“ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT JUNKANOO”
THE NATIONAL JUNKANOO MUSEUM AND THE POLITICS OF TOURISM AND IDENTITY

By
RESSA MACKEY

A Thesis submitted to the Department of Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Degree Awarded Fall Semester, 2009
The members of the committee approve the thesis of Ressa Mackey defended on August 18, 2009.

_______________________________
Roald Nasgaard
Professor Directing Thesis

_______________________________
Karen Bearor
Committee Member

_______________________________
Michael Carrasco
Committee Member

Approved:

_______________________________
Adam Jolles, Co-Chair, Department of Art History

_______________________________
Sally McRorie, Dean, College of Visual Arts, Theatre and Dance

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members.
To Michael and Abigail
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank the members of my committee, Roald Nasgaard, Karen Bearor, and Michael Carrasco, whose guidance and patience tremendously benefitted my project. I am also grateful for the opportunities afforded to me by the Penelope E. Mason Grant, which enabled me to witness the Junkanoo festival and interview several of the Junkanoo artists. My understanding of the festival was truly enriched by the testimonies provided by Stan Burnside, Angelique McKay, Mornette Curtis, Jackson Burnside, and Eddy Dames.

Accomplishing my thesis would not have been possible without the help of my family and friends. I would like to thank my wonderful team of babysitters, notably Connie and Colleen Rawson and Arenthia Herren, who provided me with the free time I needed to complete my thesis. I am especially thankful to Deirdre Carter, whose assistance during the final stages of this project truly I appreciate. Finally, thank you Michael for all your love and support throughout this experience.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Junkanoo: From Slavery to Tourism</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: The National Junkanoo Museum</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: The Institutionalization of Authenticity</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five: Conclusion</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix: Figures</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographical Sketch</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

1. New Year’s Day Junkanoo Parade.  
Nassau, The Bahamas. Photo taken by author ................................. 1

Ferguson, *I Come to Get Me!: an Inside Look at the Junkanoo Festival* ................ 2

Thompson, “Preserving While Destroying: The Junkanoo Expo.” ............ 2, 34, 45

4. Discarded costumes after the New Year’s Day Junkanoo Parade in 2009.  
Photo by author ................................................................. 2, 24

Ferguson, *I Come to Get Me!: an Inside Look at the Junkanoo Festival* .......... 18

The Island of the Bahamas advertisement campaign, Ministry of Tourism.  

7. Da Junkanoo Shak Bahamian Restaurant & Bar.  
“Kalik Beer” advertisement, the official beer of the Bahamas. 2009.  
Nassau, The Bahamas. Photo by author ............................................... 19

Released in 2007 .................................................................................. 19

Ferguson, *I Come to Get Me!: an Inside Look at the Junkanoo Festival* .......... 20

10. Ship headdresses, paper-fringed costumes, and white masks.  
Ferguson, *I Come to Get Me!: an Inside Look at the Junkanoo Festival* .......... 20

Ferguson, *I Come to Get Me!: an Inside Look at the Junkanoo Festival* .......... 20

12. New Year’s Day Junkanoo Parade. The Valley Boys,  
Nassau, The Bahamas. Photo by author .................................................. 20
Date unknown. Nassau, The Bahamas.
Ferguson, *I Come to Get Me!: an Inside Look at the Junkanoo Festival* ............... 21

Off-the-Shoulder Dancer featuring the Rams football team. 2007.
Nassau, The Bahamas. Photo by Sam Singh, obtained through Flickr,
http://www.flickr.com/photos/singharoundtheworld/2183444944/ ......................... 21

15. New Year’s Day Junkanoo Parade.
Saxon Superstars, costume theme: “I Have a Dream” in honor of black politicians.
Photo by author ................................................................. 21


Photo by author ........................................................................... 23

18. New Year’s Day Junkanoo Parade.
Nassau, The Bahamas. Photo by author ........................................ 23, 24

19. New Year’s Day Junkanoo Parade.
Photo by author ................................................................. 23, 45

20. New Year’s Day Junkanoo Parade.
Photo by author ........................................................................... 24

Photo by author ........................................................................... 24

22. New Year’s Day Junkanoo Parade.

23. New Year’s Day Junkanoo Parade.
Scrapper banner recognizing sponsorship from SOBE Energy Drink.

25. Aluminum rods and cardboard frames for costumes. Ferguson, *I Come to Get Me!: an Inside Look at the Junkanoo Festival* .......................... 25


34. New Year’s Day Junkanoo Parade. The Valley Boys. Lead Piece resembling a float more than a costume. 2009. Nassau, The Bahamas. Photo by author .................................................. 46

ABSTRACT

The annual Junkanoo festival in the Bahamas is regarded as “the ultimate national symbol,” representative of Bahamian sovereignty and culture. A festival that originated from Bahamian slaves, Junkanoo has evolved into a popular commercial and cultural event that features extravagant, crépe-paper costumes. This paper analyzes the role of the commodified Junkanoo costume in constructing a Bahamian national and cultural identity. Specifically, it analyzes the history and policies of the National Junkanoo Museum, the first institution to display the costumes outside their performative context.

Through a interdisciplinary approach that incorporates methodologies from art history, sociology, and museum studies, I argue that Junkanoo serves a commercial purpose, which the National Junkanoo Museum perpetuates by displaying the costumes for touristic consumption. My thesis is based on three separate grounds of analysis. First, I examine the festival’s hybrid and dynamic nature by analyzing external factors that influenced Junkanoo’s development. Notably, I consider the Ministry of Tourism and the Bahamian Development Board’s involvement and administration of the parade, which significantly impacted the costumes’ iconography, materiality, and ephemerality. Next, I view the National Junkanoo Museum within the context of other Caribbean Museums to conclude that the institution encounters similar challenges to its neighbors, which include reconciling the museum’s nationalistic intentions with its objectives to bolster cultural tourism.

Finally, I demonstrate how the National Junkanoo Museum diverges from standard museum practice in order to augment the country’s fledging heritage industry. Instead of assembling a permanent collection, the museum operates as a non-collecting institution by exhibiting the costumes only on an annual basis and then returning the objects to the Junkanoo artists who proceed to dismantle and recycle their costumes. The museum’s exhibition policy reflects the artists’ habit of abandoning their costumes immediately following the parade. However, I contend that the National Junkanoo Museum’s use of nostalgia as a museum epistemology is less about an effort to restore the costumes’ traditional ephemerality, than it is an indication of the pervasiveness of the tourism industry in formulating a Bahamian national and cultural identity. Junkanoo’s economic potential is dependent on the perception of the festival as an identifiable, authentic Bahamian product, which the government facilitates by promoting
the costumes as national symbols of Bahamian culture and appropriating them into a national museum system.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

During the early morning hours of 26 December and 1 January the city of Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas, celebrates the annual Junkanoo festival with a parade of live musicians, choreographed dancers, and extravagant costumes (Fig. 1). The 26 December spectacle is known as the Boxing Day parade while the demonstrations that occur on 1 January parade are referred to as the New Year’s Day parade. Although the Boxing Day and New Year’s Day parades are two separate events with entirely different sets of costumes, both parades comprise the Junkanoo festival. What originally began as a recreational activity of Bahamian slaves has evolved into the nation’s premiere cultural event, and a profitable tourist attraction. The festival’s popular reception by both tourists and locals is driven by the perception of Junkanoo as an authentic Bahamian product. Repeatedly described in Bahamian discourse as the “ultimate national symbol,” Junkanoo is the principal component in developing a Bahamian collective identity.

Accordingly, it is no surprise that authenticity and cultural identity are fiercely debated topics within the Bahamian community. Many Bahamians feel that the islands’ colonial history and close proximity to the United States diminishes the genuineness of Bahamian culture. For instance, in 2003, a reporter for the *Nassau Guardian* wrote an article that questioned the role of objects in defining a Bahamian identity after meeting a young man who insisted that Wendy’s fast food was as Bahamian as the conch fritters served at the Bamboo Shack. The reporter argued:

Those of us who are tempted to denounce him and dismiss his proclamation are missing the point he's making. For so long we've been taught to approach culture as something to do with things—with food, performance, Junkanoo, music, art, dance, you name it—that

---

1 Both parades begin at 2:00 a.m. and usually end around 10:00 a.m. the next morning.


we’ve bought into that myth. Because we’ve been taught to believe that culture consists of objects, we get very defensive when people mess with our objects, believing that if you take them away from us, we're in trouble . . . Before we claim some things as Bahamian, then, before we dismiss others as not, before we pump money into preserving something that gives us our 'identity'. [emphasis added] I suggest we take a lesson from the young man who named Wendy's Bahamian.  

Consequently, my thesis explores the role of the commodified Junkanoo costume in constructing a Bahamian national and cultural identity. The costumes have been subject to commodification ever since the Bahamian government began orchestrating the festival’s activities and appearances in order to advance the country’s tourism industry. An important contributing factor to the commodification process is the National Junkanoo Museum, the first institution to exhibit the costumes outside their performative context. By analyzing the history and policies of the National Junkanoo Museum, one can better understand the ensuing theoretical and practical debates over contemporary Junkanoo practices and Bahamian identity.

In 1993, a group of Junkanoo artists established a permanent exhibition space for displaying the winning Junkanoo costumes from the annual parades (Figs. 2 and 3). Referred to as the Junkanoo Expo, the museum’s original mission consisted of celebrating the costumes as a distinctly Bahamian art form. However, despite the museum’s altruistic intentions, exhibiting and preserving the costumes contradicted the objects’ traditional performative and ephemeral nature. Not only was the Expo incapable of replicating Junkanoo’s sensory experiences, but preserving the costumes also proved contrary to the performers’ tendency to abandon their apparel immediately following the parades. Typically after the parades’ finale, many Junkanoo performers simply leave their costumes alongside the sidewalks and streets for Nassau’s sanitation crews to collect and haul to the city dump (Fig. 4).

---


5 The Junkanoo costume is a marvelous feat of engineering in which a single performer wears an ensemble that weighs between twenty to fifty pounds, and rises anywhere from six to ten feet in the air. Several different types of costumes exist, ranging from smaller, less constraining outfits worn by the choreographed dancers; to the enormous and captivating Off-the-Shoulder costumes worn by adult men and women; and finally, the Lead Pieces which function more as floats than costumes but are still operated by a single individual. Costume production is a communal activity that occurs mostly at night in high-ceiling enclosures referred to as “shacks.” Many of the island’s abandoned warehouses and unused buildings have been converted into these communal studios. See Arlene Nash Ferguson, I Come to Get Me!: An Inside Look at the Junkanoo Festival (Nassau: Doongalik Studios, 2000), 20-21, 24-30.
At the time, the Bahamian community supported the museum’s efforts to preserve the costumes. Since the items had reached a certain level of aesthetic development that permitted their use as symbols of Bahamian culture, the Junkanoo community felt that destroying the costumes no longer seemed appropriate. Despite the strong support for a permanent collection, in 2004, the museum renamed itself the National Junkanoo Museum of the Bahamas and introduced a new exhibition policy that reinstituted the costumes’ traditional ephemerality. Currently, the institution no longer works with a permanent collection, but instead, encourages Junkanoo artists to loan their costumes to the museum for a year-long exhibition. At the end of the year, the artists reclaim their costumes and disassemble the large wings, shoulder pieces, and cardboard skirts. The museum then replaces their former exhibition with a completely new inventory of costumes from the most recent parade. Essentially, by allowing artists the opportunity to salvage their costumes, the museum sanctions the destruction of the costumes.

My thesis examines issues of authenticity, commodification, and nostalgia to conclude that since the 1920s, Junkanoo largely has served a commercial purpose. However, this function is frequently challenged by many Bahamians who feel that the commodified version of Junkanoo depreciates the substantive qualities of Bahamian culture. After all, the museum’s location within Festival Place, the tourism center of the Bahamas, suggests that the museum mostly appeals to tourists groups and that visitors’ exposure to Junkanoo is part of a “packaged commodified travel experience.” The critics’ insistence that Junkanoo must retain its “authentic” features is exemplified by the 1989 controversy over the proposed transfer of the parades from its historical route on Bay Street to the Queen Elizabeth Sports Complex. Many in the Junkanoo community responded harshly to the proposal, holding public meetings, press conferences, protests, and strikes in opposition. Two of the largest Junkanoo groups, the Saxon

---

6 According to many contemporary Junkanoo artists, including Eddy Dames, Stan Burnside, Angelique McKay, and Jackson Burnside, the costumes’ transitory nature carries no religious or spiritual significance, but instead, embodies the practical concerns of an island with very limited storage space and the individual artists’ deep-rooted competitive spirit to devise new creations each year.


