

Brent Malone

Painter, Draughtsman



- Born in 1941; died in 2004 in Nassau, The Bahamas
- Attended Queen's College for primary and high school
- He studied at the Beckenham School of Art in London (it later changed to the Ravensbourne College of Art and Design) and returned home in 1964
- He reopened and managed Chelsea Pottery (as Bahamian Pottery) but it closed a year later

About

Malone is remembered as an entrepreneur and institution builder. He opened several galleries and stores in his lifetime, including:

- The Loft Gallery 1965-1970;
- The Matinee Art Gallery 1977-1980;
- The Temple Gallery 1981-1987;
- Marlborough Antiques and Temple merged in 1987 and remained functional until 2004;
- He also helped established The Ladder Gallery at New Providence Community Centre.

Malone's contributions to Bahamian culture and art were not limited to the mere provision of physical locations to display art. He worked closely with cultural and educational institutions to create and enhance awareness of the visual arts. In 1978, he worked with Eddie Minnis to call for the reduction of import duty rates on art supplies and served as the chairman of the Bahamas

Chamber of Commerce Cultural Committee. In 1979, he again partnered with Eddie Minnis to develop and initiate the FINCO Summer Workshop, which is one of the country's longest running arts education programmes. He was a major component of B-CAUSE (Bahamas Creative Artists United for Serious Expression), which was established in 1991. Malone believed that Junkanoo was the first sign of a national art form and a reservoir of creative energy waiting to be tapped by all the arts. Junkanoo was Malone's muse for the better part of his early career. His compositions changed over the years using a full range of techniques from neorealism to abstract expression but consistently relied on the elements true to Junkanoo to emphasize form and motion: vibrant colours, patterns, ribbons and other rudimentary items of the costume.

From the Collection: *Metamorphosis* (1979) by Brent Malone

September 27, 2017

by Natalie Willis

There are few artists who were able to evoke the energy of Junkanoo as Brent Malone did. He didn't just show vibrant costumes swaying lightly: he showed colours and costumes that vibrated, bodies tense with energy and muscles coiled as cowbells get poised to strike, eyes as red as the feathers from that 3 am lap, sweat dripping down tired faces. Malone set out the path for others to display Junkanoo as the manic, feverish, exhausting, and mesmerizing spectacle it is - he made it his mission to show the feeling at the root of the celebration, the cathartic outpouring of energy and freedom. It is fitting that he lends this deference of accurate portrayal to a work that means so much to so many: *Metamorphosis* (1979) is a testament to the idea of a nascent Bahamas, the burgeoning forth of a still transforming nation after independence.

Malone was a Bahamian of European descent who came of age in a segregated, colonial Bahamas. All the more touching then, that he set out so adamantly to claim his sense of Bahamian identity while being so proud of his Britishness - as in many ways Bahamian culture is Black culture, and Malone inserted himself into spaces with the Black majority and celebrated the triumph and history of Bahamian people in all its facets. In fact, he had said himself in conversation with Fred Mitchell

writing for the Nassau Guardian in 1982: “I feel the rush of Junkanoo music as much as you do... I’ve never felt like an outsider here because I am white. I’ve hardly been conscious of the difference, in fact I can’t afford to, because I feel very strongly identified as a Bahamian and I see The Bahamas as so much a Black experience.” *Metamorphosis* (1979) doesn’t just speak to the transformation and to the birth of a nation, as the title suggests, but it also alludes to a rebirth of the artist as someone claiming his identity and inserting himself into the narrative of Bahamianness outside of white Britishness. The butterfly costume with its shaking white fringe dazzles you, it shakes, just as the



newly born butterfly shakes itself dry and the cowbeller rhythmically shakes the bell to add a steady undertone of sound to the music of Junkanoo. The choice of a beller in particular is a way to pay homage to the everyday roots of Junkanoo.

The piece also tells of a period in Malone’s career where he wasn’t just being a student, this Bahamian surrealist period of his works - notably seen in pieces such as *Earth Sea Sky (Triptych of Unity)* (1977) - is also arguably the only time in his lengthy career where he developed a style that was purely and palpably his own.

[Click here to read more: Brent Malone's Metamorphosis \(1979\)](#)

From the Collection: *Woman with Flamingoes* (1996-1997)

August 29, 2017

by Natalie Willis

It is time to revisit an old favourite with the detail and context it truly deserves. A cross-hatch of brushstrokes, full of the looseness, movement and vibrancy associated with R. Brent Malone's work, gives way to the key figures from which this piece in the National Collection gets its title. *Woman With Flamingoes*

(1996-97), a gift to the Collection donated in memory of Jean Cookson, depicts a flamboyance of flamingoes with a woman

staring beyond the frame. Though the flamingoes are bustling and full of movement, she is purposefully still. Malone renders her the focus of the work amidst a pink and crimson cacophony of tropical birds.

To those familiar with his practice and with the troupe of Bahamian Pottery and Chelsea Pottery trained Bahamian artists, Malone was - by his own words - heavily influenced by renowned and art-historically significant European and American artists.

[Click here to read more: *From the Collection: Woman with Flamingoes*](#)



Woman With Flamingoes (1996-97), R. Brent Malone, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30. Part of the National Collection, donated in memory of Jean Cookson.

