diaspora to bring people together. I'm wondering how Sur Gallery tries to foster those relationships. I know art is your biggest avenue to do that, of maintaining those relationships to be ongoing within the organization.

TT LACAP has existed for 20 years, so of course the needs of the community were very different back when we just started from what they are today and the and the demographic has changed as well. We've been an organization that has strived to adapt and respond to those different needs and the different projects that LACAP has developed throughout the years really have been developed in response to those needs.

RE In terms of fostering the community of the diaspora, how do you attempt to gather different experiences in an institutional context? I'm curious about the ways that the programming and initiatives are trying to foster this community and grow it and in what ways you have done that in the past. Also, looking forward into the if the needs of the diaspora have adapted you've adapted your programming to cater to those needs, are you currently seeing any trends that you are planning to accommodate?

TT Yeah. So, so thinking back on how we've addressed those needs in the past and I can give some examples of things that we've done, for example, around 2005, I believe, or 2006, there was a report that came out of the TDSB [Toronto District School Board] saying that there was a 40% dropout rate of Latin American youth from schools. Our response was to initiate a project called Knowledge of the Americas. We partnered with the TDSB to bring in workshops about Latin American art and we would hire Latin American artists from the community to bring in different kinds of disciplines into curriculum to establish connection with community, but also give a sense of belonging and place for all those students of Latin American background within the school system that felt very detached from a very Eurocentric perspective of teaching and a Western pedagogy. So, I that was sort of our response and contribution towards that specific circumstance within our community.

We've also advocated for the naming of a laneway in Toronto after a Latin American artist. The laneway is called Victor Jara Lane , and it's and located very close to a housing Co-op in the Chilean community. It's not only been focused on visual art and exhibitions at Sur Gallery, but it also has been community-based engaged projects that we've tried to respond to the social needs of our local community.

One of the more recent projects we've conducted is Archivo, which is the digital archive that we've been developing since 2022 and that was also in response after a symposium we conducted during the pandemic. It was an online symposium and we had the diaspora participating throughout Canada with different partnerships established with various Latin American organizations throughout Canada in cities line Vancouver and Winnipeg and Montreal, and the realization afterwards that there was no archive of visual artists. So that was something that we took on as well.

I think that looking towards the future, we've been thinking about this a lot, especially in the context of our 10th year anniversary. We conducted a community gathering and looked at what others were thinking about how to contribute and how to engage with the work that we've been doing for the past 10 years at the gallery. In envisioning what the next 10 years could look like, there were lots of ideas and contributions from people from different backgrounds that we will respond to and think about, considering also the resources that we have as a small underfunded institution. We have taken that position from the very beginning, since we launched LACAP to really engage with community through talks, through

panels, through discussion with events like Aconséjate, which is another project that we had developed in the past in in reaching out to community to see what is needed and then respond and then take action and implement projects.

RE That's wonderful. The main thing that I see as a theme throughout all of those is that there's a there's an idea of visibility that is, I think maybe comes through with this idea of fostering culture, making it really apparent. And this came up in other conversations that I've had with other leaders of institutions within the Hispanic community in Canada. It seems to me that there's a physical element to culture that manifests itself in different ways. Whether it's music or art or theater, there seems to be an element of practicing and mastering that craft. Is that something that you have thought about or that you have noticed?

TT Yeah, definitely. I mean, I think throughout the two decades that I've been involved within the visual arts sector and the industry in Toronto, my personal objective has been to master that and to present our craft as you've mentioned, with the most utmost professionalism as possible in order to step away and reject that stereotype of Latin Americans being 'all over the place' or 'unprofessional'. Twenty years ago, a lot of the artists within the community were presenting their work in small shops and in cafes, and that's that. The best they could do is rent a small little gallery space, but they weren't given the opportunity to show their work in and be represented by commercial galleries or in larger institutions, there wasn't that sort of platform for them. When there were group exhibitions, they weren't necessarily curated or they were sporadic, not carefully curated and so there wasn't a sense of…

RE Focus maybe?

TT Yeah, there was no clear focus of exhibitions. So, when I started curating 20 years ago, for me it was really important to showcase the work with attention and with more care towards the artists and the themes and really develop ideas around the concept of exhibitions and to present them with professionalism, which at that point we weren't seeing 20 years ago. That's why I personally got into curating.

I started my profession as an artist and as a Latin American artist, and at that time there were no platforms, there were no opportunities for me to develop as an artist in Toronto. I slowly started building those opportunities for my fellow colleagues, and I think that there is in essence not only this need for representation and visibility, but also in a way, we are the ones who decide how that representation is developed and how to develop that narrative ourselves.

RE For sure. I find it very commendable and inspiring that you've taken matters into your own hands and decided that there was this missing piece to the experience of being a person of Latin American descent in Toronto and wanting to change that, and I think in a lot of ways those are the same issues that I'm feeling. I don't know if you have felt this as well, but at least in my case, I feel like even though nowadays we've become more connected than ever, a lot of the time I have ended up feeling quite disconnected from my own culture. It's only in very small moments throughout my day that I do end up feeling like I connect with my culture, if at all.

I think what you're talking about is a step in the right direction and I'm trying to further that idea of connecting people together, which is why I'm asking about the network tat you've established with initiatives like Archivo, and all the other initiatives that you're spearheading.

TT Yeah, I think in terms of network, the connection between organizations and individuals, leaders, and community. Not that I want to be hierarchal, but it's it there. There should be some sort of communication and collaboration happening. Otherwise you just have silos of different organizations doing their own thing and unaware of each other, which hasn't been ideal. We haven't reached that sort of level of collaboration. There is some communication, but I think that if we're able to collaborate in more meaningful ways, we could grow as a community a lot further.

I think a lot of these organizations are in such a precarious situation; as you know, non-profits as underrepresented and underfunded communities, so it's very difficult to also collaborate under those conditions, but I think that it is needed for our community to be a lot more in sync so we can work together towards building something bigger.

RE For sure. Is that something that you've been feeling for a while? Has this been a theme that's been recurring for a while, or is this something a bit more recent that you've experienced? Because that's very aligned with what I'm trying to do with this thesis and design.

TT Yeah, I think that from the very beginning it's always been very divided and very difficult to collaborate. I think that there is a lot of competitiveness for the little resources that there are. There's a lot of individualism and egos in the community that hinder any possible collaboration. I'm sorry to be so blunt about it, but it's

something that I'm sure is not only true to our community as Latin Americans, but it's probably something that repeats in other communities as well. However, I think that particularly our community, because we're composed of so many different nations, cultures, and political ideologies or stances within our community, they can sometimes divide more than unite us. I think it's very difficult at the same time to come to meeting points with other people.

I co-founded LACAP with my partner Rodrigo Barreda, and he has specific experiences of trying to establish a Latin American Arts Center. This was one thing that he was trying to develop about 10 years ago, and that's where the Aconséjate sessions started. These sessions were an attempt to reach out to the community and have conversations of what this Latin American Art Center could look like. And he tried to collaborate with other Arts organizations and leaders from the community and that proved to be very difficult. So, it requires a lot of work and a lot of support, I would say financial support, logistical support. But also, a lot of support from the community and from key individuals that that really believe in collaboration.

RE Would you be able to speak to me a little bit more about what that process looked like 10 years ago? As you're mentioning, maybe some things got in the way and the project didn't take off as expected.

TT In LACAP's core mandates, one of the things that we mentioned is we would like to open a Latin American Art Center or art space. And so that idea of opening a center, it was probably more than 10 years ago because we've had Sur Gallery for 10 years. We started as a multidisciplinary arts festival, so this idea of opening a space was multidisciplinary. The vision was to have a space where you could have theater and dance and screenings and visual art. Rodrigo tried to reach out to organizations like Alameda Theater and Aluna Theater that existed back then, to try to begin to have discussions around the potential idea of opening a Centre and collaborating.

We did end up doing a pilot project called Imagine, which I believe I mentioned to you that we did. That was like a pop-up Gallery for one month on St. Clair [Avenue], and that served as a precursor for Sur Gallery. And it shifted. Once we realized that we weren't going to be able to collaborate with everyone to realize a center, a multidisciplinary center, then we focused more towards opening a gallery space, which was sort of our expertise, right? We had no idea about theater or music or anything, so our expertise was visual art, and we just focused on that.

RE I understand. I won't keep you too much longer, but talking about this pilot project got me wondering what would envision a space like that today, how would it look to you?

TT I mean, right now for me the focus is still visual art. I'm envisioning a larger space for sort of gallery, a space where you could have not only exhibitions but public programming, maybe artist residencies. A space that could potentially host a library of Latin American art books. A space where you could also host talks and screenings… that's sort of where my mind is going. Not so much like a big Arts Centre where you have a multitude of different spaces.

Interview with Rodrigo Barreda

Education Programming Director, Latin American Canadian Art Projects (LACAP)

RE I wanted to ask you a bit about your attempt to start a Latin American Arts Centre in the past. What was the process like for that endeavour?

RB We started in 2003 during the as an initiative of the Chilean community to commemorate the 30 years of the military coup, and so we came up with this idea of the Salvador Allende Arts Festival. It had a longer name because we really wanted to characterize it as a celebration of survival, so we named it the Salvador Allende Arts Festival for Peace. Not that we were in a war or in armed conflict or anything, but it was more on a reflection of the peace that we needed for healing after trauma as the children, as the sons and daughters of political refugees. There was an acknowledgment of the role of art in the healing process for a community, or the lack of that healing, and it was intended to be a one-off event and then we were just all going to go home. But it was such a big success that people wanted us to continue organizing it.

