

[accessAtlanta.com](#) > Arts

Life's ups and downs, with tropical touch

By DEBRA WOLF
For the Journal-Constitution

Published on: 07/29/2007

Combining drawing, assemblage, sculpture and painting, four Atlanta-based artists of Caribbean heritage offer personal and historical perspectives in a polished show curated by artist Freddie Styles at City Hall East.

Jamaican Yanique Norman's "The Dunce: Uterus" poses a leering whale on cracked, egg-like eyeballs as reproductive organs float overhead. "Unsalted Seas" features mysteriously crowned fish, teetering on their tailfins in a dry ocean bed. Nearby, a mutating torso sprawls over a toadstool, morphing into something grinning that we can't quite make out. Reading like sci-fi meets folklore, we struggle to decode the work but we're quickly hooked on Norman's quirky, Kafkaesque compositions.



(ENLARGE)

Stefanie Jackson's "No Man Is an Island" combines symbols of lost vision, destruction and blighted innocence during forced migration.



REVIEW "A Summer Show With Caribbean Roots: Lillian Blades, Stefanie Jackson, Yanique Norman, Basil Watson" Through Aug. 10. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays. Prices: \$350-\$18,000. City Gallery East, 675 Ponce de Leon Ave., Atlanta. 404-817-6815, [www.oacaatlanta.com](#). **Verdict:** Strong and varied works shine in an elegant show.

exude hopefulness. Watson's women are enduring and fecund. And Norman teaches us that we can dream, adapt and evolve.

Bahamian-born Lillian Blades makes large, sculptural assemblages in vibrant, tropical tones. Resembling pieced quilts, she weds fabric-covered blocks to domestic objects — beads, pearls, photographs, decorative wooden bowls and spoons.

The pleasing mélange creates a rhythmic and effusive color field, while presenting an intimate and collective history as in "Birthing II" and "Ethnic Cleansing." The inclusion of small frames and mirrors is a leitmotif for Blades, as she punctuates the visual space with purposeful points of emptiness, placeholders for those we've lost, for the past, and for the future.

Basil Watson's charcoal studies and bronze sculptures highlight the vitality, power, and sensuality of the female form. While all the works are striking, "The Three Graces" makes for an exquisite, diminutive triumvirate, casting a trio of figures in contemporary reinterpretation of feminine beauty. With arms raised high and wrists bound, the well-known Jamaican sculptor's "Graces" are elegiac. They hang tragically and heroically in literal and symbolic enslavement.

Stefanie Jackson's richly colored, expressionistic oils overflow with harrowing scenes of upheaval. With family from Trinidad and Grenada, the painter's ties to New Orleans add another layer of meaning to recent canvases of involuntary migration.

"Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea" and "No Man Is an Island" brim with severed limbs, symbols of death and dying, life cut short and cut off. Vision is obscured by hands, masks, even crutches. Yet surrounded by destruction and blighted innocence, survivors cling to one another and hang on.

While turbulence, loss and separation fill these artworks, so too does resilience. Jackson offsets despondency with community. Blades' hues