8 The new location would have better accommodated the growing number of spectators and performers, eliminating the increasing challenges of over-crowding and safety. Additionally, the financial gains projected from hosting the parade in a more tourist-friendly locale significantly impacted the National Junkanoo Committee’s and Ministry of Tourism’s decision. See Clement E. Bethel, *Junkanoo: Festival of the Bahamas*, ed. Nicolette Bethel (Oxford: Macmillian Caribbean, 1992), 90-91; Gladstone Thurston, “Junkanoo Move to Boost PLP Carnival at Sports Centre?” *The Tribune*, October 10, 1989; and MaryAnn Burrows, “Saxons and Valley Boys Will Defy Move to Have Junkanoo at Sports Centre,” *The Tribune*, October 10, 1989.
Superstars and the Valley Boys, held protests in Rawson Square (a prominent tourist attraction) and shouted “Bay Street forever! Sports Centre never!” In the end, the Junkanoo groups halted all costume production, which forced the Ministry of Tourism and the National Junkanoo Committee to reconsider their decision to move the parades.

Nonetheless, discounting Junkanoo’s commercial aspects ignores the significant impact of tourism in shaping the costumes’ history and in constructing a Bahamian identity. As corroborated by Bahamian scholar Nicolette Bethel, Junkanoo represents “the culmination of the tales of identification told to the self (Bahamians) and to the other (tourists and other foreigners).” A growing portion of the Bahamian community recognizes the potential marketability of Junkanoo, and several artists and community leaders support the linkage of Junkanoo with tourism. The National Junkanoo Museum’s current manager, Angelique McKay, intends to make the museum mutually beneficial to the cultural and touristic needs of the country. Accordingly, I argue that the National Junkanoo Museum appropriates the costumes in order to fulfill the Bahamian government’s nationalistic and economic agendas. The perception of Junkanoo as an identifiable, authentic Bahamian product—by both tourists and locals—facilitates Junkanoo’s commercial function. The museum, consequently, manipulates the costumes’ “authentic” attributes to effectuate greater touristic appeal. My analysis reveals that the museum appeals to nostalgic sentiments and therewith constructs a discourse of nostalgia as a means to augment the costumes’ authenticity and obscure the museum’s new commercial function. However, I also demonstrate how the use of nostalgia as a museum epistemology generates significant controversies and paradoxes that question the “authenticity” of the costumes and the National Junkanoo Museum’s commercial function. Altogether, I argue that reinstituting the practice of destroying the costumes speaks little of the Bahamian people’s traditions, but instead, indicates the fundamental role of tourism in establishing museum policy.

The Junkanoo festival is primarily studied by musicologists and anthropologists who typically analyze the festival’s African and colonial heritage. Almost every Junkanoo scholar continues to recognize and build upon Keith Wisdom’s 1985 dissertation, “Bahamian Junkanoo: An Act in a Modern Social Drama.” Wisdom’s dissertation provided the first comprehensive

---

9 Clement E. Bethel, Junkanoo, 90-91.

10 Ibid., 91.

11 Nicolette Bethel, “Junkanoo in the Bahamas.”
study of Junkanoo. Furthermore, Wisdom was the first author to associate the festival’s identifiable features with the government’s institutionalization efforts. As well, domestic Bahamian scholars Arlene Nash Ferguson and Nicolette Bethel have published extensively on the historical development of Junkanoo. Ferguson’s book *I Come to Get Me: an Inside Look at the Junkanoo Festival* and Bethel’s numerous journal articles, including “Junkanoo in the Bahamas: A Tale of Identity,” explore Junkanoo as a national discourse in the Bahamas. My understanding of tourism and cultural identity in the Bahamas was greatly impacted by Bahamian novelist and cultural theorist Ian Strachan whose analyses of “brochure discourse” and the myth of the Bahamas as Paradise focus on the language and symbolism of tourism advertisements and its effects on Bahamian artistic production. Anthropologist Garth L. Green’s application of nostalgia theory in his study of Trinidad’s Carnival provided me with a comparable study from which I was able to recognize a similar narrative within the Junkanoo festival. In “Authenticity, Commerce, and Nostalgia in the Trinidad Carnival,” Green examines the political implications of nostalgic rhetoric and nostalgic enactments on the Carnival celebration as he analyzes the festival’s shift from a use-value to a commodity. My argument certainly builds on these prior studies, and I am especially grateful for the work of Bahamian anthropologist Krista Thompson, the only scholar to document the National Junkanoo Museum’s unusual practices.

Nevertheless, my study of Junkanoo differs significantly from pervious scholarship as I bring an art historical perspective to the discussion of Junkanoo. My study challenges the perceived authenticity of the costumes as indigenous Bahamian objects by identifying the external political and economic structures that have shaped the costume’s iconography, materiality, and significance. I aim to demonstrate that relative to the reporter’s comment, “Before we claim some things as Bahamian, and before we dismiss others as not,” the controversies regarding the commodification of Junkanoo indicate a hierarchy within material

---

12 A term coined by Green, nostalgic enactments refer to “specific events that emerge out of representations of the past. . . . These nostalgic activities are ways of doing and being that concretize identity and identification. It is in the charged representational and experiential space of art galleries, cultural shows, and even souvenir shops that we find the fluid movement between individual memories and representations. Through this dialectical process, people attain and demonstrate their understanding of their national identity through particular activities and representations of those activities.” Garth L Green, “Authenticity, Commerce, and Nostalgia in the Trinidad Carnival,” in *Trinidad Carnival: The Cultural Politics of a Transnational Festival*, ed. Garth L Green and Philip W. Scher (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 65.
culture that resembles the distinction between low and high art in which the signifiers of a particular culture may not accurately reflect the living culture that exists. In bringing more attention to this obscure, but highly complex cultural event, I hope that my thesis will contribute to the scholarship on the Caribbean arts not only by providing the first extensive study of the National Junkanoo Museum, but also by exploring how community museums and cultural objects construct identity in postcolonial societies.

**Methodology**

The complexity of the topic requires an interdisciplinary approach in which I apply a variety of art historical, museological, and sociological methods to my analysis of Junkanoo. My methodology synthesizes social history, iconographic analysis, postcolonial studies, discourse theory, and the concept of nostalgia in order to provide a holistic understanding of the Junkanoo costumes.

Throughout my discussion of the National Junkanoo Museum, I examine the politics and ideologies behind the construction of a national cultural identity through museum exhibits. I refer frequently to *Museums and the Making of “Ourselves”: The Role of Objects in National Identity* published in 1994 and edited by Flora Kaplan, which provides a number of case studies that critique the representation strategies employed by many museum in postcolonial societies. Specific to the Bahamas, the terms “postcolonial” and “indigenous” differ considerably from typical usage in that during the Bahamian colonial period, Spanish and British colonizers almost completely eradicated native Amerindian populations. In effect, the Bahamas do not have an indigenous population. So instead, my use of the term “indigenous” refers to the unique, hybrid group of African descendents, Creole populations, and early colonizers. Interestingly, the African slaves, although forcefully brought to the Bahamas, can be considered a type of colonizer (rather than a colonized group) since they were not native inhabitants of the Bahamas and essentially replaced the former population. This unique colonial experience certainly impacts the formation of a national identity in which contemporary Bahamians look to Mother Africa and not the Amerindians to define their sense of culture and nationalism. Accordingly, the museums in this particular postcolonial society are not so much attempting to recover a forgotten indigenous group, as characteristic of other postcolonial museums in Africa, Australia, and the Pacific Islands, but instead, are seeking to recognize its African heritage.
I also incorporate into my methodology the concept of nostalgia as outlined by social theorists Fred Davis and Bryan Turner. Derived from the field of sociology, the discourse of nostalgia provides cultural theorists, art historians, and anthropologists with an opportunity to understand how communities use the politics of memory and representations of the past to convey different ideas about cultural value and national identity. In my study of Junkanoo, I intend to use the principles of nostalgia to critique the myth of authenticity and possibly answer why the Bahamians are nostalgic for certain types of costumes and festival practices. I define nostalgia as a yearning for lost patterns of everyday life and the invention of a romanticized version of what can never be regained or recreated. Nostalgia recalls only memories that serve the interests of the present, disregarding unpleasant and controversial historical components that do not conform to a sentimentalized world-view. Moreover, Davis argues that nostalgia significantly impacts the formation of our personal and collective identities. Nostalgia provides humanity with a much needed sense of continuity by connecting people to their past and uniting individuals through shared experiences. A decade later, Turner expanded upon Davis’ theories by categorizing the four dimensions of nostalgia: as a sense of historical decline, an absence of personal wholeness or moral certainty, a sense of lost personal freedom and autonomy, and a loss of simplicity, personal authenticity, and emotional spontaneity. While both sociologists discuss nostalgic sentiments with regard to a community’s practices and conventions, I intend to expand on their theories by including a consideration of culturally significant objects. Many Bahamians


14 Ibid., 65. Turner adds to our understanding of nostalgia by defining the emotion as “a fundamental condition of human estrangement” brought on by “the loss of rural simplicity, traditional stability and cultural integration following the impact of industrial, urban, capitalistic culture.” See Bryan S. Turner, “A Note on Nostalgia,” Theory, Culture, & Society 4 (1987): 150, 152. Turner explains the evolution of nostalgia from a medical and moral concept to a model used for framing bourgeois values. During the Greek classical period and lasting until the sixteenth century, nostalgia was originally believed to be associated with melancholy and affected secluded individuals burdened with a heightened sense of moral consciousness. During the seventeenth century, a Dutch physician defined nostalgia as a physical symptom of homesickness, which indicated a continuation of the belief that nostalgia signified human alienation from the physical and social worlds. Overall, nostalgic melancholy infected those individuals dissatisfied with the illusions of reality, who either succumbed to depression or gained an existential sense of the sublime. See Turner, “A Note on Nostalgia,” 147-50. For an etymological study of the word, see Fred Davis, Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 1-5.

15 Davis, Yearning for Yesterday, 37.

16 Ibid., 31.

are nostalgic for the “authentic” crêpe-paper costumes of the past since these particular types of costumes allegedly signify a “purer” and “simpler” period in Junkanoo’s history. As well, Bahamians have a sentimental yearning for the less formal, more spontaneous parade activities of the past, such as “rushing,” spectator participation, and unrehersed dancing. Overall, nostalgic sentiments deplore the commodification of Junkanoo because it constitutes a significant break from the past that threatens the cultural integrity of their community.

**Précis of Chapters**

My thesis has five chapters, including the “Introduction.” Chapter two “Junkanoo: From Slavery to Tourism,” traces the historical development of the Junkanoo festival and applies a social-historical approach to reveal the symbiotic relationship between the Junkanoo artists and the Bahamian government. I focus on the government’s contribution to the iconographic development of the costumes and examine the other principal changes in the costumes’ materiality, significance, and ephemerality. Motivated by Junkanoo’s economic potential, the government assumed control of the festival during the early twentieth century and initiated a series of regulations meant to transform the parades into a tourist-friendly event. The standardization of Junkanoo preserved certain tangible qualities of the costumes, which the government then markets to international audiences as cultural objects unique to the Bahamas. Junkanoo’s economic potential is dependent on the perception of the festival as an authentic Bahamian product, which the government facilitates by promoting the costumes as national symbols of Bahamian culture. I argue that although the earlier costumes signified the diasporic traditions of African slaves and their resistance towards colonial rule, contemporary Junkanoo costumes now convey a multitude of functions, which include promoting the Bahamas’ vital tourism industry.

Chapter three “The National Junkanoo Museum,” analyzes the role of the National Junkanoo Museum in forming a collective identity and the conflicts that arise when nationalistic and economic agendas collide in a social institution. I examine the National Junkanoo Museum within the context of other Caribbean museums to reveal that the museum in question encounters the same challenges facing other Caribbean museums. Following the typical pattern of museums

---

18 “Rushing” refers to an impromptu game of “chicken” enacted between two groups of performers. The two groups rush in to each other’s formations, disrupting the musical ensembles and creating temporary havoc. Rushing is a competitively driven activity and often performed between rivalry neighborhoods.
in postcolonial societies, the National Junkanoo Museum is expected to foster a national and cultural identity based on the rejection of Bahamian colonial history. By appealing to the costumes’ African characteristics, the museum “rediscover” the heritage of the Bahamian people and exhibits the objects as material evidence of the country’s non-European heritage. However, the demands of the tourism industry affect the representation of the costumes. In the service of tourism, the National Junkanoo Museum commodifies the heritage of its people and perpetuates a version of the costumes that, ironically, resembles that of the country’s colonial past rather than its new national and cultural identity. I argue that the museum encounters conflicting demands for the costumes: to represent a new nationalistic identity, and to fit neatly into a commodified package for tourist consumption.

Chapter four “The Institutionalization of Authenticity,” examines the paradoxes and controversies that arise from the National Junkanoo Museum’s highly unusual practice of forgoing a permanent collection. I apply Fred Davis and Bryan Turner’s theories on nostalgia to the National Junkanoo Museum’s non-collection policy in order to analyze the museum’s use of nostalgic sentiment as a theory of knowledge for authenticating the costumes, which, as I argue becomes a pressing issue once the museum assumes a new commercial function. The National Junkanoo Museum’s policy manipulates the actual objects and former Junkanoo traditions in order to construct a discourse of nostalgia. First, the museum displays and recognizes only those costumes which conform to a nostalgic world-view—in the case of the Bahamas, beautifully-ornate costumes that support the tourists’ romantic assumptions of “tropicality” or Paradise. Second, the museum maintains continuity with the past by reinstituting the practice of destroying the costumes in an attempt to retain the costume’s original significance as temporal, performative objects. Although facilitating the artists’ habit of destroying the costumes connects present-day Junkanoo customs with the traditions of the past, at the same time, it complicates the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity. Furthermore, the paradigm of nostalgia paradoxically both conflicts with and supports the museum’s commercial function.

