



Mo Mohamed

cultural laborer

The lifelong artistic journey that has brought him back home

Mo Mohamed tells us he feels safe in art, and indeed has made it the center of his life. Upon first meeting, he seems an art form in himself; with long dreads and a cap, loose-fitting garb and wooden shoes, he gets from place to place with a carved walking stick. Mo has a way about him that is almost surreal, as if he comes from a different place and time. He is a calm and humble man, with a definite sense of humor that has surely seen him through rough times.

A slight man in his 70s, Mo has lived the kind of life that seems impossible to most of us. Born in Aruba of a family of 10 children, he became independent early on. His travels have taken him through Europe, the Caribbean, and South America. Mo has called the Netherlands, Brazil and Surinam home; he returned to Aruba in 1992 where he has been ever since. His life journey has brought him sweetness, love, and four wonderful children, but also years as a starving artist. "The street is the best place to find art and music," he explains. The years he spent in the Netherlands from the 1960s to 1980s were in the midst of a circle of artists, and he describes these struggling years with

nostalgia and appreciation. "Life is the best teacher," he shares.

Mo doesn't describe himself as an artist, rather a "cultural laborer." Others have described him as a non-conformist, third world artist, autodidact, unusual character - each of which captures only a part of him. He lives a humble life, sleeping in a hammock in his large home/studio accessible only by a narrow dirt road not too far from the sea, among wildlife and desert brush. He has no electricity or running water in his house. His artwork overflows, covering walls and floors, tables, shelves and chairs. When asked to see more, he unrolls dozens of canvases that he is preparing for an upcoming exposition.



The house is a storehouse of his creativity as well as his atelier. He paints on cans, bottles, cloth, wood, metal...really any surface...using powders, pencils, acrylics, oils, inks, crayons, watercolors. He creates walking sticks, masks, maracas, figurines, sculptures. He can create art from anything - and perhaps that is his greatest gift.

Interspersed with his works are books, newspaper clippings, photographs, and the like, accumulated over the years. His subjects are endless, often biographical, reflecting art, history, beauty, nature, emotion. His style can be primitive, abstract, whimsical, surreal, bold and mesmerizing. His art has been shown at museums, art galleries and events for more than 40 years and has appeared in group

and solo expositions - finding its way to the far corners of the world. But that's not all. Mo is also a poet, philosopher, storyteller and musician. In his younger years, he played in the Reality Band of Tony Sherman and traveled with them from Amsterdam throughout South America. Today, he enjoys playing with his friends or sons in a group known as Sonfaya 2020, with drums, flutes, pipes and other wind instruments.

After living and traveling all over the world, Mo quietly immerses himself in his artistic pursuits. He has become a kind of legend in his own time, and he chuckles at all the stories that are told about him, knowing that few are really true. He is known and greeted wherever he goes, and when asked how he is, he responds, "Divine as usual." And he means it.

Mo is happy to receive visitors at his home in Seroe Bentana, but it's not easy to find. Just a few minutes from downtown San Nicolas, it seems a world unto itself...a million miles away.