That really pushed us to dive into a super steep learning curve about how the arts and cultural kind of networks and system worked in Toronto, in Ontario, and in Canada, but also basic things like how do you write a grant application? How do you apply for funding? How do you set up a board? Because these things, it's almost like a domino effect. If you want to apply for funding, you have to be a not-for-profit organization, you have to register, then you have to have a board, then you have to write applications…it was one thing after the other. So that the process in the initial years, I would say from 2003 to maybe 2005 or 2006.

In that period, we tried different things. I think the main motivation was to create a platform for presenting Latin American artists and their work. It was a multidisciplinary festival, but we started diving into things like advocacy. We started doing, for example, Aconsejate, we started working on the Victor Jara Lane Project. We started working on also providing workshops. Since we were learning, we also partnered up with the art councils to see if they

could actually provide workshops for artists in the community on writing grant applications and things like that.

So that was about the initial stage, and I think we hit a bit of a plateau, because even within the festival, one thing was to showcase your work or present your work as an artist or designer. Another thing was to organize the platform. Not only to present your work, but to present the work of others. And to be quite honest, I think that was the main obstacle. People were and actually told me, you know, openly, they would say "What I want is for you to organize an event for me to present my work. I'm not going to dedicate any effort in organizing an event to promote others' work. why would I do that?" And that was heartbreaking, but it was also part of the environment that we were working in. And so, through that process we decided to begin focusing more on visual arts and performance specifically, and in visual arts we also included community projects and design projects. For example, we organized the creation of things like mural paintings and educational workshops in high schools. And that led to other kinds of projects, like the Art of the Americas projects, the creation of an activity book for kids that was distributed throughout the TDSB, and those kinds of initiatives.

But then we started focusing on visual arts, and at the same time other organizations began focusing on other art practices. You already had Alucine, for example, focusing on film and video, at that time there was Aluna Theater led by Beatrice Pisano, and you also had Alameda Theatre that was led by Marilo Nunez at the time. You also had Jose Ortega, who was the co-owner of Lula Lounge, where a lot of the Latin American arts music artists were performing and presenting their work. There was also Pavia Arts on Saint Clair, which at that time was a physical space where different dance workshops, capoeira workshops, and music collectives would gather to practice, and rehearse. So that was a bit of what was happening in in the community and what we had done was really tried to focus on creating the presentation platform.

We felt that the biggest challenge was that there wasn't a market specifically for the visual arts. So, to generate that market or create that market, we needed to promote an understanding, for starters, of what Latin American visual arts were. Because we felt at that at that time, at least when we talked about Latin American art, the mainstream of the Canadian audience, their minds went to Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, and that was it. You couldn't move beyond that, there was no knowledge, understanding, or awareness that there were other artists and other art forms. There was no knowledge really of, for example, performance art in Latin America or anything else really. We had to create that market and we started doing more to create it. The Latin American Speaker series was part of that effort. We also felt, or we realized at that point that

what we also wanted was that we needed our own spaces to be able to articulate our own curatorial perspectives.

There was starting to be some interest in Latin American art, but you had instances like the AGO's Frida Kahlo exhibit. It was not curated by a by a Latin American, and you could see even in the curatorial premises, a very eurocentric gaze or perspective on what Frida Kahlo meant, not only artistically, but also culturally and politically. So, we started feeling like, "well, we need a space where we could talk about and articulate our own perspectives on Latin American art." So, we set out to talk to other organizations, the ones that I've mentioned, and talked about the possibility of working on a Latin American Arts Center together.

We came up with this idea of the Latin American Art Center Collective, and there was a collective of people that got together, and we started working on a few initiatives. One of them was a survey to get a sense of the Latin American artist community in Toronto, and of the community's needs and perceptions of art. This was a project that Lewin Goldring, a professor at York University, worked with us on. She provided student support to work on and manage it, and we also worked on a project which was basically a fundraising project supported by OCAD University and Scotiabank. And it was basically a calendar; that was 2013. It was a Latin American artist calendar, and each month profiled an artist, but also the calendar talked about specific dates of importance.

Part of the challenge that we found was that we had this collective organizing these kinds of things; research and fundraising activities, but the coordination table that brought together the actual art organizations wasn't really gaining traction in terms of having a collective perspective on the work that we could be doing. In other words, everybody was just pulling water to their side, and it came to a point where people just said: "You know what? I'm not really interested in a Latin American Arts Center. What I'm interested in is for my theater company to have a space", or "I'm interested in maintaining Lula Lounge, because that's my project."

RE So what I'm hearing is that there was a little bit of a "what's mine is mine" mentality, and this resulted in a breakdown of collaboration that you envisioned from the beginning, is that right?

RB Yeah, right. And I'm not criticizing, but I think there's some factors that obviously kind of allowed for that, that kind of response. I would think that first and foremost this, the lack of resources dedicated to Latin American arts is one. There's a bit of a scarcity mindset within the community. Everybody's competing for the very limited resources that are out there, and the little resources

that we have in terms of organizational capacity, why should be we be dedicating it to a collective effort when I have my own needs and I need them to survive? And we couldn't get past that, to be quite honest. We couldn't because you could have said "Okay, well, why don't we share resources? Why don't we have a common office space? Why are we? Why don't we share operational expenses? So, instead of going in that direction, everybody went inwards. So that was the biggest challenge. After that we decided to go at it alone, basically. We said: "Okay, well, if everybody's pulling to their own side, then I guess it's not an Arts Center that's possible right now. Let's focus on establishing an art gallery." And that's how the Sur Gallery project came to be.

RE Right. Yeah, I think that's super clear, and it's a kind of a shame, honestly. A lot of the themes that I'm considering and thinking about recently revolve around collaboration, and I think one of the main sentiments that I've felt—and people I've interviewed and surveyed have felt—is that there's an underrepresentation of Latin American people and Caribbean people in the city of Toronto today. This thesis partly came from that perception, and it's very interesting to hear that there was a lack of willingness to collaborate, in that sense. Because of that, I'm wondering if you yourself have noticed a lack of spaces and services for Latin American people in the city of Toronto, and I am also wondering if you were to go about this again, what would you try to do differently, or how would you go about it?

RB Well, I think that being very simplistic, you could say that yes, there is a lack of spaces for Latin American and Caribbean organizations; but it's a bit more complicated, I think. Because it's not like you can't go to a library or a Community Center and find spaces, right? I think the main issue is that there aren't purposely designed spaces for specific activities. We don't have the resources, the infrastructure, or even the organizational capacity to access funding to build a Latin American Arts center or a gallery or a theater space, right? So, to a certain extent, we're still programming or using spaces that are not necessarily designed for those purposes and that are specifically for the Latin American community.

I would say that also the other issue has been an issue of identity. When we talk about 'Latin American' art, whether it's visual art or theater or music, what exactly do you mean? Because the truth is that most people, when they arrive to Canada, independently of their status, whether they're economic immigrants, they come to work, they come as part of a program or as political refugee, the reality is that they come with a national identity. They might come as a Brazilian, as a Chilean, as a Mexican. And in time you start realizing that others see you as Hispanic or Latino or Latinx or Latin American.

In the development process of the Arts Centre, for example, we were very conscious of that, and we said we wanted to establish a Latin American Heritage Month, and we worked on that. There was a huge discussion in the community, though, because others, like The Hispanic Teachers Association, which were primarily Ecuadorian, really fought for the term 'Hispanic'. And we said: "Look, give us anything. If you want to call it Hispanic, sure. But we believe it's a contradiction." We don't want to emphasize the fact that we what unites us is that we speak Spanish, or that we all somehow come from Spain and Spain is the motherland or something like that. What we want to emphasize is that we have a common experience as a colonized territory. And so, right away it became political. To us, we have more in common with a Brazilian immigrant, although they might not speak Spanish. But we have a common history of colonization, of political dissidents and of military dictatorship, of migration, and a whole bunch of other experiences that bring us closer.

There's the other issue around the Caribbean. Is Latin American, for example, inclusive enough of a term or that speaks and resonates to a Puerto Rican, or more specifically, a Black Puerto Rican? It's interesting because when we were working on trying to put together the Latin American Art Center collective, we had conversations with the folks at NIA, and they were working on it as well. And one of them said to me: "You know, the problem that you guys have is that you're not black."

So I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, you guys suffer from the same problems that we suffer from. Lack of resources, lack of voice, lack of representation. But we're receiving tons of funding because we're black. You guys are not receiving anything because you look white, or you could pass for Filipino, or you could pass for black, or you could pass for anything. That visibility—or invisibility—doesn't help you guys."

This is something that came from a black artist who was organizing NIA, right? And it's true. In that sense, we get lost. We're lost in in the in the diversity and inclusion discourse. Consider also, that 10 years ago even, it was hard for an artist to identify as Latin American. They didn't want to. They thought they didn't want to pigeonhole themselves as a Latin American artist. So, they would just say "I'm an artist." Today that has changed. Now there's value in in stating that you're Latin American because it provides you access to funds. But ten years ago, it was a no-no. So, it's complicated and all of that has also played a role in in all of this.

In terms of the second part of the question around what I would do differently, I'm working on a proposal and I'm going at it again.

RE Really?