19 The terms “tropicality” and Paradise are used by Caribbean scholars Ian Strachan and Krista Thompson in reference to the representational structures and discourses that romanticize the Bahamas as a picturesque, tamed, and orderly jungle environment with naturalized black populations. See Krista A. Thompson, An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 149-55; and Ian Strachan, Paradise and Plantation: Tourism and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean, ed. A. James Arnold (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 5.
Chapter five concludes my analysis of Junkanoo. I provide a summary of the preceding chapters and reiterate my argument concerning the National Junkanoo Museum and cultural identity.
CHAPTER TWO
JUNKANOO: FROM SLAVERY TO TOURISM

My first chapter analyzes the development of the Junkanoo festival from a recreational slave activity to a profitable tourist attraction. By following a social-historical approach, I identify the various political and economic forces responsible for the commodification of Junkanoo, focusing specifically on the Bahamian government’s financial and administrative support of the parades during the twentieth century. Within this context, I examine the effects of the government’s regulatory measures on the Junkanoo costumes’ materiality, iconography, and ephemerality. The costumes have come to represent the cultural identity of the Bahamian people, an image perpetuated by the Bahamian government, which promotes Junkanoo as a cultural experience unique to the Bahamas in order to attract tourists and sustain the country’s only lucrative industry. I argue that contemporary Junkanoo costumes take on a commercial function that differs considerably from their earlier role as oppositional tools against British colonial rule. As indicated throughout this chapter, a dichotomy has developed between the Bahamians who support the commodification of Junkanoo and the traditionalists who express nostalgic sentiments for the simpler, purer costumes and practices of the past.

The Junkanoo festival descended directly from Bahamian slaves, and the masquerading and dancing traditions typically associated with Junkanoo most likely originated from a variety of West African festivals. The exact origins of Junkanoo remain unknown, although the Bahamian celebration may stem from the Ibo tribe’s yam festival or the Ga tribe’s Homowo planting festival. Additionally, the annual Egungun festival that occurs today in Yoruba resembles the practice of Junkanoo. The Yoruba people celebrate the collective spirit of the ancestors by masquerading in elaborate costumes, similar to the types of costumes worn by early Junkanoo performers.20 A masqueraded dance known as Kanoo, performed by the Bam-bari tribe during their first fruit ceremony, may also have influenced the development of Junkanoo in the Bahamas.21 Regardless of its exact origins, Junkanoo is one of many similar masquerading


19 Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Department of Archives and Ministry of Education, Public Records Office, Archives Section, Aspects of Bahamian History: Loyalists, Slavery, and Emancipation, Junkanoo, Nassau, 1991,
festivals that developed throughout the Caribbean. Particularly in Jamaica, Bermuda, and Trinidad, the slaves blended their African heritage with Creole customs, British folklore, and plantation culture to create a unique set of traditions.

During the pre-emancipation period of the early nineteenth century, the festival began to revolve around Christmas as several laws came into effect that mandated a three-day holiday be given to all slaves from December 24 to 26. During the Christmas holiday, slaves congregated freely with their families and friends and celebrated their momentary freedom with music, dance, and masquerading. In the evenings, the slaves held large dances that culminated with costumed processions of both men and women dressed in straw costumes, ox-horn headdresses, and large masks. The December 26, 1811 diary entry of the Methodist missionary Reverend W. Dawson provides historians with the earliest reference of the Junkanoo tradition. As the Reverend feverishly described, “I never witnessed such a Christmas Day; the negroes have been beating their tambourines and dancing the whole day and now between eight and nine o’clock they are pursuing their sport as hotly as ever.”

Initially Junkanoo functioned as a form of slave entertainment but later developed into an

33. See also Wisdom, “Bahamian Junkanoo,” 17. The connection between the Bam-bari tribe and Junkanoo was first reported by Robert Dirks and Virginia Kerns in their essay “John Canoe” (1975).

22 Wisdom, “Bahamian Junkanoo,” 17. The term “Junkanoo” did not appear until the 1950s, and the festival was originally referred to as John Canoe. A name of unknown origins, John Canoe may stem from the West African commander John Connu (commonly spelled as Konny, Conny, Kounie, and Koni) or Kooner of the Brandenburg trading fort in Axim on the Gold Coast. The Bahamian Junkanoo celebrations could have been in honor of John Connu who was considered a hero among the slaves. Additionally, the term “Junkanoo” may also be derived from the combination of two words commonly used by the Quoja tribe of West Africa. The Quoja use the word “jannanin” to describe the spirit of the dead and “canno” for the supreme being. See Ferguson, I Come to Get Me!,8-9. Bahamian scholar Judith Bettelheim takes a different viewpoint and contends that the term Junkanoo derives from the Jamaican term “Jonkonnu” and was applied to the Bahamian festival for publicity purposes. See John W. Nunley and Judith Bettelheim, Caribbean Festival Arts: Each and Every Bit of Difference (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 71.


oppositional movement against the racial inequality present in the British colony. Following the emancipation of the slaves in 1834, strict racial segregation divided the New Providence Island, and black Bahamians lived and worked “Over the Hill” in exclusively black neighborhoods. Nonetheless, the political and social barriers created by segregation did not stop black Bahamians from displaying their new independence. Rather than performing inconspicuously in the largest black settlement, known as Grant’s Town, masqueraders traveled to Nassau, the white capital of New Providence and the country’s main business district and tourist center, and performed unabashedly on Nassau’s main avenue, Bay Street. The phrase “Over the Hill,” first coined by the Nassau Guardian in 1881, became synonymous with the early Junkanoo practices and, overall, came to signify the racial obstacles endured by the majority of black Bahamians. During the nineteenth century and continuing into the twentieth century, black Bahamians received a sub-standard education from the inadequate public-school system, were excluded from jury selections by literacy requirements, and occupied only a few of the seats in the Home Office, the single elective body in the Bahamas. During the 1890s, black Bahamians used the Junkanoo parades as a vehicle for social activism, merging the processions with public protests that demanded equality between black Bahamians and the ruling white class. As Junkanoo continued to develop and gain prominence, the public celebrations and protests became even more extravagant and, in 1899, caused the government to restrict the frequency and time-length of the parades with the Street Nuisance Prohibition Act. Despite the limitations

29 Thompson, An Eye for the Tropics, 147. Today, the parade still occurs on Bay Street while the majority of the costumes remain constructed in abandoned warehouses located on the western and southern portions of the island. Bay Street is a fundamental part of Junkanoo, and despite the government’s numerous attempts to relocate the parade to a more tourist-friendly locale, Junkanoo remains on Bay Street to this day.
32 The Street Nuisance Prohibition Act dictated that the parade could only occur on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. and on Christmas Day and New Year’s Day from 4:00 to 9:00 a.m. See Wisdom, “Bahamian Junkanoo,” 33-34. Although the Junkanoo performances always took place at night, the celebrations before the Street Nuisance Act occurred at random throughout the latter-half of the month of December. The parades did not have a uniform starting or ending time, nor did they occur on the same evenings year after year.
enforced by the Street Nuisance Act, Junkanoo became a permanent fixture on Bay Street with choreographed dancers and sophisticated costumes.

By the 1920s the Bahamian Development Board realized the potential profitability of Junkanoo and began commercializing the parades as a source of entertainment for tourists.\textsuperscript{33} Even at this time, the tourism industry wielded substantial influence over Junkanoo. Pandering to the tourists’ and white Bahamians’ complaints about the secular nature of the Christmas parade, the Development Board, in 1935, negotiated the official re-scheduling of Junkanoo to a less revered holiday, New Year’s Day.\textsuperscript{34} The Development Board achieved this arrangement only by offering to the Junkanoo performers cash prizes for the most original and most impressive costumes.\textsuperscript{35} The manner of awarding cash prizes actually began the previous year in an attempt to improve the visual quality of the costumes. The Development Board aimed overall for the parades to better correspond with the charming, touristic image of Nassau that they intended to promote. After nearly a century of failed efforts to build a strong agricultural system in the Bahamas, the British colony had finally found its niche in tourism and was eager to develop the island’s reputation as a “picturesque, tropical destination.”\textsuperscript{36} In 1937, the Nassau

With the restrictions put in to place by the Street Nuisance Act, the parades tapered off into two events: the Christmas Day parade and the New Year’s Day parade.

\textsuperscript{33} Public Records Office, \textit{Aspects of Bahamian History}, 35. The Development Board was a state agency responsible for managing and expanding industry in the Bahamas. The Board focused its energies primarily on encouraging foreign investment and developing tourism. Thompson, \textit{An Eye for the Tropics}, 147-49. Black culture and music began to make an appearance in the entertainment industry during the 1920s, and Bahamian tourism promoters may have been influenced to transform Junkanoo into a marketable product after Bahamian dancer Paul Meeres appeared in Paris and Bahamian musicians and dancers starred on Broadway in the production of \textit{The Great Day}. By the 1930s, the Development Board began encouraging hotels and clubs to feature native Bahamian entertainment—goombay dancers, conche shell blowers, and players of native instruments—which signaled an acceptance of black culture for the service of tourism.

\textsuperscript{34} Public Records Office ‘Junkanoo’, preface; Nunley and Bettelheim, \textit{Caribbean Festival Arts}, 75; and Thompson, \textit{An Eye for the Tropics}, 153. Although the parade was officially moved to New Year’s Day, performances still occurred in the early morning hours of 26 December. In 1938, the Bahamian government declared 26 December a national holiday—naming the date “Boxing Day”—so that the parade’s festivities would not interfere with church services. See Wisdom, “Bahamian Junkanoo,” 43.

\textsuperscript{35} Thompson, \textit{An Eye for the Tropics}, 150. The Development Board’s first category of prizes was “Fancy Costume” and “Most Original.”

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 150. According to the Development Board’s annual report in 1934, “This event was warmly applauded by the cruise ship passengers from the ships which were in port that day and the fact that several of our distinguished visitors acted as judges of the costumes added to their general interest. It is hoped that this quaint and picturesque custom may be made increasingly interesting each year.”
Guardian clearly conveyed the intentions of the Development Board by stating that “the object of offering prizes is to encourage more and better costumes to be worn in the parade, which will reflect more credit to Nassau generally.” The Development Board’s monetary incentives facilitated the costumes’ development during the twentieth century by intensifying the already strong competitive drive among participants and inaugurating an acute desire among performers, spectators, and government officials for elaborate, innovative costumes.38

As, throughout the twentieth century, the Junkanoo festival increased in size and popularity, the Bahamian government took greater control over the parades. In 1933, the Development Board created the Masquerade Committee to assume all administration and funding responsibilities of the parades. By the 1940s, the Committee began establishing rules and regulations meant to instill order over the parades.39 Although Junkanoo was an established Christmas and New Year’s holiday event, the middle-and-upper class Bahamians (both black and white) did not accept the parades but merely tolerated them. Before the Committee’s restructuring of Junkanoo, the majority of festival participants included out-of-work alcoholics, ex-convicts, and other social delinquents whose lack of steady work granted them the leisure time to construct the costumes. Most middle-and-upper class Bahamians considered the unruly behavior of the masqueraders, as well as the festival’s complete lack of internal organization, to indicate Junkanoo’s lack of respectability.40 In order to reverse Junkanoo’s negative reputation, the Committee disallowed the practice of non-costumed participation and introduced metal barriers to separate performers from spectators. Before the use of metal barriers and other regulatory efforts, spectators would spontaneously join the performance and participate in “rushing” or an impromptu game of “chicken” between two groups of performers.41

37 Nunley and Bettleheim, Caribbean Festival Arts, 75.

38 Wisdom, “Bahamian Junkanoo,” 35, 41. The element of competition remains significant to contemporary Junkanoo practices and originated from the strong rivalry that developed among black settlements. Following emancipation, each neighborhood or district developed a distinct, exclusive community that often transgressed into “gangs.” Even though the majority of gang activity was non-violent, the gangs turned Junkanoo into an aggressive contest and used the costumes and the corresponding prize money as a vehicle for asserting their sovereignty over rivaled groups.


40 Ibid., 41-42.

41 Ibid., 47-50. Originally, the Junkanoo participants and spectators found the metal barriers so intrusive that they negotiated a compromise with the Masquerade Committee that limited the enforcement of barriers to periods of
spontaneity of Junkanoo occasionally escalated into mild violent outbursts that substantiated the parade’s negative reputation.

To improve the marketability of Junkanoo, the Masquerade Committee spent several decades re-structuring Junkanoo as a safe, wholesome experience for families and tourists.

