

## A Garden of Hope

Opening Remarks from Inaugural Ceremony

28th of January, 2023

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The Garden of Hope refers to the 17th-century Hope estate, later amalgamated into a larger Scotland plantation, once owned by Judith Powrey becoming the foundation of what is now Walkers Reserve. It eventually shifted from sugar cane to a silica sand quarry. In recent years, under Ian McNeel's vision, it has been transitioning to a site of permaculture and regeneration. That's where Hope returns...through vision, knowledge, and action, an exhausted landscape is being transformed into a healthier ecosystem and a post-plantation site of healing.

I was raised on a series of plantations and as a child, had the impression that I was in a natural environment because of the endless fields of green sugar cane. It wasn't till I was older that I understood there was nothing natural about mono-crop estates. Rather, they were designed for a larger carefully constructed colonial project which we were all a part of.

I later became interested in finding ways to form a more intimate relationship with landscapes that had been mediated for centuries by the plantation. That process has been facilitated by walking, writing, and making art inspired by a practice of innerseeing rather than overseeing.

I started noticing wild plants growing in former sugar cane fields, collected, pressed and drew them as I learned about their historic value as plants of resistance. Those plants then became the basis for making a bush tea service with Hamilton Wiltshire and serving bush teas followed by growing several small bush tea plots at UWI, in Derbyshire, England at a former cotton mill, in the Scottish Highlands with crofting students where some of the indentured labourers came to Barbados from, and one that opens at the Sharjah Biennial in the UAE next month.

The Garden of Hope builds on the history of marginal plots of land inside plantations given to enslaved African people to grow food, practice rituals, make medicine or poison, and take care of their community. It is conceived as a post-plantation living apothecary, and, rather than reflect the geometry of the plantation with its clearly delineated rows of sugar cane plants, this small plot is inspired by bio-diverse counter-landscapes honouring inter-cropping methods and healing traditions while suggesting future strategies for repair, thriving and connection.

Spirit-based rituals and healing methods survived the forced migrations of human beings beginning in the 17th century, infusing our landscape with ancestral knowledge systems critical for endurance and in defiance of inhumane conditions. In Barbados, that took the form of bush teas, bush baths, and bush medicines— forming an oral pharmacopeia that included charms and incantations uttered to release the healing power of plants and support people through the terrors of dislocation, offering a balm to weary or diseased bodies and broken spirits.

In response to the existential climate crisis known as the 6th extinction or the Anthropocene, I prefer the term plantationocene which places colonialism and capitalism in the driver's seat of this epochal shift. It's not natural for the world to collapse. We, humans, did that. The planet is now begging us to develop a different relationship with the natural world, one of mutuality or living with. The architecture of our past does not have to be the blueprint of our future. I believe in the potential of small green spaces to give birth to a greener world that can breathe more easily.

I am hopeful that visitors who spend time in The Garden of Hope might reflect on the ancestors who came before us, using what was available to them for medicine - plants growing in their environment that they had to learn about so as to heal themselves and one another. There is also a QR code and some labeling offering some information about local plant uses and traditions. This is very much a work in progress, and hopefully, there will be more opportunities to engage with the garden through workshops for those who are interested.