RB Yeah, but I'm trying to focus more on that issue of identity first. So, the proposal that I'm working on is focusing on a very kind of specific segment of the community, which is very small segment of the community and it's specifically the Chilean, left-wing political refugee community. And I'm doing that because it's a very specific set of identity markers. It's Chilean, progressive, so there's common values, common lived experiences, and perhaps mindsets and outlook on everything; on life, on what we should be doing, on what we could be doing, on the needs that our community has, and we also have a stance, a very specific stance. So, that's where I'm starting, and I'm just in the stage of putting together the vision and inviting people to explore that vision, but there's a lot of work to do still. It's almost like going back 25 or 30 years and starting the process again.

RE Yeah. I think there must be a reason why you and I are thinking about these things at the same time. You have much more experience with this topic and with this endeavour than I do, but I have been thinking about this too, and one of the reasons that I'm focusing on the Caribbean Sea itself is that metaphorically, it felt like a centralization of that region. I'm from Venezuela, so it felt like a reframing of the Caribbean as a place of connection, and so on. But it also felt really daunting to prescribe, or even be at the risk of prescribing things to communities whose nuances and customs I might not be aware of, so part of the design that I'm suggesting is really placing a lot of emphasis on the agency of each specific cultural entity and regional group, rather than trying to, like you said, pigeonhole people onto a specific identity. The goal is that this could be a place where all these identities could go and they could either come together as a big congregation, or to separate into smaller groups as well. So yeah, that question around agency is an important one to me for this project.

Also, in terms of the Caribbean, this philosopher from Martinique called Edouard Glissant has this idea of relation. The idea is basically that the connections between things are what give things meaning. So, that's the angle that I'm coming into it from. You can have many different groups together and who you decide to connect with is what will give meaning. And that's what I think the value is of having this one roof that covers all these different cultures.

RB Right. I would say that I agree with that, and it's not lost on me that there's also a different kind of perspective on how to do this work in comparison to maybe 10, 15, 20 years ago. Things have evolved in in different ways, and we've learned certain things that have shaped the way that we are approaching this work now in

comparison to the past, and some of those things have to do with the state of development of the community itself. I think that specifically the Chilean community, for example, does not see itself as a refugee community anymore. It has established roots here. And in doing that, you've also started questioning your relationship with others, as you say, in the context of Canada. This idea of kinship, of relationality, right, that comes from indigenous communities, it becomes more important to us as we establish roots here. But in in saying that, we are also aware that it's a very different political environment in comparison to 10 years, 20 years, 30 years ago. There's greater social polarization, and there's a bigger influence of neoliberalism.

If we want to guarantee that from the beginning, we're all in agreement that we're going to create a space that's open to the pluriversality of thinking that we need, I think that betting on the left-wing community and the progressive community is the way to go, because what we've seen is that other communities that are not guided by political principles or ideological principles are guided them by the market. And ultimately, they believe that if you can pay for it or if you can create a market and you can provide capital, then they'll listen to you and support you, but if you don't, then you have to go into it by yourself and try to survive in this environment, and I think part of that's also an important factor.

RE Yeah. Another thing that I've been thinking about is that the commodification of art is a topic that is so entrenched in that, and in some of my writing for this, I have written that to some extent, whatever place this is has to be outside of the bounds of that neoliberal commodification and like capital accumulation of art, because that's the way that culture can move forward and can keep evolving in new ways, when it's not attached to that idea of what's profitable in the market.

RB Yeah, for sure. And there's very clear examples of how that expresses itself in the actual art circuits. I would say that when it comes to distancing yourself or differentiating yourself from neoliberal practices, "We're not the AGO". We're a community-driven or community-led initiative, right? And I can give you tangible examples.

I remember the Canada Council for the Arts was interested in in funding organizations that were working on efforts to reach communities that did not have access to the arts, let's say 'marginalized' communities. So, they came up with this program and made it public to all the institutions and organizations. The idea was to focus on outreach to communities that were indigenous, black, and people of color.

But when time came to give out the grants and the resources, it was primarily the bigger organizations and institutions that received the funding. And in the case of the visual arts, it was the AGO. They received the funds to contract people to operate, to create programs, to essentially spearhead this effort towards marginalized communities. And so, they received the funding, they turn around and they call that contact Sur Gallery. And they say "we need contacts within the Latin American community, which we don't have. Can you work with us on reaching out to the Latin American community?" And we said "Sure. What's the reciprocity here in terms of the relationship?" They said "Well, we don't have funds. We need you to do this work on a volunteer basis." So we said, "Okay, well, no thanks." If the Canada Council for the Arts want this to happen, they should fund the community organizations. Don't give the funds to the Art Gallery of Ontario. Why would you do that? Because that reinforces the cycle of dependency and marginalization, really. That's a very clear example of how the neoliberal model is expressed on a day-to-day functioning of the arts system.

On the other hand, you could say, well, we are doing things that are on the margins, that are alternative to that. We're doing a whole bunch of things that are not guided by capital, by the financial winds. For example, at Sur Gallery, we believe in pluriversality and the fact that we need to be open to different perspectives. It's not easy, but in our programming, for example, we've invited people that ideologically sit on the left, and others that ideologically sit on the right. And you come under fire from both sides. We've received threats calling us Marxists, people saying that they don't understand why the art councils would fund us. On the other hand, we've also received comments like "why are you giving a voice to, you know, Cuban dissidents that are anti-revolutionary?" So, you're never going to make everyone happy, but you have to stay the course. And I think that that's why I'm betting on the on this community to be able to have the political capacity to thread that those waters.

RE Right. Well, maybe you could tell me a little bit more about specifically what your goal is by starting a centre for the specific Chilean community that you're speaking about. Is it about visibility? Is it more about having a space for these people to get together? What are drivers for doing this this time around?

RB I think it's both. And perhaps the biggest driver is when we look at the future of the community. That's why I was saying that it also has to do with where we are at as a community. We arrived here, in my case, as a as a child of the son of political refugees. We thought that we were going to go back to Chile, that this was just a passing moment, and we were going to be back by the time the 90s came back around. And then the dictatorship ended and we

established roots here, or our parents established roots here. They didn't want to go back. Then, we started establishing our own lives here. We started studying, we started finding jobs here, and it became harder to go back. Now, at this point in our community, we see each other for the funerals of that first generation that came as political refugees. That's where the community gathers again, right? And we're preoccupied in taking care of our elders, that generation that came first, but we're also taking care of our kids who are now teenagers or in their 20s or even in their 30s who have very specific needs. Not only in terms of needs that affect all their demographic such as finding work and the precarity of work, but they also have cultural needs that are different from ours. They have a different sense of identity, right? They are faced with the risk of being treated differently for being Latin American or Latinx. We're thinking of that. We're also thinking about how to create viability for the Latin American community. And it's not that we want to create a Latin American Center for the Chilean Community, but I think that it's this small right community that's the Chilean Latin community understands this perhaps better than other communities within the Latin American community, not because they're smarter or better, but because they've been here perhaps a bit longer than others. They've gone through a series of changes that positions them in a in in a way to kind of think of the future differently, as opposed to perhaps other communities who are still thinking of going back, for example.

RE Right, you are betting on this community because you've already committed, or you've accepted the commitment of remaining here and establishing roots here.
But it doesn't necessarily mean that it should compromise your own identity as a Latin American, or a Chilean, or however you identify. Is that correct?

RB Yeah, for sure.

RE Yeah, I think that's exactly how I feel. And I haven't really been here that long. I mean, I came here when I was 10. I'm. Almost 25 now. So, I've spent more of my life here in Canada than I have in Venezuela, but even though I'm young, I still came with the understanding that something was going to be different, and I still have that—maybe rose-colored—view of my time in Venezuela. And there's still that connection there. Even if I don't remember, a lot of the nuances, I still look back at it fondly, and I think that's kind of one of the reasons why I wanted to take this on. I think that's something that we share in the in the building of our respective communities.

RB Yeah, yeah. And also, that's one need, but there's other needs as well, right? Because it's such a diverse community. For example, there is a group in the Chilean community of old folks that just get together to have tea once a week and just chat.

And that's it. Sometimes they do it at a Tim Horton's. Sometimes they do it somewhere else. Because that's what they need. And it's that simple. You don't necessarily have to have the same needs or the same ideas, but how do you create a space that accommodates the community? That's the challenge.

RE Yeah, for sure. That's, Wwhat this is all about. Well, I don't want to take up too much more of your time, but honestly, thank you. This was super enlightening and incredibly helpful. I'm excited to see how your proposal materializes in the coming months.

RB Yeah, yeah. I'll keep you posted and think through what we've talked about today and if you have any questions or if you want to reach out again, just do so, OK.

RE Thank you so much. OK. It was great to meet you, Thank you so much. Have a great rest of your day.

RB Welcome. Great to meet you too. Bye.

RE Bye.