The Masquerade Committee presided over Junkanoo until 1982, when the government created the National Junkanoo Committee, an organization comprised of artists, festival leaders, and government officials responsible for overseeing all Junkanoo activities. The creation of the National Junkanoo Committee satisfied the surmounting complaints that Junkanoo artists and performers were excluded from important decisions concerning the administration and future direction of Junkanoo.

A division of the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture, the National Junkanoo Committee continues today to administer the parades. Throughout the next three decades, the National Junkanoo Committee further standardized the event by instigating a variety of new measures, which included introducing bleachers, permitting food and beverage vendors, requiring all groups to submit a written registration, and mandating that all identification banners and numbers remain visible throughout the entire duration of the parade.

Despite the establishment of a more inclusive organization to preside over Junkanoo, several Bahamians have insisted that the institutionalization of the festival abolishes several of judging. Once the judges finished evaluating the costumes, the police removed the barriers and the spectators were free to join the parade.

Wisdom, “Bahamian Junkanoo,” 45. By 1944, after experiencing a full-blown riot in 1942 and an increasing level of aggression in the “friendly combat” practiced during the parade, the Bahamian government officially banned the Junkanoo parade until 1947.

Ibid., 49-51. During the 1960s, the Masquerade Committee became under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Tourism. The restructuring and ordering of Junkanoo during this time accorded with the Ministry’s tourism objectives. For example, the introduction of uniformed police in the early 1960s, charged with the task of walking along the parade routes with the masqueraders during the performance, was meant to convey to the tourists a sense of security. To further promote a safe environment, the Committee disallowed potentially dangerous activities such as the shooting-off of fireworks and the heating of goat-skin drums with fire.

Ibid., 50.

Ibid., 53-55. Another significant regulation imposed on Junkanoo is the enforcement of a two-lap circular route which compensates for the extremely large costumes and more importantly, allows the judges ample viewing time and space to review the costumes. See Ferguson, I Come to Get Me!, 16. The new route completely eradicated the art of “rushing,” which, as one Bahamian scholar argues, negatively impacted Junkanoo music. Clement Bethel contests that “while it must be admitted that the new arrangement makes for a smoother flow of traffic, one no longer hears the interesting clash of contrasting rhythms which used to occur when one band passed another going in the opposite direction.” See Clement Bethel, Junkanoo, 86.
its essential qualities. These individuals are indeed nostalgic for the simpler parades of the past when Junkanoo participants exercised more freedom during performances. One citizen expressed this sentiment to the *Nassau Guardian* by stating, “It saddens me because one sees junkanoo, which started out as a form of recreation for many Bahamians, a form of cultural advancement of the Bahamian people, has been taken over by a government agency and the people . . . find that all their authority has been taken away and taken over by the Government.”46 The sense of lost personal autonomy and authority indicated by the previous statement is one of Turner’s four dimensions of nostalgia and, moreover, reveals the nostalgic attitudes circulating in the Bahamas. According to Bahamian scholar Lisa Carol Dean, the government’s efforts to regulate the festival, altogether, have transformed the celebration into a spectator sport in which Junkanoo loses its spontaneity, sense of community, and power as a resistance movement.47

As a result of the government’s involvement with Junkanoo since the 1920s, the festival maintains several key components, such as the use of shredded strips of crépe-paper in costume construction, the choreographed marching step, and the competitive rivalry between neighborhoods, all of which help establish the cultural event as an identifiable Bahamian product.48 The government then uses their constructed image of Junkanoo to their advantage by marketing the festival’s definite characteristics to international audiences as a commodity unique to the Bahamas.

Government officials in Trinidad use Carnival in a similar way, producing an objectified national culture that Trinidadian scholar Philip Scher argues, “[C]an be controlled, coordinated, marketed—in short, easily manipulated for presentation on a global scale.”49 The Trinidad state

46 Gladstone Thurston, “Junkanoo Move to Boost PLP Carnival at Sports Centre?” *The Nassau Guardian*, October 10, 1989. The reporter responded to the Bahamian government’s controversial proposal in 1989 to relocate the parade from Bay Street to the Queen Elizabeth Sports Centre.


48 Wisdom, “Bahamian Junkanoo,” 50; and Clement Bethel, *Junkanoo*, 84. Specifically, the rules and regulations imposed on Junkanoo by the government during the 1930s until the 1960s ensured the continuation of certain components. For example, the allotment of prize money fostered the strong competitive spirit and sense of rivalry that originally stemmed from the self-imposed ethnic and tribal segregation of black neighborhoods. Additionally, the use of crépe-paper has been preserved since, at one point early in the parade’s history, the government allowed only fringe costumes to be eligible for prizes. This last point will be discussed further later in this chapter.

recognizes the complex relationship between nationalism, culture, and economics and accordingly employs a strategy of commodification that links all three factors together. By positioning itself as the logical administer and protector of national culture, the state gains the authority to manipulate the image of Carnival for economic purposes. Thus, Trinidad is capable of simultaneously legitimizing its sovereignty while building a new tourism base by exporting a controlled version of Carnival to such events as the French bicentennial, the Olympic Games in Barcelona, and the World Cup in the United States.50

I find that the Bahamian government follows a similar commodification strategy. During the last two decades the government has exported Junkanoo throughout the United States and Europe, showcasing Junkanoo performances at the Miami Super Bowl, the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC, the Carnival Learning Centre in the UK, and on ABC’s “Good Morning America” in New York (Fig. 5).51 The following was the Nassau Guardian’s response to the “Good Morning America” performance:

Co-host Dianne Sawyer commented on the excitement that was being generated around them, providing the Ministry of Tourism conceivably with hundreds of thousands of dollars of free publicity . . . Tourism Minister Obie Wilchcombe, who seems to have his finger on the pulse of what it takes to get The Bahamas back in full gear as one of the world’s favourite destinations.52

Similarly, after their performances held in the UK, the same newspaper reported:

The initiative could be exactly what’s needed to better attract more of their countrymen and women, to get them to actually want to visit a nation they’ve heard of but have yet to visit. It is a point . . . that “sun, sand and sea” are no longer enough to grow this country’s tourism industry.53

50 Scher, Carnival and the Formation of a Caribbean Transnation, 130-32. The development of cultural exports includes maintaining that products viability, and under the guise of “cultural preservation,” the Trinidadian state ensures the survival of its “investment.” A 1994 Symposium “Carnival: Exploring the Export Potential” discussed which marketable elements of Carnival were worth preserving and cultivating in the name of the service industry. The discussions determined that Carnival provided “tension-release” and “organized spontaneity”— features that should be preserved in order to continue the success of the Carnival product abroad.

51 According to the Nassau Guardian, Junkanoo performers appeared at the Super Bowl in 1995, the Smithsonian in 1998, New York in 2004, and England in 2008. However, these performances exclude the controversial scrapper groups and the unimpressive newspaper costumes as these images do not advance the Ministry of Tourism’s “cultural tourism” platform. The term “scraper” refers to individual or small groups of performers who dress in simple, non-uniform costumes and parade for pure enjoyment rather than for prize money.


These statements indicate that Bahamians have come generally to accept the use of Junkanoo as a promotional device through which the Ministry’s cultural tourism program commodifies the Junkanoo experience for touristic purposes.

The Bahamas’ official marketing campaign, “The Islands of the Bahamas,” further demonstrates how Junkanoo has been commodified in the service of tourism. The advertisements for the “The Islands of the Bahamas” often feature Junkanoo imagery. One advertisement from 2004 specifically represents the function of Junkanoo as a permissive getaway for white tourists (Fig. 6). The advertisement describes the tourist Christine as a former wallflower, who is liberated by the inhibition-free environment of Junkanoo, her life, thereby, forever transformed by the authentic sounds and sights of the Bahamas. Although supported and produced locally by the Bahamas’ Ministry of Tourism, the advertisement emphasizes the conventional cultural distinction between the Self and the Other, depicting their own Junkanoo costumes and performers as exotic counterparts to the white Europeans and Euro-Americans. No longer signifying a force of resistance to colonial oppression or racial inequality, the Junkanoo festival now encompasses the Bahamian government’s efforts to commodify the liberating experiences of the parades as a source of entertainment for tourists.

Beyond growing and sustaining the country’s tourism industry, Junkanoo imagery also has become a popular device for selling local merchandise and other commodities. The Bahamian national beer, Kalik, seafood restaurants, and the Miss Junkanoo Beauty Pageant all refer to or appropriate Junkanoo in order to sell their products (Fig. 7). Even Bahamian currency features Junkanoo imagery, and the five-dollar bill proudly displays the iconic Junkanoo performer with his colorful crépe-paper costume and goat-skin drum (Fig. 8).54 The changes experienced by Junkanoo generate a wave of controversy because not all Bahamians support the commodification of the festival. One angry reporter for the Nassau Guardian wrote in 2006, “We try to convince ourselves and we go to great lengths to influence others that Junkanoo is all about Bahamian culture and tradition when in fact it is not. When it is all said and done, for the people who are in control of what happens, Junkanoo is about materialism, money, pure and simple.”55

54 Nicolette Bethel, “Junkanoo in the Bahamas

The Junkanoo Costumes

The institutionalization and commodification of the festival in the service of tourism has in particular impacted the style of the Junkanoo costumes. Before tourism became the principal industry in the Bahamas, the Bahamian people—first as slaves and then as emancipated citizens—depended for their livelihood on the islands’ struggling plantation system and thus constructed simple costumes from everyday materials such as banana leaves, newspapers, and burlap sacks (Fig. 9). Europeans and Americans first began traveling to the Bahamas in the 1850s, but with the advent of Prohibition in the United States starting in 1919, tourism soared as Americans flocked to the Caribbean for legal alcohol. The rise in tourism generated an economic boom in the Bahamas which enabled Junkanoo artists to create increasingly sophisticated costumes. At this time, Junkanoo participants began incorporating fringed paper, cloth, and wire into their costume designs (Fig. 10). The Masquerade Committee found the vibrancy of the fringed, colored crêpe-paper complementary to the picturesque image of Nassau that they intended to market, and in an effort to promote the use of crêpe-paper, the Committee allowed only fringe costumes to be eligible for awards. Not surprisingly, fringe paper became the staple for costume decoration and quickly replaced sponge, newspaper, and sacking costumes (Fig. 11). To remain competitive, artists abandoned traditional costume materials and began using aluminum rods, cardboard, and Styrofoam. The more sophisticated materials enabled artists to incorporate larger structures into costume design, thus developing the enormous shoulder-pieces, headdresses, skirts, and wings characteristic of contemporary Junkanoo costumes (Fig. 12).

---

56 Wisdom, “Bahamian Junkanoo,” 54. Unlike the other Caribbean islands, the Bahamas is covered with a thin topsoil of limestone which makes it difficult to sustain a large agricultural system. See Stratchan, Paradise and Plantation, 94. Although agriculture never prospered in the Bahamas, the short-lived but lucrative sponge industry caused a sponge surplus, and Junkanoo artists used sponges in their costumes for several years.

57 Strachan, Paradise and Plantation, 95.


60 Ibid., 49; and Ferguson, I Come to Get Me!, 16. Another significant contribution to the stylistic development of the costumes was the government-sponsored trips for artists to witness Trinidad and Port of Spain’s Carnival parades. Two leading Junkanoo artists, Winston “Gus” Cooper and Percy “Vola” Francis, attended the Port of Spain trip in 1983 and soon thereafter integrated Carnival engineering into their costume design. Inspired by Carnival’s floats, Cooper and Francis began creating enormous, three-dimensional lead costumes that Junkanoo performers
Just as the materiality of the costumes has reflected the socio-economic conditions of the Bahamas, the costumes’ iconography also has responded fluidly to external political and social factors. During the mid-nineteenth century, many Junkanoo costumes depicted Poseidon and Amphitrite, and the presence of these Greek mythological characters indicated the blending of Western folklore with the masquerading practices of disporic Africans.\(^1\) As racial tensions worsened in Nassau during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, satire became a key element in the costumes, and several Junkanooers parodied white Bahamians, policemen, and Englishmen. To further defy the remnants of colonial rule, the male performers would paint their faces white and wear puffy pantaloons or dress as high-fashioned Parisian women (Fig. 13).\(^2\)

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States has remained an important reference point and cultural signifier for the Junkanoo performers. Costumes during World War II displayed U.S. military equipment such as tanks, battleships, and anti-air craft guns. During the 1950s, the costumes featured Disney characters like Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse. In recent years, Junkanooers have proudly displayed their favorite NFL or college football teams (Fig. 14).\(^3\) The 2009 theme of the Saxon Superstars, “I Have a Dream,” focused on Barack Obama’s presidential victory in which the lead costume portrayed a larger-than-life portrait of the president-elect while hundreds of musicians donned red, white, and blue costumes (Fig. 15). The Saxon Superstars’ theme not only demonstrates the influential power of the United States, but also reveals the Bahamian people’s shared enthusiasm for the Americans’ first black president and their treatment of Obama’s victory as synonymous with their own political and

either rolled or carried. See Nunley and Bettelheim, *Festival Arts*, 76. Today, all major Junkanoo groups incorporate lead costumes that introduce the group’s theme to the audience and signal the beginning and end of their performance. Since Junkanoo officials and enthusiasts are sensitive to the growing criticism that the lead costumes resemble Trinidadian floats, regulatory measures have been taken to ensure that the lead costumes maintain their “Bahamian” quality. All lead costumes must be carried or rolled by an actual person or persons and cannot encompass more than six wheels.

