



## **ANTONIUS ROBERTS, OBE**

### **Director of The Gallery & Wine Bar**

#### **Biography**

Antonius Roberts was born in 1958. He graduated in 1981 from the Philadelphia College of Art (now the University of the Arts), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania earning a BFA in Painting.

He was born and grew up on Lewis Street in the heart of Nassau, Bahamas, a reference which informs his life's work creatively and his connection to history and community. He has one daughter, Ayla Antonia Roberts and is married to Dr Annette Warren-Roberts.

In his early career he was a teacher and lecturer at Government High School and The College of The Bahamas (now University of The Bahamas) and coordinated a series of FINCO Summer Art Workshops mentoring a generation of young Bahamian artists. He conceived and coordinated the first Junior Junkanoo competition and parade in 1983, to celebrate ten years of Bahamian Independence. He also served as the Curator of The Central Bank of The Bahamas' Art Gallery until 2017, and was the architect and coordinator of their annual Competitions and Exhibitions until 2006.

His continuing role in furthering awareness of the Arts saw him playing a supportive role in the restoration of the former Villa Doyle and its conversion to the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas. He founded The Bahamian Art Gallery in 1991 which was responsible for the re-introduction of Bahamian Master Artists, Kendal Hanna and Jo Monks - USA Boy. That same year he curated the largest exhibition of another Bahamian artist, Amos Ferguson at The Central Bank of The Bahamas Art Gallery. He then encouraged The Right Honourable Sir Lynden Pindling, Prime Minister of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas, to approve the purchase of twenty five paintings from that exhibition. This purchase was significant as it became the foundation of the National Art Collection of The Bahamas.

In recognition of Roberts' contribution to the national development of the arts, he has received several awards which included a Commonwealth of The Bahamas Silver Jubilee Award; the E. Clement Bethel Award from The College of The Bahama; and in 2000 received the Ministry of Tourism's Cacique Award for the Arts.

His career as an artist has taken him around the world to participate in various exhibitions as well as numerous shows at home in The Bahamas. In 2005 Roberts spent one month in Pietrasanta, Italy working in marble and granite as part of the International Professional Artist Symposium and Exchange. In 2006 he was invited not only to exhibit in Changchun, China but to leave, as a permanent installation, his 12' bronze sculpture. As a sculptor Roberts became known for his first *Sacred Space* project at the historic Clifton Heritage site, New Providence. This theme of enslavement was expanded on with a larger installation at the Blake Road Welcome Centre; another group of *Sacred Women* travelled to Wiesbaden, Germany for their *Funky Nassau* Exhibition; these were then exhibited at The Nassau Art Gallery of The Bahamas, with a similar installation now forming part of The Grand Bahama Heritage Foundation. In 2011 he participated in the *Master Artists of The Bahamas Exhibition* at the Waterloo Centre for the Arts in Iowa.

On November 3, 2017, The Cove, at Atlantis, Paradise Island became the recipient of another permanent *Sacred Space* installation sited on the tip of The Cove's peninsula. This *Sacred Space* series represents seven dancing women individually depicting triumph, hope and determination demonstrating his vision of conserving Bahamian history. Donning a different hat in 2009, as an Open Space Designer, Roberts designed and directed the creation of the seven acre park at Centreville House, an integral part of the revitalization programme in downtown Nassau. His creative versatility was demonstrated in his creation of *Bubbles*, a collection of blown-glass bubbles installed at the newly renovated Lynden Pindling International Airport in 2013. Roberts became the first Artist in Residence at Schooner Bay, Abaco for several years and later in 2017 established a relationship with the Island School in Eleuthera.

In 2012, he opened Hillside House Art Gallery and Studio on Cumberland Street in an historic building dating back to the 1700's. Over a ten year period it has grown exponentially into a welcoming hub for artists and public. His spiritual connection, his desire to record and honour his Bahamian heritage, as well as his commitment to conservation, preservation and restoration is reflected in all his creative works and endeavours.

A natural progression in his pursuit of growing and expanding the potential of young artists in all genres, has been the founding of Project I.C.E., an acronym for 'Incubator for Creative Expression'. In 2019 he took a ten year lease on a parcel of land with a dilapidated warehouse and proceeded, as expected, to conserve, preserve and restore the building as a useable space for emerging artists to be mentored and, perhaps more importantly, to expand their horizons into becoming part of the Orange Economy and

potentially sustaining themselves through their work. There is currently an Artist in Residence opportunity and a S.T.E.A.M. programme for inner-city children who have the opportunity to learn 3D printing and eco-friendly garden-farming.

A member of The Charitable Arts Foundation for over twenty years, Roberts, along with other Council members, continues to raise significant funding for the creative community in The Bahamas. These funds are available on an annual bases for: art education, grants for short and full length films, art and music projects, supporting writers, poets, musicians and national art institutions.

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