Caribbean Museum Index

National Archaeological Museum
Museum of Antigua and Barbuda
National Art Gallery of the Bahamas
Barbados Museum and Historical Society
Museum of Belizean Art
Mangazina di Rei
Lower Estate Sugar Works Museum
Medellin Museum of Modern Art
Museo de Arte Moderna de Bogota
Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Cuba
Kura Hulanda Museum
National Museum of Costa Rica
Kalinago Barana Aute
Museo de las Casas Reales
Museo de Arte de El Salvador
Grenada National Museum
Camp de la Transportation
Memorial ACTe
Museo Ixchel del Traje Indigena
Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology
Musée du Panthéon National Haïtien
Centre D'Art
Garifuna Cultural Centre
Museo Para la Identidad Nacional
National Gallery of Jamaica

Musee de la Pagerie
Museo Anahuacalli
Museo Nacional de Antropolgia
Museo Frida Kahlo
Museo Jumex
National Trust Museum
Museo de Arte Fundación Ortiz-Guardián
Afro-Antillean Museum
Biomuseo
Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico
National Museum and Art Gallery
Harry L. Johnson Museum
Fort Oranje
Wall House Museum
Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park
Morne Fortune Museum and Art Gallery
Amuseum Naturalis
Fort Charlotte Interpretive Centre
Surinaams Museum
National Museum of Turks and Caicos
Fort Christian Museum
Teatro Teresa Carreño
Museo de Arte Moderno Jesus Soto
Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Caracas
Centro Italo Venezolano

National Archaeological Museum

Oranjestad, Aruba

Merdardo 'Dada' Picus, ca. 1875 - 1929

https://manaruba.org/



151. ***Plan of the Archaeological Museum of Aruba.*** Retrieved from https://coleccion.aw/show/?ANA-DIG-THE-NEWSARU_BA-D0061-05-20060430-024

https://www.aruba.com/us/explore/archaeological-museum

The Ecury Complex, the buildings on Schelpstraat 40-42-44, are the former homes of merchant Segundo Nicasio Ecury, commonly known as Dundun. The trade house S.N. Ecury represented Ford motorcars and Goodrich tires, was agent of several firms in refrigerators and radios and much, much more.

The center piece of this complex, the two-story green building, is the last one built, in 1929. The oldest is the low cunucu house to the right of the green one. It dates back to the second half of the 19th century.

Museum of Antigua and Barbuda

Saint John's, Antigua and Barbuda

Peter Harrison, 1750

https://www.antiguamuseums.net/



152. ***Satellite View of the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda with surrounding context.*** Source: Google Earth.

https://www.antiguamuseums.net/portfolios/about-the-museum/

The Museum of Antigua and Barbuda was founded in 1985 and resides in the former St. John's Courthouse, built in 1750 and believed to be the oldest building in town. The architect was Peter Harrison, well known for many fine buildings in the United States and the West Indies. The Court of Justice was held on the ground floor, with meeting rooms for the Legislative Council and Assembly upstairs.

National Art Gallery of the Bahamas

Nassau, Bahamas

Sir William Doyle, ca. 1860, rest. Anthony Jervis, 2003

https://nagb.org.bs/



153. Source: Google Earth

https://nagb.org.bs/exhibitions/the-history-of-the-nagb/

The NAGB is housed within the Villa Doyle, a mansion with an approximate 160-year history. It was once the residence of distinguished Bahamian governors, civil servants, and social contributors. Constructed in the 1860s by Sir William Doyle—Chief Justice and the first Bahamian-born individual to receive a knighthood—the building is an architectural marker of the nation's colonial past.

Barbados Museum & Historical Society

Bridgetown, Barbados

R.B. Walsh, 1853, rest. Barbara Hill, 1982

https://www.barbmuse.org.bb/



154. Source: Google Earth

https://www.barbmuse.org.bb/

Located in Barbados' UNESCO World Heritage Property of Historic Bridgetown and its Garrison, the galleries of the Barbados Museum & Historical Society are housed in 19th-century military prison buildings and reveal the island's rich natural, social and military history.

Museum of Belizean Art

San Pedro, Belize

Architect Unknown, 1815

https://www.salient360.com/moba



155. Source: Google Earth

https://www.salient360.com/moba

Built in 1815, MOBA's location holds historical importance, as the old Government House. Initially constructed for the Superintendent of the Colony, it replaced a wooden house near the Belize River due to accessibility concerns. Surviving hurricanes in 1931 and 1961, it stands across from St. John's Cathedral in downtown Belize City. Originally named the House of Culture in 1998, it became a community center upon opening to the public, managed by the government.

Mangazina di Rei

Rincon, Bonaire

Architect Unknown, ca. 1820.

https://www.mangazinadirei.org/stichting.php?lc=en



156. Source: Google Earth

https://infobonaire.com/unique-tours/mangazina-di-rei-the-kings-storehouse/

Mangazina di Rei is one of the oldest stone structures on Bonaire from 1820. It is about the same age ad Fort Oranje, which stands guard at the harbour in Kralendijk, the capital of Bonaire. It was used by the government (Rei—the King) to store provisions for the government slaves and tools for farming. Each Saturday afternoon, these slaves would meet at the Mangazina to receive their weekly provisions.

Lower Estate Sugar Works Museum

Road Town, British Virgin Islands

McCleverty Slaves, ca. 1780

www.whatsoninbritishvirginislands.com/1780-lower-estate-sugar-works-museum/



157. Source: Google Earth

https://www.whatsoninbritishvirginislands.com/1780-lower-estate-sugar-works-museum/

The 1780 Lower Estate Sugar Works was built by the McCleverty slaves. Sugar was produced here until the 1940s. During the 19th century its Timber frame became what is believed to have been the first Virgin Islands Guest House. 1900: By now the Government had acquired the Works, added a one storey building in front of the Magazine, and installed the machines for a Cotton Factory. the Agriculture Department managed the Complex, supervised the sugar production and the ginning and pressing of cotton.

Museum of Modern Art

Medellin, Colombia

51-1 arquitectos & Ctrl G, 2015

https://www.elmamm.org/



158. Source: Google Earth

https://51-1.com/MAMM

As in the informal city of stacked houses in the hills, where one's roof is the upstairs neighbour's terrace, the new MAMM is laid out as a cascade of connected terraces open to the public. Inside, the blocks are a sequence of spaces displaying artwork; outside, they create a public realm that is continuous up to the fifth floor. With the combination of both, multiple new ways to display the art emerge.

Museum of Modern Art of Bogotá

Bogotá, Colombia

Rogelio Salmona, 1985

www.mambogota.com



159. Source: Google Earth

The current MAMBO, designed by architect Rogelio Salmona, is located in the cultural and historical center of Bogota. Its first phase was inaugurated in 1979, and the construction was completed in 1985. The building features four floors, six exhibition halls, an auditorium or cinema, a project room, two workshops for educational activities, a storage area for the permanent collection, a library, a bookstore, a restaurant, and administrative offices, covering an approximate area of 5,000 square meters.

https://www.mambogota.com/en/the-museum-2/

Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes

Havana, Cuba

Alfonso Rodríguez Pichardo, 1954

www.bellasartes.co.cu



160. Source: Google Earth

[Translated from Spanish] The Cuban Art Building, formerly the Palace of Fine Arts, located on Trocadero Street between Zulueta and Monserrate, exclusively exhibits the national art collections through an integrative display of different artistic expressions: painting, sculpture, drawing, and printmaking.

https://www.bellasartes.co.cu/pagina-estatica/sede-de-arte-cubano-0

Kura Hulanda Museum

Willemstad, Curaçao

Various Architects; rest. Jacob Gelt Dekker, 1999

https://www.curacao.com/en/activity/kura-hulanda-museum



161. Source: Google Earth

Museum Kurá Hulanda is an anthropological museum that focuses on the predominant cultures of Curacao. It offers a world-class chronicle of the Origin of Man, the African slave trade, West African Empires, Pre-Colombian gold, Mesopotamian relics and Antillean art.

https://web.archive.org/web/20150414125431/http://www.kurahulanda.com/en/museumx

National Museum of Costa Rica

San José, Costa Rica

Jose Francisco Salazar, 1917

www.museocostarica.go.cr



162. Source: Google Earth

https://www.museocostarica.go.cr/museo/arquitectura-bellavista/

[Translated from Spanish] The architecture of the Bellavista Barracks is undoubtedly influenced by medieval fortresses: large walls on all four sides, making use of the terrain's topography both for defense and for controlling the city of San José, flanked by towers or watchtowers.

Kalinago Barana Aute

Kalinago Territory, Dominica

Kalinago People, ca. 1903

kalinago.ictu.gov.dm/barana-aute



163. Source: Google Earth

https://kalinago.ictu.gov.dm/barana-aute/

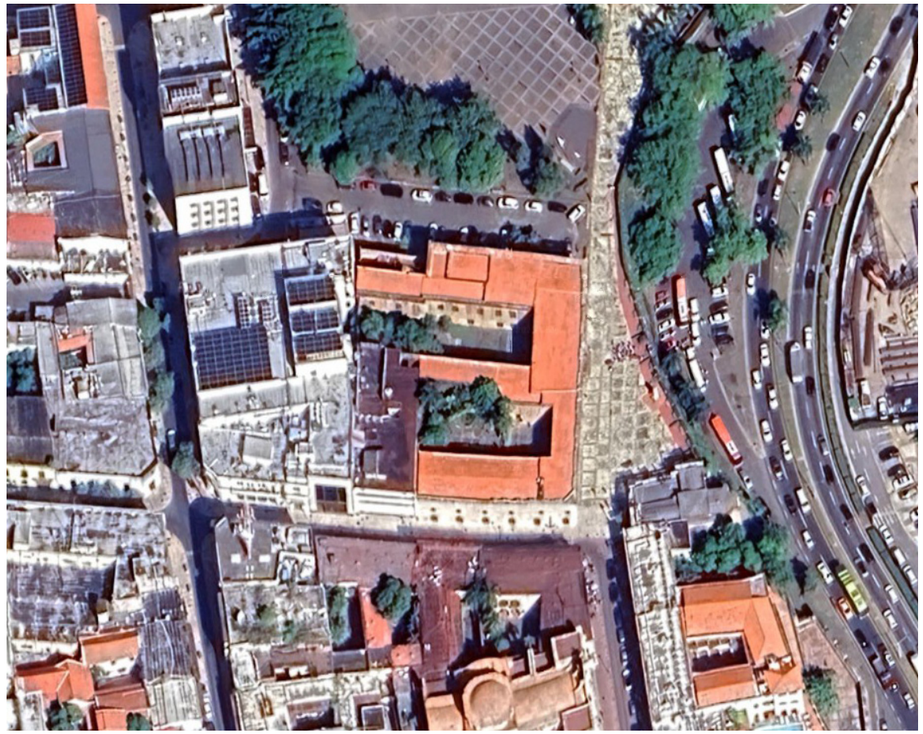
The Kalinago Barana Aute (KBA) is a place of celebration for the cultural heritage of the Kalinago People in Waitukubuli Dominica. Established as a model cultural village, KBA stands as an essential destination for any visitor eager to explore the traditions that have flourished here for centuries.