\(^1\) Wisdom, “Bahamian Junkanoo,” 30-31. Furthermore, the Bahamians in choosing to portray Poseidon and Amphitrite also demonstrate the significance of the ocean in their daily lives. The only industry to flourish in the Bahamas during this time was fishing and the inhabitants depended heavily on the ocean for their livelihood.

\(^2\) Nunley and Bettelheim, *Caribbean Festival Arts*, 72-73.

\(^3\) Ferguson, *I Come to Get Me!*, 36. The island’s physical and cultural proximity to the United States is further demonstrated by the abundance of references to the University of Miami’s football team, the Hurricanes.
racial struggles.

As demonstrated by the heavily ornate costumes worn by the Saxon Superstars in 2009, the use of decorative materials, such as beads, sequins, rhinestones, and feathers, is now an important feature of Junkanoo (Fig. 16). Several Bahamians find this trend upsetting and insist that the costumes are becoming too carnivalesque and, in a sense, losing their Bahamian spirit. As demonstrated by one nostalgic reporter for the Tribune who insisted that “those who create this fake, this garbage that they misrepresent as Junkanoo, need to be corrected,” the use of decorative materials challenges the perceived authenticity of the traditional fringe paper costume. The Masquerade Committee’s criteria for prize-eligible costumes has inevitably ensured the preservation of the fringe costume, and its longevity throughout the years has resulted in a wide-spread perception of the fringe costume as the supreme, authentic Junkanoo costume. Contemporary parade judges and group leaders have shown considerable preference for costumes adorned in decorative materials, and the trend shows no sign of disappearing.

The stylistic development of the costumes is intrinsically linked to the government’s financial support of Junkanoo, which extends beyond providing cash prizes and actually includes funding large Junkanoo groups. Referred to as “groupers” and typically supporting between four and six hundred members, the Junkanoo groupers are organized teams of individual artists, dancers, and collaborators. Groupers compete with each other for the highly coveted prize money, and accordingly, spend months constructing sophisticated costumes and rehearsing choreographed ensembles.

The first official Junkanoo group appeared in 1954 as the

---

64 The Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Bahamas Independence and Beyond, Nassau, Jones Publication, 93.


66 Wisdom, “Bahamian Junkanoo,” 45, 53, 62. Although membership to Junkanoo groups is entirely unrestricted, the organizations require an extensive amount of time and dedication from its members. The two largest and most popular groups today are the Valley Boys and the Saxon Superstars. Other prominent groups active today are the Music Makers, the Vikings, One Family, and the PIGS. Costume production is an important inclusive, communal activity that unites neighborhoods and promotes a strong sense of community. Originally, one leader presided over a Junkanoo group, but today committees of leaders manage group activities. The design process begins with the group’s core members who determine the costumes’ theme and sketch the designs on paper. The construction process begins with building the frames, deciding color schemes, and working out the logistics of mobility. After the framework is completed, the shack opens and the support staff and the remaining group members assist in the application of crêpe-paper, decorative materials, and paint. Costume production mainly occurs at night, a tradition that most likely originated from the Bahamas’ slave ancestors who constructed their costumes in secrecy or during the only allocated free time. Production occurs at night for practical reasons as well since most of the group members have full-time jobs, families, and other obligations. See Ferguson, I Come to Get Me!, 20, 24-30, 41-46.
“Mexicans” and forever transformed the nature of the festival by instituting choreographed dancers and themed, uniform costumes.67 Throughout the 1960s and 1970s groupers gained more prominence and recognition, which perpetuated a distinct dichotomy between the organized masqueraders and the individual performers and small groups referred to as “scrapers.” Dressed in simple, non-uniform costumes, these scrapers do not compete for prize money, but instead, parade for pure enjoyment (Fig. 17).68 Joining scrap groups enables Bahamians the opportunity to participate in the parade without committing to the extensive schedule as mandated by the Junkanoo groupers.

Government funding supports many of the groupers by partially supplementing the high cost of costume production. However, as costumes become more elaborate and expensive to produce, with lead costumes costing on average $60,000, outside funding becomes essential, and many Junkanoo groups actively seek corporate sponsorship in addition to government funding.69 Corporate sponsors that contribute and supplement the high cost are recognized by the strategic placement of their company’s name or logo on the group’s banner or on the lead costume (Fig. 18). Conversely, scrapers receive very little government and corporate sponsorship which accounts for their simpler costumes and fewer members.70

Although the iconography of both scrapers’ and groupers’ costumes functions in the same manner, the imagery chosen by scraper groups differs considerably from the themes depicted by larger groupers. Based on my observations from the New Year’s Day parade in 2009, scrapers typically portray politically overt themes, depicting localized controversies and pressing political-social issues. On the other hand, the groupers’ themes depict relatively “safe” or neutral topics. For the 2009 New Year’s Day parade, the scraper group the Bush Warriors featured a stuffed dummy hanging from a noose and a panel-board banner stating “Hang ‘Em

67 Ferguson, I Come to Get Me!, 14-15. In 1965, the group the “Vikings” appeared and introduced large cardboard costumes decorated with cut paper that quickly became the standard for costume construction.

68 Dean, “Preserving Junkanoo,” 19. During the 1970s and 1980s, many group members and parade officials considered scrapers a nuisance and an undesirable feature of Junkanoo. At one point, scrapers were considered dangerous because of their gang associations, and parade officials attempted to prohibit the inclusion of scrapers in the parade. Scrapers persevered nonetheless and today represent the traditional and individualistic qualities of Junkanoo.


“High, Jail Not Bail” (Fig. 19). The noosed figure and the text illustrate the current Bahamian controversy over the country’s method of corporal punishment, which the Bush Warriors’ explicitly support. Another scrapper group demonstrated the livelihood of the tourism industry with their theme “Tips.” Their vests sporting the text, “Bartender 20% Gratuity,” proclaimed the Bahamian people’s dependency on tipping income and their demand for a 20% standard (Fig. 20). In contrast, large, successful Junkanoo groupers shun away from divisive political or social statements, as demonstrated by the group One Family, whose theme “Let it Snow” included a snow monster, snow flake dancers, and a snow mobile costume (Figs. 16 and 21). Additionally, the group Roots showcased the “Wings of Nature” and depicted costumes with highly ornate butterflies, flamingoes, and eagles meant to entertain and bedazzle spectators (Fig. 22).

The disparate amount of corporate sponsorship and government funding received between groupers and scrappers plays a significant role in determining the level of political and social activism augmented by the costumes. Since the scrappers do not depend so much on outside funding, scrap members exercise more freedom in choosing costume themes. Junkanoo groupers, on the contrary, rely heavily on government and corporate funding and literally cannot afford to upset their sponsors with controversial themes. Nevertheless, corporate sponsorship still affects both scrappers and groupers in that all Junkanoo groups, regardless of status and size, must incorporate the sponsor’s logo in their lead costumes or risk losing future funding. Banners dedicated to Shell Oil prominently adorn the lead costumes for several Junkanoo groupers while smaller and local corporations, such as A.G. Electric Company and SoBe Adrenaline Rush Energy Drink, appear on scrapper and smaller Junkanoo groups’ banners (Figs. 18 and 23).

Although the commercialization of Junkanoo now greatly impacts the costumes’ iconography and materiality, its traditional ephemeral nature has been completely overturned. Originally, Junkanoo performers simply discarded their costumes immediately following the parades, and Nassau’s sanitation crew disposed of the costumes at the city dump (Figs. 4 and 24). The performers’ disinterest in their costumes is partially attributed to pure exhaustion.

71 Curtis, interview.
72 Although the images portrayed by Junkanoo groups do not overtly signify specific political controversies, the extravagance and sheer size of these costumes do constitute a discursive political-social affiliation in that government and community support enables the livelihood of these large groups.
73 Ferguson, I Come to Get Me!, 21.
After eight hours of continuous dancing and parading the participants preferred to abandon their costumes on the side of the street rather than transport the heavy apparel back to their shacks. By the early morning hours, many of the costumes were severely damaged, and, in any case, the lack of storage space on the island limited the ability to preserve the surviving items. Bahamian historian Krista Thompson provides a different account and theorizes that “[the costumes] are no longer meaningful outside their communal creation and their public performance. . . . The abandonment and immediate destruction of the costumes became a part of the cycle of Junkanoo or ‘junk a new,’ as some Junkanooers describe the artistic process of destruction and recreation.”

Although several of the Junkanoo artists that I spoke with found this explanation misleading, the Junkanoo participants and spectators nevertheless demand that each performance out-shine the previous one. Thus the re-use of old costumes would contradict the inherent competitive and innovative spirit of Junkanoo. As Angelique McKay maintains, the costumes become less important after the parades because “the relationship is over and it’s time to move on.”

The customary abandonment of one’s costume immediately following the parades has in recent years declined significantly as the costumes have become increasingly more extravagant, expensive, and time-consuming to construct. As Junkanoo artists have transitioned away from disposable and economical materials to use instead aluminum rods and plastic feathers—with each feather costing between $12 and $15—the costumes have become too expensive to throw away (Fig. 25). Many Junkanoo artists recycle the expensive and resilient materials by incorporating these items into next year’s costume design. Artists’ are further discouraged from destroying their costumes because additional opportunities now arise throughout the year to

---

74 Angelique McKay, interview by author, telephone conversation, February 26, 2008.


76 I questioned Jackson Burnside, leader of One Family and former leader of the Saxon Superstars, Stanley Burnside, former director of the National Junkanoo Museum, Angelique McKay, current manager of the National Junkanoo Museum, and Eddy Dames, leader of the Saxon Superstars. In response to Thompson’s statement, each person replied that Junkanoo is not about “destruction” or “renewal” and that the abandonment of the costumes has no significance or deeper meaning as alluded to by Thompson.

77 McKay, interview.

78 Ibid.
reuse the costumes in smaller events, such as the Junkanoo in June parade and the Junior Junkanoo parade (Fig. 26). To generate publicity and excitement for the Christmas and New Year’s parades, Junkanoo groups showcase their costumes abroad and perform on a smaller scale at local schools and hotels.79

Despite the rampant insistence, on the part of some, that the government’s commodification of Junkanoo diminishes the parades’ Bahamian qualities, several Junkanoo artists, community leaders, and cultural brokers completely endorse the use of Junkanoo for tourism. When questioned about the possibility of opening a Junkanoo museum in 1988, the museum’s future founder replied that “too often people don’t look at the possibilities, but only at their restraints. . . . Imagine the self-respect and esteem that displayed Junkanoo pieces would inspire in the hearts of the artists.”80 During a 2002 symposium on “The Future of Junkanoo,” Bahamian historian Victoria Sarne corroborates this latter view:

The other voice says that there are all kinds of economic and business opportunities being ignored particularly in the tourism field, the country’s primary source of revenue. There are global opportunities for the groups to travel and showcase the essence and the culture of the Bahamas. There are myriad opportunities at home to market and promote Junkanoo as a specific and distinct tourist attraction to this destination. A partnership or an alliance between individual groups, the hospitality industry and the Ministry of Tourism could provide a mutually beneficial strategy and outcome.81

Taking into account the tremendous amount of time, resources, and planning that accompanies this voluntary art form, several Junkanoo artists and group leaders wish to earn some sort of income from it. Within the Junkanoo groups, a large movement is currently underway to explore the means for turning Junkanoo into a profitable business for group members, and the coalition of Junkanoo with the tourism industry is gaining widespread support as the best opportunity for achieving their economic goals.82

79 Curtis, interview.
During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the leader of the Saxon Superstars and renowned Junkanoo activist and artist, Stan Burnside, publically campaigned for the establishment of a museum to exhibit the Junkanoo costumes. Finally in 1992, shortly before the annual Boxing Day parade, Burnside persuaded his friend Algemon Allen, the newly appointed minister for the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, to allow Junkanoo groups access to an old, dilapidated warehouse located just blocks from the parade route. Minister Allen agreed to the request only because Burnside led the Minister to believe that the warehouse would serve as a temporary storage facility for the costumes. However, the artist considered this arrangement the perfect opportunity to finally actualize his museum concept, and he intended to transform the space into a permanent expo for the Junkanoo costumes. The artist intentionally timed his request to coincide with the Ministry’s annual Christmas holiday so that Burnside and his team of fellow artists could work freely without any interference from the Ministry.\textsuperscript{83}

The warehouse originally held unused government furniture that Minister Allen promised Burnside would be removed prior to the latter’s arrival. Nonetheless, when Burnside and his team finally gained access to the building on Christmas Eve, the entire space remained filled with office chairs, desks, and filing cabinets pilled high to the ceiling. With the help of a group of young men from Nassau’s Boys Home, the team spent all of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day scrambling to remove the furniture. Unfortunately, most of the Junkanoo groups did not take the project seriously, and only the Valley Boys and a few other groups actually brought their used costumes to the warehouse following the Boxing Day parade. Despite the lack of support from the other Junkanooers, Burnside’s team worked feverishly for the next several weeks to prepare the warehouse for the Junkanoo costumes. Upon touring the converted warehouse, Minister Allen quickly became supportive of the museum concept. No doubt realizing the space’s potential profitability, the Ministry agreed to oversee and fund the venture and appointed Burnside as the museum’s first manager. After a series of minor renovations, the museum

\textsuperscript{83} Stan Burnside, telephone interview with author, 10 March 2008
officially opened in 1993 as the Junkanoo Expo, becoming the first institution to exhibit the costumes outside their performative context (Fig. 27). 84

This chapter analyzes the history and policies of the National Junkanoo Museum within the context of other Caribbean museums. Similar to cultural institutions throughout the Caribbean, the National Junkanoo Museum defines and substantiates the heritage of its people by exhibiting certain objects as representative of a “Bahamian” essence. It therefore replicates a common expectation of those postcolonial museums that attempt to reject colonial histories in order to construct a new national and cultural identity. As stated by the Junkanoo Expo’s first manager, Stan Burnside, the museum originally intended to dignify the Bahamian artist and their craft. 85 However, the museum recently has become entrenched in the country’s cultural tourism program, which severely alters their original mission. I argue that the expanded mission of the National Junkanoo Museum to include and facilitate the country’s cultural tourism program depreciates the very nationalistic goals the museum originally intended to accomplish.

