

M+B

HYPERALLERGIC

A Caribbean Present Steeped in a Colonial Past

In *Coffee, Rhum, Sugar & Gold: A Postcolonial Paradox* at the Museum of African Diaspora in San Francisco, ten artists explore the implications of colonialism's violent legacy.

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July 29, 2019



Coffee, Rhum, Sugar & Gold: A Postcolonial Paradox seeks to understand the enduring legacy of European colonialism in the Caribbean through the work of ten contemporary artists. The paradox named in the show's title speaks to the commonality and cultural ubiquity of these materials — the drivers of colonial slave economies in the Caribbean — and how their assimilation into contemporary society has enabled a forgetting of their primacy as cash crops of European

coloniality. A further paradox lies in the fact that many of the Caribbean nation-states that have emerged from these former plantation economies presently exist as raw exporters of fruits, extracted mining products, natural gases, and fertilizers, and are also consumer markets for the finished manufactured and agricultural products sold back to them through trade agreements and manipulated global markets. These resource-rich states, to varying degrees, are trapped in political and economic relationships with their former colonizers in order to participate in the international financial marketplace; it is within this context that Dexter Wimberly and Larry Ossei-Mensah curate this show, put on at the Museum of the African Diaspora.

Occupying the liminal space between body politics and religiosity in his depiction of the body as a vessel for a kind of spiritual warfare is Didier William's creation of fluid, flowing figures despite the rigid immovability of the wood from which they are carved. It serves as an analogy for the arduous labor of Black reimagining in the fight against a white hegemony as he, in his own words, is "compelled by a body that's tougher to consume." His work is created from familial oral traditions and mythologies and rituals from Haitian Vodou, all in service of a queered imaginary that subverts the colonial gaze.