Museo de las Casas Reales

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Various Architects, ca. 16th C.

museosrd.gob.do/museos/museo-de-las-casas-reales



164. Source: Google Earth

https://web.archive.org/web/20110716093211/http://www.cultura.gov.do/dependencias/museos/museodelascasasreales.htm

[Translated from Spanish] The museum is housed in two palaces dating back to the 16th century. Its name corresponds to the original designation appearing as "Royal Houses" in maps and archival documents. They were built by order of the Spanish Crown to host its main official institutions in the Americas: the Royal Audiencia and General Accounting Office, and the Palace of the Governors and Captain Generals.

Museo de Arte de El Salvador

San Salvador, El Salvador

Salvador Choussy Rusconi, 2003/Ernesto Álvarez Córdova, 2007

museomarte.org



165. Source: Google Earth

https://museomarte.org/quienes-somos/

[Translated from Spanish] The building that houses the museum covers an area of 2,275 square meters. It was designed by Salvadoran architect Salvador Choussy (1947) and built on a 6,520-square-meter plot. It includes exhibition halls and administrative areas, a storage space for artworks, workshops, and complementary spaces, including a projection room.

Grenada National Museum

Saint George's, Grenada

Architect Unknown, 1704

museum.gd



166. Source: Google Earth

https://museum.gd/about/

The Grenada National Museum complex comprises several buildings dating to different time periods. The foundation of the building on the corner of Monckton and Young St. was built in the mid-1700s and functioned as the British colonial Constabulary, an adjunct to the Common Gaol between 1763-1904.

Camp de la Transportation

Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni, French Guiana

Architect Unknown, 1858

No official website found



167. Source: Google Earth

https://www.dark-tourism.com/index.php/1324-camp-de-la-transportation-st-laurent

A large prison complex in French Guiana on the eastern banks of the Maroni River, i.e. the westernmost part of the territory, on the border with Suriname. The prison, or 'camp de la transportation', as the terminology went, was the principal arrival point for most convicts who were processed here and then assigned to other parts of the penal colony, in particular the Îles du Salut, with the infamous Devil's Island. But the camp in St-Laurent was no less brutal. Today it stands a brooding vast stone complex in the centre of the colonial town.

Memorial ACTe

Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe

BMC Architectes, Atelier Doré/Marton, 2015

https://memorial-acte.fr/



168. Source: Google Earth

https://memorial-acte.fr/decouvrir-le-macte

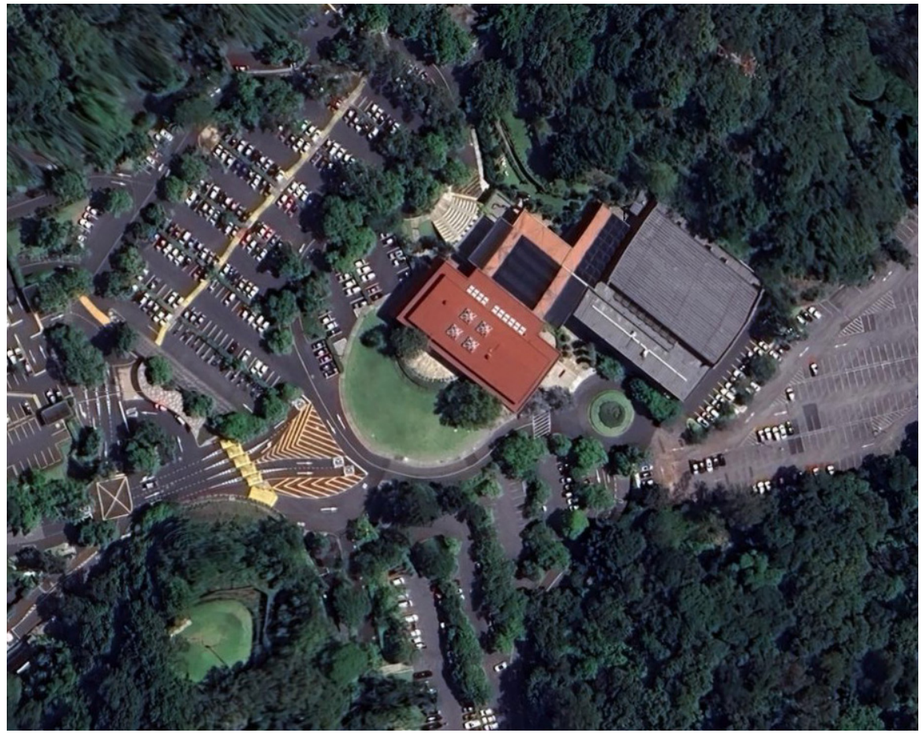
The building consists of two blocks forming the base of a metal arch with a span of 40 m. The whole represents a linear length of approximately 260 m, presented on the sea and equipped with a sparkling mesh by day and night. The black box and the silver mesh contribute to giving the main building a footprint and a volume that contrast with the relatively low and compact built environment of the city of Pointe-à-Pitre. The topography is determined by the coexistence of the horizontality of the seaside and the presence of the hill.

Museo Ixchel del Traje Indígena

Guatemala City, Guatemala

Cohen, V.; Giesemann P.; Leon Fajardo, A.; Lau, A.; Pemüeller, W., 1993

https://ixchelm.squarespace.com/museum/



169. Source: Google Earth

https://ixchelm.squarespace.com/museum/

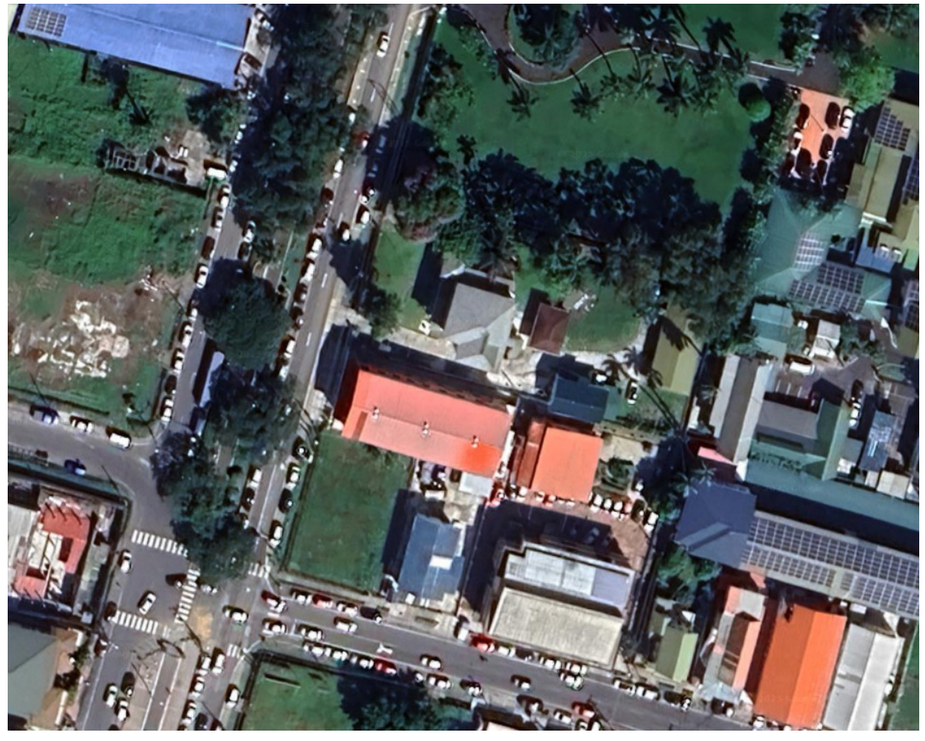
The Ixchel Museum of Indigenous Dress is a non-profit institution that collects, catalogs, conserves, examines, exhibits, and promulgates Guatemalan indigenous dress. Founded in 1973, the museum has a well-documented textile holding built almost exclusively on textile donations from Guatemalan collectors. The frieze of the building is decorated with a distinctive textile symbol, the rupan plato, a design woven into the huipils and over-huipils of Comalapa. It represents a plate used in church when fruit and bread are blessed as part of cofradía rites.

Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology

Georgetown, Guyana

John Bradshaw Sharples, ca. 1890

https://ntg.gov.gy/monument/walter-roth-museum-of-anthropology/



170. Source: Google Earth

https://web.archive.org/web/20080807182947/http://www.sdnp.org.gy/wrma/about.htm

The Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology, the first museum of anthropology in the English-speaking Caribbean was founded in the year 1974 with the collections of Guyanese Archaeologist Dr. Denis Williams. In 1980 the ethnographic collections of Dr. Walter Roth, Mr. J.J. Quelch and Sir Everard im Thurn were transferred to the Walter Roth Museum from the Guyana Museum. The Museum was opened to the public in 1982.