European philanthropists in collaboration with colonial governments established the first museums in the Caribbean beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. 86 Residing as subsidiary spaces within the public libraries, these early Caribbean museums functioned as natural history museums and were charged with the overwhelming task of categorizing and exhibiting the plethora of ethnographic artifacts and scientific specimens indigenous to the Caribbean. 87 Museum founders intended for the institutions to provide “intellectual stimulation” to the inhabitants of the colony and assist the recently emancipated populations achieve self-sufficiency through education. In reality, the majority of the freed slaves benefitted little from these early

79 Stan Burnside, interview.
85 Ibid.
87 Ibid., 196. During the nineteenth century, the strong correlation between scientific discovery and imperial expansion lead many colonies to create special interest, local societies dedicated to natural and industrial sciences. These local societies organized large-scale exhibitions, including “Exhibition of Industry of All Nations in London,” the Great Exhibition of 1851 that influenced other national exhibitions in British Guiana, Trinidad, and Jamaica. The success of these exhibitions contributed to the formation of national collections that further augmented the development of Caribbean museums.
museums, which were designed to meet the commercial and agricultural needs of the colonizers.\textsuperscript{88} By displaying impressive collections of natural resources, the museums attempted to demonstrate the wealth of the colony and encourage investments in local industry. However, by the 1950s the symbiotic relationship between tourism and the heritage industry stimulated new interests in archeological fieldwork and the preservation of historical sites. Although the heritage industry brought awareness to the preservation needs of the Caribbean, the museums largely excluded African and other non-European experiences, selecting to preserve only colonial-style architecture and exhibit Amerindian artifacts that held no significance to local populations.\textsuperscript{89}

During the 1960s and 1970s, several Caribbean nations—including the Bahamas—gained independence from Great Britain. Subsequently, government officials stressed the importance of developing a cultural heritage and national pride unsullied by colonial dependency. In the political community, museums gained credibility as important instruments for fostering a new national and cultural identity. According to an independent consulting firm hired to evaluate Caribbean museums, an emphasis on cultural development had the potential to cultivate “a sense of pride, self-esteem and national identity that will help the people of developing nations overcome the debilitating sense of cultural inferiority and dependency induced by colonialism and slavery.”\textsuperscript{90} Furthermore, cultural brokers felt that a cohesive and unified Caribbean heritage would benefit the development of national identity; thus, the Caribbean Conservation Association (CCA) and the Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM) were established to improve the quality of Caribbean museums. Under the leadership of Dr. Raymond Singleton, a consultant for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the two groups conducted a number of studies throughout the 1970s and 1980s on the state of Caribbean museums. Collectively, the studies reported that the majority of the museums were

\textsuperscript{88} Cummins, “The ‘Caribbeanization’ of the West Indies,” 198, 200. The lack of leisure time and adequate transportation prevented the majority of freed slaves from visiting the museums (a problem the National Junkanoo Museum still struggles with today). Low literacy rates also contributed to their disinterest in the museums, which locals viewed as institutions for the elite and “cultured” members of society.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 199, 204-05. The almost complete eradication of Amerindians during the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries by early colonizers severed any cultural or ancestral link to these native populations, resulting in diminished emotional ties to these surfaced artifacts. As argued by Cummins “the museums continued to suffer from a colonial viewpoint in which preservationists were seen primarily as an expatriate element seeking to cling to the last vestiges of an exploitative past.”

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 216. Edward Towel and George Tyson from the Island Resources Foundation conducted the study in 1979.
poorly organized, understaffed, and insufficiently funded, and needed professionally trained museum staff. To improve the professional standards of Caribbean museums, CARICOM, in 1979, organized a workshop on museums, monuments, and sites. Also intended to stimulate cultural awareness and encourage conservation, CARICOM’s workshop marked the first initiative in the Caribbean to train professional curatorial and technical staff.\(^\text{91}\)

Additionally, the CAA and CARICOM recommended that Caribbean museums should develop closer working relationships with each other and, moreover, link their institutions with the tourism industry.\(^\text{92}\) Although Singleton’s reports recognized the importance of the tourism industry, he also advised against creating a homogenized museum system and advocated that “a virtue should therefore be made of diversity, encouraging each museum to develop its own highly individual character. . . . [E]ach museum . . . should be strongly community-orientated, reflecting not only the complete history, but also the character of the community it serves.”\(^\text{93}\)

In response to Singleton’s reports, museums reorganized their collections to reflect the entire population. As a case in point, in 1980, the Barbados Museum addressed their deficient representation of local communities by allocating more exhibition space to the lives of slaves, plantation laborers, and peasant farmers.\(^\text{94}\) To further augment the professional standards of Caribbean museums, the Museum Associations of the Caribbean (MAC) was created in 1989 to develop training and regional conservation centers and encourage government participation in museums. MAC continues today to be an active organization that supports and assists Caribbean museums.\(^\text{95}\)

\(^{91}\) Cummins, “The ‘Caribbeanization’ of the West Indies,” 209-10.

\(^{92}\) Ibid., 207-08, 209-11. Although each report conducted by CAA and CARICOM urged museums to develop cultural tourism programs, the majority of these institutions failed to incorporate the tourism industry into their practice. In comparison to departments of education, health, and tourism, governments often grant Caribbean museums the smallest budgets, severely limiting their ability to implement any type of changes.

\(^{93}\) Ibid., 220.

\(^{94}\) Ibid., 213-16. Despite the museum’s efforts to bring more exposure to previously unrepresented groups, the museum’s website still emphasizes the country’s colonial past. To highlight their Social History Collection, the website features photos of a bugle, cricket paddle, and a bicycle, certainly items that plantation workers or peasant farmers would not own. See Barbados Museum and Historical Society, “Social History,” http://www.barbmuse.org.bb/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=38& Itemid=53.

\(^{95}\) Ibid., 216.
The Junkanoo Expo and the Formation of a National Identity

It was the costumes’ increasing level of extravagance and complexity, during the 1980s, that compelled Burnside and other artists to begin to campaign for the establishment of a national museum to showcase and preserve the costumes. An editorial opinion submitted to the *Nassau Guardian* in 1988 argued that “we need a Museum, so that we can put our talented Bahamian people’s work on display. It takes months of hard work, long, long hours to prepare those costumes. It hurts to see that after the Junkanoo celebrations some of the costumes are destroyed.” 96 The article suggested that beyond recognizing the Bahamian artist, showcasing the costumes would benefit tourists as well by providing visitors with the opportunity to view the costumes throughout the year. 97 As well, a museum would mitigate the Junkanoo artists’ apprehension that younger generations might eventually lose interest in the festival, resulting in the disappearance of the Junkanoo tradition. The *Nassau Guardian* expressed this concern by reminding readers that “possibly the saddest part of the parade is the fact that there is no museum or showroom where Bahamians and visitors can view the winning costumes. The three-dimensional costumes . . . should be displayed so that many young people who are interested in becoming involved in the parades can see how they are made and why they are so good.” 98

As a result of “better engineering, color, and drama in design,” the costumes gained a new significance as symbols of Bahamian sovereignty and culture. 99 Acting in a similar manner as other newly independent states, the Bahamas strived to subdue the social and cultural effects of colonialism by denying the contemporary relevance of its colonial past. 100 To articulate a postcolonial, cultural identity that was distinctly Bahamian, the community looked to Junkanoo. The festival’s African heritage and origins in slavery, combined with its nighttime occurrence on Christmas and New Years, which distinguishes it from Trinidad’s pre-Lenten Carnival, makes Junkanoo the ideal signifier for a Bahamian national and cultural identity. Furthermore,

---


97 Ibid.


99 Stan Burnside, interview.

100 Despite the museum’s efforts, Junkanoo cannot escape its colonial history. The costumes, and the festival in general, are very much a product of colonialism, and Junkanoo’s African appeal is very much a construct and, moreover, a simplified version of the costumes. The festival’s Christmas associations, location on Bay Street, and art of costume-making reference the country’s colonial past as much as they represent Junkanoo’s African ancestry.
Junkanoo’s entrenched institutionalization and civic patronage helped dictate its receptiveness as an accessible cultural product for the government to re-appropriate into a national discourse.\textsuperscript{101} To further promote Junkanoo as a “national treasure,” the government sponsored workshops on the art of drumming and costume-making.\textsuperscript{102} As recorded by the \textit{Tribune} in 1993, “This festival of Junkanoo which had its rustic beginnings as the poor man’s entertaining and its inexpensive release of holiday energy, has evolved as the centerpiece of the national culture of the Bahamas.”\textsuperscript{103} Junkanoo scholar Nicolette Bethel reiterates this understanding of the festival by simply stating, “Junkanoo, for Bahamians, is the ultimate national symbol.”\textsuperscript{104}

Henceforth, as part of the national rhetoric of cultural identity, destroying the costumes no longer seemed appropriate. Interestingly, at this juncture in the festival’s history the majority of Bahamians did not object to the costumes’ new permanence; a feature which strikingly differs from the costumes’ past significance as ephemeral objects and should, accordingly, bring about nostalgic responses. The fact that Bahamians were not nostalgic for the costumes’ ephemerality demonstrates Davis’ assertion that “what occasions us to feel nostalgia must also reside in the present. . . to the effect that nostalgia tells us more about present moods than about past realities.”\textsuperscript{105} In this particular circumstance, a sense of nostalgia does not consume the Bahamians because the costumes’ ephemerality does have any relevance to or, moreover, would conflict with contemporary trends that desire for the costumes to become icons of Bahamian

\begin{footnotes}
\item[101] Timothy Rommen, “Home Sweet Home: Junkanoo as National Discourse in the Bahamas,” \textit{Black Music Research Journal} 19 (Spring 1999): 74-75. Furthermore, Junkanoo embodies a sense of timelessness reinforced by the element of myth surrounding the festival’s origins (see footnote 3 in Chapter two) and solidified by the performance. As described by Rommen, “As groups rush down Bay Street, the music of one group blends into the music of the next, fashion-ing the performance and, by extension, Bahamian history, as a long and seamless event. Thus, junkanoo offers a very specific image of the nation, one that is timeless and mythical, spatially bounded, and embodied in community performance” See Rommen, “Home Sweet Home,” 78.
\item[102] Clement Bethel, \textit{Junkanoo}, 84. As explained in Chapter two, the majority of middle-class Bahamians did not participate in Junkanoo until the government’s interventions changed the parade into a safer and more organized event. See Wisdom, “Bahamian Junkanoo,” 41–42. Junkanoo gained further acceptance among the majority of Bahamians after popular musicians began to incorporate Junkanoo rhythms, Bahamian painters used the colors and subjects of the parade in their paintings, and scholars, both domestic and international, began researching the origins and themes of the festival. See Clement Bethel, \textit{Junkanoo}, 84.
\item[104] Nicolette Bethel, “Junkanoo in the Bahamas.”
\item[105] Davis, \textit{Yearning for Yesterday}, 9-10.
\end{footnotes}
Since nostalgia serves the interests of the present rather than reflect the realities of the past, the costumes’ ephemerality is no longer necessary in the midst of nationalistic fervor.

Instead of permitting the customary disposal of the costumes at the city dump, community leaders and Junkanoo artists were more interested in “saving” the now culturally significant objects by establishing a national museum. Museum scholar Leslie Witz describes that “museums as sites for the visual management of the past have become important signifiers in the unfolding of this discourse of a newly rediscovered heritage.” Once safeguarded by the Junkanoo Expo, the presupposed qualities of any museum—the authoritative transmission of knowledge, public accessibility, and educative purpose—enabled the costumes to represent a new Bahamian heritage to replace the outdated truisms of colonialism. As argued by museum scholars Ivan Karp and Corrine A. Katz, museum exhibitions assert a type of authority referred to as “cultural authority” in which the museums’ “self-appointed mission as scientific, artistic and educational institutions” legitimizes their existence as custodians and commanders of world cultures.

In other words, museums claim the ability and the right to substantiate a nation’s heritage, and in the Bahamas’ attempt to construct a collective identity, they permit the National Junkanoo Museum to associate national identity with material culture. As demonstrated by the opening quote in Chapter one, the perception and defining characteristics of a specific culture are

---


107 Ivan Karp and Corrine A. Katz, “Displaying Cultures through Public Display,” 207-08. The authors contend that museum exhibits claim two, distinct types of authority: cultural authority and ethnographic authority. Ethnographic authority consists of “claim[ing] and creat[ing] through the use of particular stylistic devices, metaphors and analogies, patterns of tense, person, voice and address, as well as recurrent scenes dispersed through texts. Together these create and signal the author’s expertise.” Their understanding of ethnographic authority is built upon James Clifford’s four definitions of ethnographic authority in anthropological texts: experience, interpretation, dialogue, and polyphony. To formulate their conceptualization of cultural authority, the authors look to Michael Foucault’s concept of discursive formation that he developed in his book The Archaeology of Knowledge (1969).

108 Similarly, national museums in Nigeria are susceptible to the same notions, and they exhibit and preserve material culture to envision collective identity and national goals. As in the Bahamas, Nigerian museums are a twentieth century phenomenon, instituted for the most part after gaining independence and meant to provide tangible evidence of a cultural history that serves as the foundation for a national identity. As of 2005, Nigeria maintained forty-six national museums which give support to the power of material culture in forming a sense of self-awareness and pride. Furthermore, geographer David Lowenthal suggests that in newly independent states, the formation of national identity is contingent upon an awareness of the past which provides a sense of continuity and knowledge of one’s own identity. Nigeria’s former museum director-general, Dr. Yaro T. Gela, reinforces this claim by stating, in reference to African political and economic national development, that culture is “a determinant of history.” Flora E.S. Kaplan, “Nigerian Museums: Envisaging Culture as National Identity,” in Museums and the Making of “Ourselves”: The Role of Objects in National Identity, ed. Flora E.S. Kaplan (London: Leicester University Press, 1994), 45-46.
dependent upon the existence of material history, in which the inherent, “authentic” qualities supposedly embedded within the object have the ability to distinguish a particular group of people.

Originally, the Junkanoo Expo’s original mission was to exhibit the costumes as a unique, Bahamian art form in a space large enough to enable intense examination.\textsuperscript{109} The museum incorporated simple design concepts that included an open floor plan that could display twenty to thirty costumes, a separate, smaller area for offices, and a gift shop that sold Bahamian crafts and Junkanoo themed paraphernalia. Black walls and carpeted floors provided the backdrop for the spot-lit costumes and didactic labels identified the Junkanoo group associated with each costume (Figs. 3 and 28).\textsuperscript{110} Although Burnside acknowledged that exhibiting the costumes conflicted with the art form’s ephemeral nature, he remarked on how it is “mostly non-practitioners, or people unfamiliar with the Junkanoo tradition, [who] insist that the new commercialized version of Junkanoo [supported by the museum and the Ministry] erases the real Junkanoo essence.”\textsuperscript{111} He argued that the museum instead represented the responsive nature of Junkanoo and signified the enhanced recognition of the artist.\textsuperscript{112}

Characteristic of other Caribbean museums, funding obstacles constantly plagued the Junkanoo Expo. Securing financial support from the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture, which already faced a tight budget, was a significant challenge throughout Burnside’s tenure as museum manager.\textsuperscript{113} The museum could never allocate enough funding for a strong marketing campaign, and although various tourism websites and brochures briefly mentioned the Expo, the museum remained an ancillary destination for both locals and tourists.\textsuperscript{114} Additionally,

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{109} Stan Burnside, interview.
  \item \textsuperscript{110} Ibid. After processing through the costume exhibit, visitors encountered a stage at the back of the museum that projected videos of previous parades. Additionally, the stage enabled museum staff to provide large tour groups with lectures and interactive demonstrations. The museum staff attempted to find ways to better preserve the costumes since, at best, the art forms only last three to four years. Since the costumes are made primarily from cardboard and crépe-paper, the island’s intense humidity quickly ruins the costumes. Although at one point the museum applied lacquer finishes to the costumes, the museum lacks the funding and the knowledge to properly implement more permanent preservation techniques.
  \item \textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} Burnside was the manager of the Junkanoo Expo from 1993 until 2003.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Sadly, this remains a problem that the National Junkanoo Museum encounters today.
\end{itemize}
converting the old warehouse into a suitable museum space became an expensive task. Basic construction projects frequently ran out of money, leaving renovation plans and critical repairs indefinitely postponed. Furthermore, the museum’s lack of air-conditioning in combination with a leaky roof negatively impacted the tourists’ perception of the museum and the costumes. Even so, Burnside asserted that a museum’s facilities do not define its contents and defended his claim with a humorous story of an unexpected visit from a group of developers from the Disney Cruise Line during the museum’s first year. After viewing the exhibited costumes, the Disney representatives contacted Minister Allen and requested that the Junkanoo Expo remain open despite the Ministry’s plans to close the museum due to inadequate facilities. The Junkanoo Expo avoided eviction and received funds from various government agencies to patch the roof, install carpets, and purchase an air-conditioning unit.\footnote{Stan Burnside, interview.} Although Burnside narrated the Disney anecdote in order to illustrate the costumes’ uniqueness, the incident actually demonstrates the overwhelming power of the tourism industry in that the perception of the museum’s importance is contingent upon its touristic value. Only after representatives from the cruise ship industry found the museum appealing did the Ministry allocate the necessary funds to keep the museum open.

Notwithstanding generous donations, augmented budgets, and frugal spending, the Junkanoo Expo continued to experience financial difficulties. Burnside recalled sitting in the Ministry’s office on numerous paydays, watching Minister Allen struggle to procure enough money for museum staff paychecks. Unfortunately, by 2003, inescapable repairs and lack of financing forced the Junkanoo Expo to close.\footnote{Ibid. The museum’s exact closing date is unknown. Neither Burnside, McKay, nor any of the other correspondents could recall the exact year the museum closed. By deducing from newspaper articles and the Bahamas Independence and Beyond publication, I speculate that the Junkanoo Expo closed sometime around 2003.}

\textbf{The National Junkanoo Museum as a Space of Consumption}

The Junkanoo Expo’s closing coincided with the Bahamian government’s change in priorities to focus on bigger and more profitable cultural projects. To better accommodate (and exploit) the booming cruise ship industry, the government, in 2003, converted the ineffectual and homely craft market surrounding the Junkanoo Expo into a welcome center for the cruise ships (Fig. 29). Referred to as Festival Place, the new 34,000 square-foot, indoor market offers to
tourists “authentic” Bahamian crafts, such as Dora the Explorer straw purses, pricey coconut hand-lotion, and plastic seashell necklaces (Fig. 30). Festival Place’s strategic position adjacent to the cruise ship docking station ensures that all visitors must proceed through the simulated market center before gaining entryway into the Bahamas, and, accordingly, Festival Place has become a thriving tourism center for New Providence Island.\footnote{Khashan Poitier, “Welcome Centre to Prohibit ‘Tourist Harassment’,” \textit{The Nassau Guardian}, February 22, 2003. The government also intended for Festival Place to eliminate the growing resentment and hostility against unlicensed Bahamian vendors who bombarded cruise ship passengers with “tacky” products as soon as they arrived on the island. The government could not entirely eliminate the practice since many of its people’s financial livelihoods depend on this arrangement. Instead, the government spent $86,000 to build the mall-like welcome center in which Bahamians can rent booths to sell their products. In my observations of Festival Place, I noted that many of the booths were closed throughout the day, and very few people actually stopped at the open counters.} Despite the radical changes to the Prince George Warf, the Junkanoo Expo remained closed during the pavilion’s rehabilitation.

A year after the commencement of Festival Place, the newly elected minister for the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture announced his intentions to re-open the Junkanoo Expo.\footnote{Keva Lightbourne, “Junkanoo Corporation of the Bahamas Working Feverishly,” \textit{The Nassau Guardian}, August 14, 2004.} The Minister’s first order of business consisted of replacing the museum’s director, Stan Burnside, with government liaison and Junkanoo enthusiast, Angelique McKay.\footnote{After interviewing both Stan Burnside and Angelique McKay, I gather that the Junkanoo community does recognize Burnside’s efforts in starting and sustaining the museum throughout the 1990s. His success was partially made possible due to his friendship with the Minister of Youth, Sports, and Culture, Allen Alljeron. With the inauguration of the new Minister, Neville Wisdom, Burnside lost his rapport with the department and stepped down from his position as a director to become a consultant for the museum.} Despite Burnside and McKay’s dedication in sustaining Junkanoo’s development, the National Junkanoo Museum continues to experience the same professional obstacles endured by other Caribbean museums. Neither of the directors possesses a museum background nor has undergone museum training, which severely affects the quality of the museum’s curatorial and educational programs. Furthermore, the museum does not belong to the Museum Association of the Caribbean (MAC), which is the leading museum organization and the primary source for professional development in the Caribbean. The museum is also not associated with the Bahamas’ national museum system, the Antiques, Monuments, and Museums Associations (AMMC). By not participating in these organizations, the National Junkanoo Museum cannot take advantage of the invaluable services with which they assist Caribbean museums in training museum professionals, developing professional standards of practice, and providing collaboration opportunities with other Caribbean and United States museums.
Notwithstanding the museum’s professional limitations, McKay and her team believe that the Junkanoo Expo still possesses enormous economic potential. According to McKay, the key reason for resurrecting the museum was to “develop the Expo into a cultural tourism site. . . . Expo officials have developed a number of marketing strategies designed to obtain maximum financial gains from the re-opening of the cultural museum.”\textsuperscript{120} With the museum’s new focus on tourism, the Junkanoo Expo expects to contribute financially to the parades and help sustain the ever-growing number of Junkanoo groups.\textsuperscript{121} McKay intends for the museum to expand its sole concentration on the costumes and, instead, focus holistically on the festival by including collection spaces dedicated to the instruments, the choreographed dance, and the history of Junkanoo.\textsuperscript{122} The Ministry reopened a much smaller version of the museum in 2004, but the Expo was largely ignored by the government and the public and consequently fell quickly into disarray. Finally in 2006, a committee formed specifically to address the neglected Junkanoo Expo. The committee changed the name of the Expo to the National Junkanoo Museum of the Bahamas and officially appointed Angelique McKay as the new manager for the museum. As a result of the perpetual construction, the museum held a soft opening in April 2007 but closed indefinitely in March 2008 until all construction could be completed (Figs. 31 and 32).\textsuperscript{123} Future plans for the museum include the addition of a theatre, an internet café, and an interactive mp3 display.\textsuperscript{124}

In terms of the country’s dependence on tourism, the revised version of the museum better corresponds with Festival Place and the Ministry’s comprehensive tourism program. By catering to the visitors’ expectations of a museum in which all the familiar, modern, and cushy amenities of home are provided, the National Junkanoo Museum is expected to attract additional tourists. The museum has always primarily attracted and served the interests of tourists as the


\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{122} McKay, interview. A space that once accommodated on average twenty costumes will now only display five to six costumes. The decreased emphasis on the costumes disappointed many Bahamians who feel that the museum’s reorientation diminishes the significance of the costumes.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid. As of June 2009, the museum remains closed and construction is still underway. According to Junkanoo artists working in the space at the time of my visit in January of 2009, the museum will most likely not reopen until January 2010.

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
museum’s location on Prince George Wharf immediately excluded the majority of local Bahamians who continue to live on the western side of the island. More importantly, insufficient parking makes traveling to the tourist district very difficult and further discourages locals from visiting the museum. McKay and the Ministry of Tourism are currently pursuing a project that would provide free bussing to the museum as a means to encourage visitation.125

Throughout the last several decades, as museums compete with other leisure venues such as shopping malls and theme parks, the need for consumer-orientated practices become imperative to ensure any museum’s success. A museum store or gift shop can easily achieve these goals. Museum stores offer an assortment of merchandise that not only generates vital revenue for the museum but also attracts visitors by accommodating the individual’s consumption habits.126 More museums are accommodating consumer culture by developing retail environments that mirror conventional department stores, placing museum stores and gift shops in prominent locations within the museum. Museum scholar Robyn Gillam boldly claims, “Going to the museum is now more like visiting a shopping mall than a library, and hence a favorite tourist activity.”127 Visitors find museum stores so appealing because museum merchandise conveys a similar degree of culture and elitism signified by the original objects. Likewise, museum merchandise differentiates itself from other types of commodities in that the cultured museum environment garners a perception of gift shop items as containing an inherent uniqueness and high quality.128

The National Junkanoo Museum is no exception to this retail trend, and throughout its existence, the museum maintained an impressive “souvenir boutique” (Fig. 27). The museum’s gift shop sold the conventional Bahamian crafts—straw baskets and conch jewelry—but also

125 McKay, interview.

126 Mark Moss, “Shopping as a Cultural Experience: Museums, Merchandising, and the Marking of Culture,” in Shopping as an Entertainment Experience (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 101. According to a study conducted by Laura Byrne Paquet, “museum stores and gift shops have earned over two and half times the revenue of admission and membership fees.”