Musée du Panthéon National Haïtien

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Alexandre Guichard & Albert Mangones, 1973-4

visithaiti.com/art-culture/museum-haitian-national-pantheon



171 Source: Google Earth

https://visithaiti.com/art-culture/museum-haitian-national-pantheon/

Built partially underground, this museum displays artefacts illustrating Haiti's history with an emphasis on its revolutionary years and its political and cultural forefathers. Get up close to artefacts from a Colombus ship, slave shackles, murder weapons and the bell that rang in independence.

Centre d'Art

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Architect Unknown, ca. 1920; rest. Aedifica, ongoing

lecentredart.org/en



172. Source: Google Earth

https://aedifica.com/en/projects/centre-dart-port-au-prince-haiti

The restoration of the Larsen-Ethéard House, a symbol of Haitian cultural richness, is at the heart of the project. It is complemented by the construction of two new buildings with clean lines and a contemporary aesthetic, which will house exhibition, conservation, education, and training activities. It aims to be a place of encounter and exchange, a symbol of resilience and pride for Haiti. It embodies our commitment to designing spaces that meet the functional needs of our clients and contribute to the cultural revitalization and sustainable development of communities.

Garifuna Cultural Centre

Punta Gorde, Honduras

Architect Unknown, ca. 1990

garifunacc.com



173. Source: Google Earth

https://evendo.com/locations/honduras/intibuca-region/landmark/garifuna-cultural-center

The Garifuna Cultural Center in Punta Gorda offers a captivating journey into the heart of Garifuna culture, a unique blend of West African, Arawak, and Carib traditions. Punta Gorda, the oldest Garifuna settlement in Central America, established in 1797, serves as a living testament to the resilience and vibrant heritage of this Afro-Indigenous community. Founded by Garifuna people exiled from St. Vincent by the British, Punta Gorda became the cradle from which Garifuna culture spread along the Caribbean coasts of Honduras, Belize, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

Museo para la Identidad Nacional

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Francisco Planas, 1882

min.hn



174. Source: Google Earth

https://www.min.hn/edificio

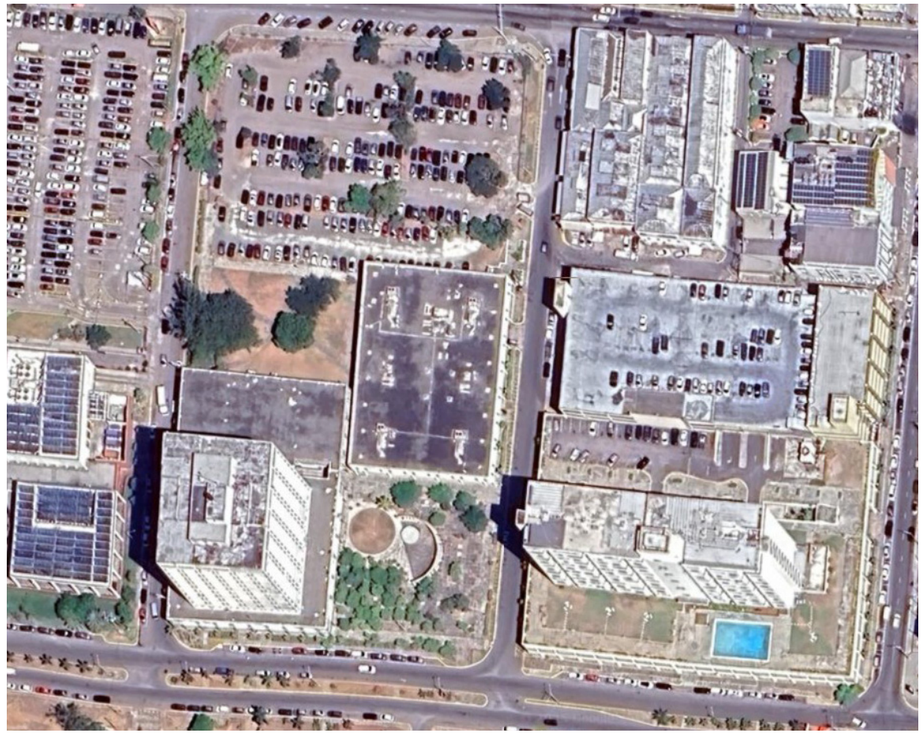
[Translated from Spanish] The Museum for National Identity (MIN) is located in the Old Palace of the Ministries, in the Barrio Abajo district of Tegucigalpa, M.D.C. The building, featuring late neoclassical architecture, was declared a National Monument by the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History (IHAH) under Category M, which designates monuments and buildings of great historical value. The structure dates back to 1882, during the presidency of Dr. Marco Aurelio Soto, who laid the building's first stone.

National Gallery of Jamaica

Kingston, Jamaica

Architect Unknown, 1974

nationalgalleryofjamaica.wordpress.com



175. Source: Google Earth

https://nationalgalleryofjamaica.wordpress.com/about/

The National Gallery of Jamaica was established in 1974 and is the oldest and largest public art museum in the Anglophone Caribbean. It has a comprehensive collection of early, modern and contemporary art from Jamaica along with smaller Caribbean and international holdings. A significant part of its collections is on permanent view, and has an active exhibition programme, including retrospectives of work by major Jamaican artists, thematic exhibitions, guest-curated exhibitions, touring exhibitions, and its flagship exhibition, the Kingston Biennial.

Musée de la Pagerie

Les Trois-Îlets, Martinique

French Slaves, ca. 18th C.

memoire-esclavage.org/domaine-et-musee-de-la-pagerie



176. Source: Google Earth

https://memoire-esclavage.org/domaine-et-musee-de-la-pagerie

This partially restored 18th century sugar refinery housed a vast dwelling of more than 500 hectares, formerly known as La Petite Guinée, then La Sannois. Up to 300 slaves were exploited there, and still 132 at the beginning of the 19th century, for the production of cocoa, cotton, coffee, indigo and sugar cane. A small museum was inaugurated there in 1954 by Doctor Rose-Rosette, owner of the site and mayor of Trois-Îlets. The dwelling , listed as a historical monument since 1979, became a departmental museum in 1984 and now belongs to the community of Martinique.

Museo Anahuacalli

Mexico City, Mexico

Juan O' Gorman, 1964; Mauricio Rocha Inturbide, 2021

museoanahuacalli.org.mx



177. Source: Google Earth

h t t p s : / / museoanahuacalli.org.mx/museo/edificio/

[Translated from Spanish] Diego Rivera invited his friend, the functionalist architect Juan O'Gorman, to join him in this endeavor. Juan was acquainted with the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright and was influenced by his ideas of organic architecture. This concept fit perfectly with Rivera's vision: the integration of the landscape into the construction of the Anahuacalli, combining functionality with pre-Hispanic cosmogony.

Museo Nacional de Antropología

Mexico City, Mexico

Pedro Ramirez Vasquez, Rafael Mijares Alcérreca, 1964

www.mna.inah.gob.mx



178. Source: Google Earth

https://mna.inah.gob.mx/el_museo.php#la_institucion

[Translated from Spanish] The current home of the National Museum of Anthropology was inaugurated on September 17, 1964, and for more than five decades, it has fulfilled its mission to research, preserve, exhibit, and disseminate the country's most important archaeological and ethnographic collections.

Museo Frida Kahlo

Mexico City, Mexico

Architect Unknown, 1904; rest. Juan O' Gorman, 1946

www.museofridakahlo.org.mx



179. Source: Google Earth

https://www.museofridakahlo.org.mx/museo/?lang=en#casaazul

The Casa Azul (Blue House) is Frida Kahlo's private universe. She spent most of her life here, first with her family and, years later, at Diego Rivera's side. They hosted a fascinating array of luminaries from Mexico and abroad, drawn by the charisma of both artists.

Museo Jumex

Mexico City, Mexico

David Chipperfield, 2013

www.fundacionjumex.org



180. Source: Google Earth

https://www.fundacionjumex.org/en/fundacion/museojumex/arquitectura

Museo Jumex was the first building in Latin America designed by renowned British architect Sir David Chipperfield. It was conceived in response to its surroundings and local context, incorporating domestically sourced materials. In addition to exhibition galleries, the museum features public spaces designed as meeting places and leisure areas that complement the visitor's experience.

National Trust Museum

Montserrat

Architect Unknown, ca. 20th C.

www.montserratnationaltrust.ms



181. Source: Google Earth

https://montserratnationaltrust.ms/

The Montserrat National Trust is a non-profit organisation dedicated to conserving and caring for Montserrat's rich environmental, cultural and historical heritage.

Fundación Ortiz-Gurdián

León, Nicaragua

Various Architects, 18th-19th C.

cultura.fundacionortizgurdian.org



182. Source: Google Earth

https://cultura.fundacionortizgurdian.org/

[Translated from Spanish] The Ortiz-Gurdián Foundation, established in 1996 by Patricia Gurdián de Ortiz and Ramiro Ortiz Mayorga, Nicaraguan entrepreneurs and art collectors from traditional families of the city of León, was conceived as a nonprofit institution dedicated to supporting and promoting the cultural development of Nicaragua.

Afro-Antillean Museum

Panama City, Panama

Barbadian Workers, ca. 1910

samaap.com



183. Source: Google Earth

h t t p s : / / caribbeanmuseums.com/institutional-spotlight-samaap/

The Afro-Antillean Museum is housed in what was formerly the Christian mission church built by Barbadian workers in 1910. The Museum is located inside the church with the purpose of commemorating and remembering the contributions made by tens of thousands of workers from Jamaica, Barbados and other Caribbean islands.

Biomuseo

Panama City, Panama

Frank Gehry, 2014

biomuseo.org



184. Source: Google Earth

https://biomuseo.org/en/el-biomuseo/

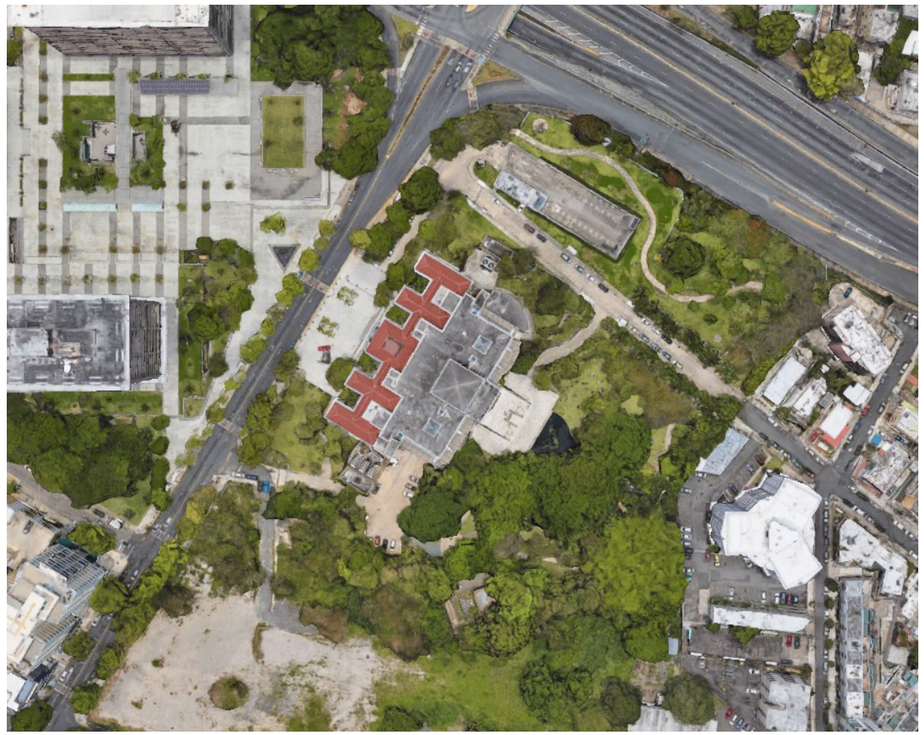
The Biomuseo is located on the Amador Causeway, a prominent area at the entrance to the Panama Canal on the Pacific Ocean. From the Biomuseo you can see the skyline of the modern city, the Casco Antiguo, Ancon Hill and the Bridge of the Americas. The building is designed to tell the story of how the Isthmus of Panama emerged from the sea, connecting two continents, splitting a great ocean in two and changing the biodiversity of the planet forever.

Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Otto Reyes Casanova, Luis Gutiérrez Negrón, 2000

www.mapr.org



185. Source: Google Earth

https://www.mapr.org/en/museum/about-the-museum/history

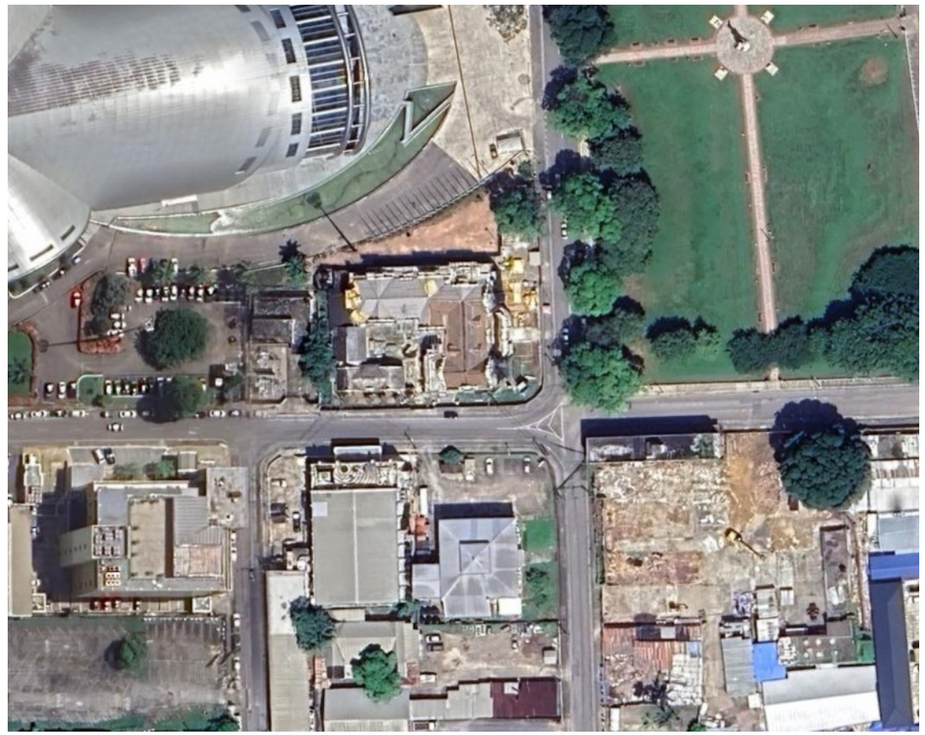
The Government Development Bank for Puerto Rico (BGF, for its Spanish acronym) approves the museum project and assigns funds for its construction. The BGF, with an interest in fostering the socio-economic development of Puerto Rico for the benefit of future generations, agrees to restore and rehabilitate the former San Juan Municipal Hospital, which houses the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico today.

National Museum and Art Gallery

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

D.M. Hahn, 1902

mtca.gov.tt/tourism_facilities/national-museum-and-art-gallery



186. Source: Google Earth

https://mtca.gov.tt/tourism_facilities/national-museum-and-art-gallery/

The National Museum and Art Gallery was established originally as the Royal Victoria Institute (RVI) in 1892 in commemoration of the Jubilee of Queen Victoria and as part of a general British Colonial policy to build cultural institutes throughout the Commonwealth.

Harry L. Johnson Museum

Windwardside, Saba

Cpt. Josiah Peterson, ca. 1840

dutchculture.nl/en/location/harry-l-johnson-museum



187. Source: Google Earth

https://www.sabatourism.com/museums/the-harry-l-johnson-museum/

The Harry L. Johnson Museum is located in a 19th-century sea captain's cottage at the end of Park Lane in the historic district of Windwardside. The museum is situated in a lush landscaped park which includes a children's play area, a gazebo, and a variety of tropical vegetation. Exhibits include collections from the 19th and early 20th-century as well as artifacts from the Amerindian archaeological sites around the island. It also serves as a resource center for published documents on Saba.

Fort Oranje

Sint Eustatius

Architect Unknown, 1636

statia-tourism.com/enjoy-fully/culture/fort-oranje/



188. Source: Google Earth

https://statia-tourism.com/enjoy-fully/culture/fort-oranje/

The fully restored Fort Oranje is located on the border of the upper town and the lower town of Oranjestad. The cannons and bastions still seem to stand guard over the island. Most striking is the old Dutch architecture with its bright, colorful, local influences. Inside the fortress are buildings that originally served as the governor's and commander's residence, barracks and town hall. The flagpole, cistern and gunpowder magazine all date from the early days.

Wall House Museum

Saint Barthélemy

Architect Unknown, ca. 1790

www.museesstbarth.com/en/page/wall-house-index



189. Source: Google Earth

This stone building is one of the largest in Gustavia, and its history is somewhat unclear. According to city maps drawn by Samuel Fahlberg, some believe it served as a theater and entertainment venue, while others think it was a hotel, a political conference center, or simply a shop during the Swedish era. This building was known as the "Steinmetz House," where rooms could be rented out by the residents. As for the origin of the name "Wall House," some believe it refers to the stone walls, which were the only parts of the building to remain intact over the years.

https://www.saintbarth-tourisme.com/en/territorial-museum-wall-house/

Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park

Saint Kitts and Nevis

Architect Unknown, ca. 17th C.

brimstonehillfortress.org



190. Source: Google Earth

https://brimstonehillfortress.org/history

The Fortress, constructed intermittently between the 1690s and 1790s, is of singular importance as being the remains of a large, complete military community of the 18th century. As such, it is a veritable time capsule of international significance. The prominent Citadel is one of the earliest and finest surviving examples of a new style of fortification known as the 'polygonal system'.

Morne Fortune Museum and Art Gallery

Morne Fortune, Saint Lucia

Architect Unknown, ca. 18th C.

www.instagram.com/themornemuseum



191. Source: Google Earth

https://evendo.com/locations/saint-lucia/castries/attraction/morne-fortune-museum-art-gallery

The Morne Fortune Museum and Art Gallery is a museum which focuses on Lucian art. This museum is not just an art gallery; it is a journey through the vibrant artistic expressions and historical narratives of the island. Visitors can expect to find a diverse collection of artworks that reflect both traditional and contemporary influences, offering a true insight into the local culture. The gallery is home to numerous pieces created by talented local artists, providing a platform for their work and a chance for tourists to appreciate the creativity that thrives in St. Lucia.

Amuseum Naturalis

Saint Martin/Sint Maarten

Architect Unknown, Year Unknown

amuseumnaturalis.com



192. Source: Google Earth

https://amuseumnaturalis.com/

Amuseum Naturalis is a free museum of the nature and heritage of St. Martin. All of the exhibits are outdoors, including the open-air Amuseum exhibit hall, and outside exhibit areas, viewpoints and gardens including the agriculture heritage displays, bush tea garden, and the St. Martin poetry exhibits. Amuseum Naturalis is located at the historic Old House in French Quarter.

Fort Charlotte Interpretive Centre

Clare Valley, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Architect Unknown, 1806

tourism.gov.vc/tourism/index.php/national-sites-of-svg/fort-charlotte



193. Source: Google Earth

https://tourism.gov.vc/tourism/index.php/national-sites-of-svg/fort-charlotte

Located on Bershire Hill, Edinboro, construction of the fort began in 1763 when the British recovered St. Vincent. It was finally completed and named in 1806. It was named after Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III. The Fort is on a ridge 600 feet above the sea, giving a magnificent view across Kingstown and the Grenadines. There are interesting paintings of the Black Caribs' history by Lindsay Prescott in what used to be the officers' quarters in the Fort; only a few minutes' drive from Kingstown. The Fort is now an Historical site.

Surinaams Museum

Paramaribo, Suriname

Various Architects, ca. 1650

www.surinaamsmuseum.net



194. Source: Google Earth

http://amazonian-museum-network.org/en/amazonian-museums/stichting-surinaams-museum

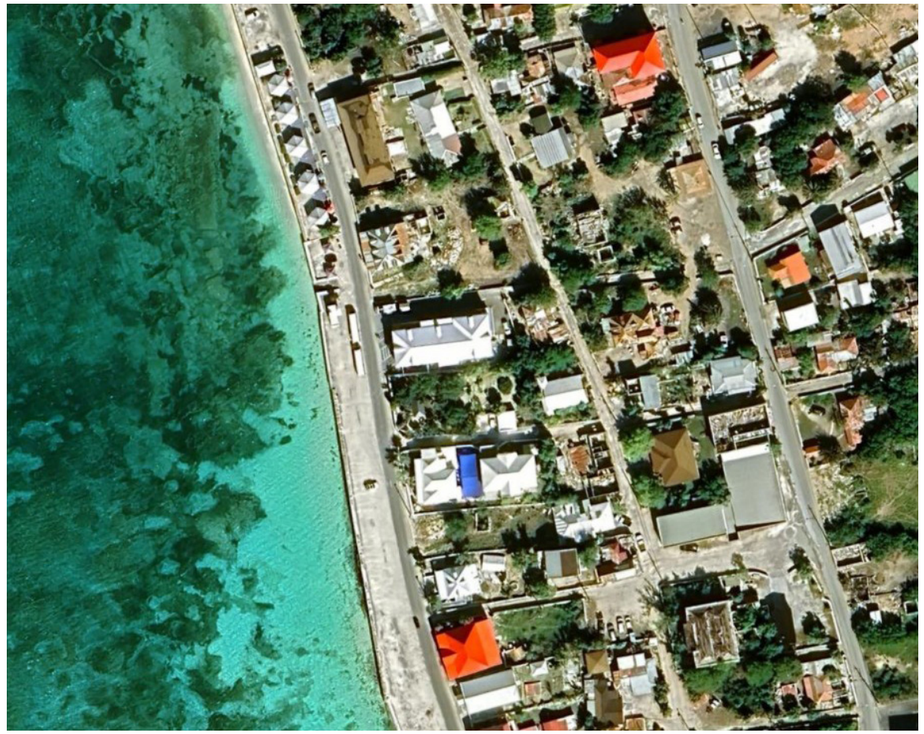
The Suriname Museum is nested inside Fort Zeelandia. The site has a great historical importance since it is the place where the first colonists set foot on the shore and from which the further development of the country started. Used as a prison from 1872 onwards, the Fort then became the headquarters of the museum in 1972.

National Museum of Turks and Caicos

Grand Turk, Turks and Caicos

Architect Unknown, ca. 1850

www.tcmuseum.org



195. Source: Google Earth

https://www.tcmuseum.org/about-the-museum/guinep-house/

The Grand Turk museum is housed in a historic building “Guinep House”. Both locations have a Gift Shop and offer a range of activities such as special tours, classes, fundraising and community events. The Providenciales location features a Heritage House, recreating how Turks & Caicos Islanders lived in the past. The original house was a simple building, containing two rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs. To the north a seperate kitchen unit was built with a courtyard between the main house and the kitchen.

Fort Christian Museum

Saint Thomas, Virgin Islands

Simon Lamar, 1678

www.stthomashistoricaltrust.org/fort-christian-1



196. Source: Google Earth

https://www.stthomashistoricaltrust.org/fort-christian-1

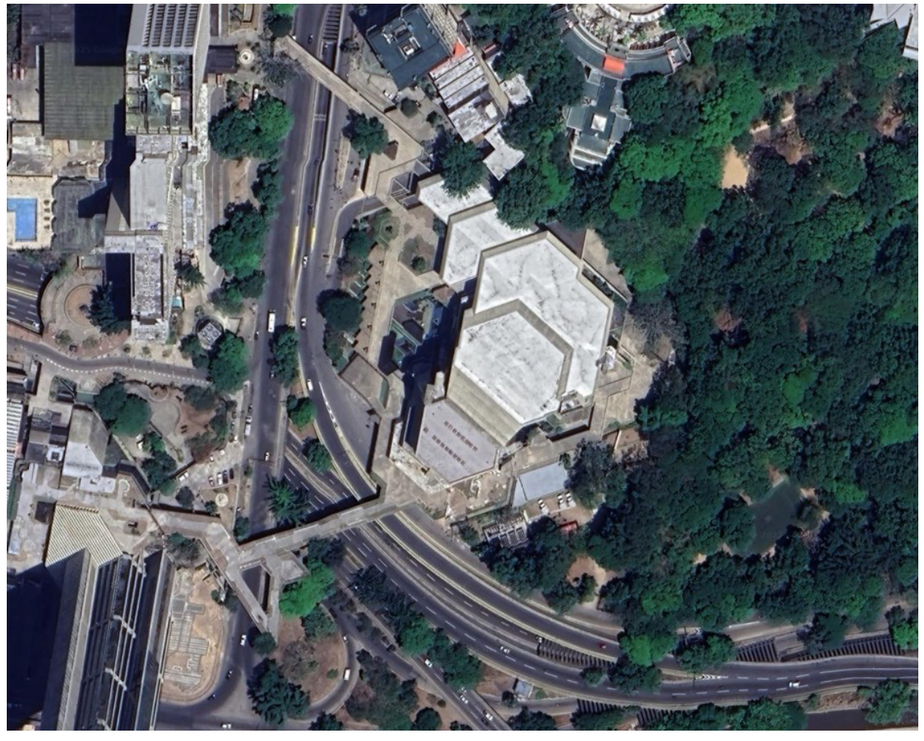
The fort in Charlotte Amalie bears the name Fort Christian after Christian V of Denmark. It was built between 1672 and 1678 on a peninsula with a rocky outcrop in the bay and is the first and largest fort in the islands.

Teatro Teresa Carreño

Caracas, Venezuela

Tomás Lugo Marcano, Jesús Sandoval and Dietrich Kunckel, 1976

www.instagram.com/teatroteresacarreno



197. Source: Google Earth

https://www.operala.org/teatro-teresa-carreno/?lang=en

It is the most important theater in Venezuela; its architecture is brutalist style with 88,000 m2 of construction, anchored in the cultural heart of Caracas. It has two main halls: The Ríos Reyna Hall, with a capacity of 2,300 people, equipped with complexes of electronic stage systems, mobile platforms, lighting, audio and variable electronic acoustics, and the José Felix Ribas concert hall with 347 seating. In the same way, it has its own production lines for stage design and theatrical characterization.

Museo de Arte Moderno Jesús Soto

Ciudad Bolívar, Venezuela

Carlos Raúl Villanueva, 1973

www.jesus-soto.com/es/museo-soto/



198. Source: Google Earth

https://jesus-soto.com/es/museo-soto/

[Translated from Spanish] On August 25, 1973, the first part of the museum was inaugurated—a complex of five buildings housing offices, administrative departments, and the first exhibition halls. Although it was not possible to complete the entire set of detailed plans at the beginning, Carlos Raúl Villanueva left clear guidelines for the later stages, which made it possible to begin the second phase of construction in 1978, under the direction of architects José Carlos Villanueva and Edgar Parra.

Museo de Arte Contemporáneo

Caracas, Venezuela

Sidorkovs, N.; Marcano, T.; Douahi, N.; Lagneau, J., 1973

https://macsi.org/maccsi/



199. Source: Google Earth

https://macsi.org/maccsi/

Caracas Museum of Contemporary Art is a museum of modern art located in the Parque Central Complex. It opened in 1974 and was the first museum in Venezuela to offer a specialist art library, a formal children's and adults' learning area, a special education department for the blind, and a multimedia arts centre.

Centro Italiano Venezolano

Caracas, Venezuela

Antonio Pinzani, 1983

https://www.centroitalianovenezolano.com/



200. Source: Google Earth

https://guiaccs.com/en/obras/centro-italiano-venezolano-3/

The set is the largest and most representative institution for the Italian-Venezuelan community in the country. Over an area of 276.000 m2, its centerpiece is the headquarters building, constructed in concrete and brutal in nature, located above a podium. Due to its location at the top of the hill, it manages to break the urban environment and exhibit a monumentality that is embedded in the landscape as a distinctive element. The piece is characterized for being a single casing that hosts a fluid interior, composed of multiple spaces of different hierarchies, and a complex program.