128 Moss, “Shopping as a Cultural Experience,”101, 103. Visitors may also enjoy museum stores for the simple fact that since museum objects are for the most part kept secure behind glass and ropes, the purchase of reproductions simulates the excitement of actually touching the original.
featured Junkanoo-themed specialties such as original paintings and fine prints. The same Junkanoo artists featured in the exhibition space were also represented by their original artwork in the gift shop.\textsuperscript{129} As souvenirs, the paintings recall the tourists’ authentic experiences with the costumes, even with, as suggested by sociologist Susan Stewart, a souvenir “represents not the lived experience of its maker but the ‘secondhand’ experience of its possessor/owner.”\textsuperscript{130} Furthermore, the purchased objects become instrumental tools for dispersing cultural knowledge and act as symbols of the visitor’s initiation into or knowledge of Bahamian identity.\textsuperscript{131} The Junkanoo paintings stand in for the masquerader and allow the tourist to simulate Bahamian culture in their own environment.

Nonetheless, the National Junkanoo Museum’s commercial function conflicts with its objective to rediscover and legitimize a Bahamian heritage. The commodified version of the costumes presented to tourists actually reinforces the colonial history the Bahamians intended to reject. Foremost, the museum promotes the costumes in vernacular terms reminiscent of the colonial experience insofar as websites advertise Junkanoo and the museum in such terms as “Explore, Discover, Celebrate—Junkanoo,” “Discover the essence of Nassau,” and “Nassau Forts and Junkanoo Discovery.”\textsuperscript{132} The typical marketing strategy for the Caribbean employs terminology and metaphors that invite tourists to “discover” and “explore” the unique qualities of the islands, in ways that replay the exploratory ambitions of European colonizers.\textsuperscript{133} The National Junkanoo Museum further compounds the voyage of colonialism by selectively exhibiting only the most exotic and ostentatious costumes, ignoring the festival’s unpleasant characteristics, such as the scraper groups’ controversial and homely costumes. By doing so,

\textsuperscript{129} Stan Burnside, interview. The typical Junkanoo painting features an idealized version of the masqueraders, almost always performing with a goat-skin drum or some other traditional Junkanoo instrument.


\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 136.


\textsuperscript{133} Strachan, \textit{Paradise and Plantation}, 111-12; and Witz, “Transforming Museums on Postapartheid Touristic Routes,” 110.
the museum portrays an image of the Bahamas as different and separate from the rest of the world; an image in harmony with the island’s touristic appeal. The image of Junkanoo marketed to tourists is arguably a romanticized version of Bahamian history that better accords with the tourists’ preconceived notions of the islands as “complete, isolated, and closed.” Colorful, charming, and apolitical costumes are essential to the acceptance of this myth of the Bahamas as an isolated, tropical destination.

---

CHAPTER FOUR
THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF AUTHENTICITY

Although the National Junkanoo Museum shares similarities with its Caribbean neighbors, the museum is considerably different in one fundamental way. Unlike many of the other Caribbean museums, which were founded on the meta-narrative of colonial experience that excluded the majority of the populations’ cultural heritage, the National Junkanoo Museum originated as an institution founded by local artists dedicated to the preservation of an African tradition. By emerging after the country gained independence from Great Britain, the National Junkanoo Museum never directly experienced the type of colonial oversight that would certainly have impacted their museum policies and exhibition content. As a result of such autonomy, the museum developed its own criteria for preserving Bahamian cultural heritage.

Without an overbearing colonial influence, McKay and her committee initiated an exhibition policy that radically diverges from typical museum practice insofar as the National Junkanoo Museum operates without a permanent collection. Instead of storing and exhibiting the costumes indefinitely as was the practice implemented by the museum’s first director, Stan Burnside, the museum now collaborates with the groupers to exhibit the winning Lead Pieces and Off-the-Shoulder costumes on an annual basis. Since the museum returns the costumes to the artists after a year-long exhibition, the artists are free to continue their practice of destroying the costumes. The museum does not necessitate that the artists must destroy the costumes.

---

135 My study emphasizes the hybrid nature of the Junkanoo festival in which African, British, Trinidadian, and American influences shape the contemporary structure of Junkanoo.

136 Previously, the costumes were only removed from the museum if groupers needed them for a performance, if they started to deteriorate, or if groupers donated more innovative and extravagant costumes. Since the artists are only loaning their costumes to the museum and thereby can reclaim the costly aluminum rods, plastic feathers, and other materials, the artists find no reason to charge the National Junkanoo Museum for exhibiting their art. A museum as small as the National Junkanoo Museum does not possess the funds to pay for the costumes and the current arrangement is mutually beneficial to the artists and the museum. The Junkanoo groups whose costumes are exhibited earn a degree of notoriety in the community which corresponds well with the deep-rooted competitive spirit of Junkanoo.

137 The contemporary costumes that are destroyed maintain their ephemeral nature but for an entirely different reason then costumes of the past. In the past, costumes were discarded because they were made from disposable, inexpensive materials and because spectators and performers wanted to devise new, better costumes for the following year’s parade. Now if an artist chooses to destroy the costumes, they do in order to recover some of the expensive materials and incorporate these items into next year’s costumes. Thus, contemporary artists are
once handed back to the community, although the majority of the artists do so in order to reuse the expensive materials. When questioned about the museum’s new exhibition policy, McKay contended that the change better corresponds with the artistic philosophies of Junkanoo. By displaying only the newest costumes and latest construction techniques and designs, the museum no longer interferes with the traditional Junkanoo cycle of creation.\footnote{McKay, interview.}

My fourth chapter analyzes the absence of a permanent collection at the National Junkanoo Museum in which the institution’s exhibition policy further complicates the relationship between authenticity, commercialism, and Junkanoo. I find a correlation between the museum’s policy and nostalgic sentiments which leads me to argue that the National Junkanoo Museum constructs a discourse of notaslagia in order to authenticate the objects it exhibits. The National Junkanoo Museum engineers a discourse of nostalgia by maintaining the costumes’ traditional ephemerality and by selectively exhibiting only those costumes that support a romanticized version of history. However, the museum uses commercialized and bedazzled costumes to construct this discourse which complicates the distinction between authentic and inauthentic. Moreover, the museum’s encouragement of destroying the costumes both paradoxically contradicts and supports the museum’s commercial function. Altogether, I argue that asserting the costumes’ ephemerality says little about preserving the authenticity of the objects, but instead, demonstrates the museum’s touristic concerns.

The sociology of nostalgia, as theorized by sociologists Fred Davis and Bryan Turner, is a framework for understanding the relevance and meaning of nostalgia in our present-day lives and the general conditions and circumstances that evoke nostalgic responses.\footnote{Turner takes the importance of nostalgic studies one step further and contends that contemporary social theory “was bound up with a discourse of modernity structured by nostalgia.” See John Frow, “Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia,” in \textit{October} 57 (1991): 135. Turner explains that nostalgia and nostalgic metaphors have played a central role in the development of Western civilizations.} As previously mentioned in Chapter one, nostalgia is defined as a yearning for lost patterns of everyday life, and the invention of a romanticized version of what can never be regained or recreated.\footnote{Green, “Authenticity, Commerce, and Nostalgia,” 65.} Turner in his article “A Note on Nostalgia” further defines the emotions as “a fundamental
condition of human estrangement” brought on by “the loss of rural simplicity, traditional stability and cultural integration following the impact of industrial, urban, capitalistic culture.” Davis in his seminal book *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* emphasizes that nostalgia, above all, alleges that the past is always fundamentally superior to the present. Thus when contemporary practices and conventions differ considerably from the past, they tend to signify a historical decline, the absence of moral wholeness and certainty, and/or the loss of personal freedom, simplicity, and emotional spontaneity.

Nostalgia provides humanity with a much needed sense of continuity by connecting people to their past and uniting individuals through shared experiences. Hence nostalgia impacts the formation of personal and collective identities by “(1) cultivating appreciative stances toward former selves, (2) screening from memory the unpleasant or shameful . . . (3) rediscovering and through a normalizing process, rehabilitating marginal, fugitive, and eccentric facets of earlier selves. . . . [and (4)] locat[ing] in memory an earlier version of self with which to measure to advantage some current condition of self.” Furthermore, nostalgia possesses the power to authenticate the places, events, and moods of the past. As Davis argues, since one can only be nostalgic for the circumstances and conditions personally experienced—as opposed to the bygone eras recorded in history books or passed down orally from generation to generation—this

---

141 Turner, “A Note on Nostalgia,” 150, 152.

142 Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 14-15. Although Davis describes this principle as nostalgia’s “distinctive rhetorical signature,” he does not adequately explain why nostalgia privileges the past over the present, in other words, why succumb to an idealized, utopic version of the past? Turner attempts to provide an explanation for this characteristic of nostalgia with his four dimensions of nostalgic discourse, all of which center on the issues of dissatisfaction that arise from modernity. See the following footnote for a detailed account of Turner’s four dimensions.

143 Turner outlines the four dimensions of nostalgic discourse and explains the conditions that bring about nostalgic responses. Nostalgia is first a sense of historical decline and loss in that humans perceive contemporary times as a radical departure from a former golden age. Secondly, nostalgia is characterized by a sense of absence or loss of personal wholeness and moral certainty. This existential crisis derives from the modernization of rural societies, primarily through the introduction of capitalistic markets that undermine religious and community authority, and replace social unity with the uncertainty and loneliness of globalization. With the annihilation of God and social relationships, the isolated individual is subjected to the third element of nostalgia, a sense of lost personal freedom. With the intensified dependency on bureaucracy and the regulatory measures provided by modern institutions, personal autonomy diminishes. Finally, the fourth dimension of nostalgia pertains to a loss of simplicity, personal authenticity, and emotional spontaneity. Using as an example Bakhtin’s analysis of the bourgeoisie’s repression of the primitive emotions celebrated during peasant festivals, Turner explains that the fourth dimension of nostalgia significantly harms the individual’s emotional stability and sense of legitimacy. See Turner, “A Note on Nostalgia,” 150-51.

144 Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 44-45.
sense of personal attachment substantiates these memories as “real.” However, nostalgia invents a romanticized version of the past.\textsuperscript{145} As indicated in Chapter three, nostalgia only recalls those memories that serve the interests and needs of the present.\textsuperscript{146} Nostalgia constructs a system of traditions that speaks to the government’s touristic agendas, the economic motivations of the Bahamian artist, and the national rhetoric of cultural identity. Cultural theorists’ and sociologists’ criticism of nostalgia reveals that “the ongoing reconstruction of the past is an act not only of recontextualization but of \textit{invention}, [emphasis added] and that even the most ‘authentic’ traditions are thus effects of a stylized simulation.”\textsuperscript{147} Altogether, the study of nostalgia further exposes the myth of authenticity, in which nostalgia, as a form of consciousness, constructs, maintains, and reconstructs our sense of the past.\textsuperscript{148}

\textbf{The Discourse of Nostalgia and the National Junkanoo Museum}

Although Davis and Turner apply the principles of nostalgia only to a community’s traditional practices, I extend the discourse of nostalgia to also include the yearning for certain historical objects. In other words, the same principles and observations of nostalgia that apply to age-old conventions also affect material objects.\textsuperscript{149} In regards to Junkanoo, many Bahamians certainly express nostalgic sentiments for the crêpe-paper costumes of the past. They contend that the exaggerated application of rhinestones, feathers, glitter, and paint reduces the usage of fringe paper, calling into question the costumes’ degree of authenticity. The \textit{Nassau Guardian} maintained that contemporary costumes have “violated the essence of Junkanoo. . . . Junkanoo is about goat skin drums, cowbells, whistles, horns, and fringe paper costumes. . . . Applying cut

\textsuperscript{145} Davis, \textit{Yearning for Yesterday}, 47

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 9-10.

\textsuperscript{147} Frow, “Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia,” 133. The above quotation is from cultural theorist John Frow’s summarization of Hobsbawm and Ranger’s main argument in \textit{The Invention of Tradition} (1983).

\textsuperscript{148} Davis, \textit{Yearning for Yesterday}, 31.

\textsuperscript{149} Recent scholars, such as Janelle L. Wilson in \textit{Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning} (2005), have studied nostalgia’s influence on the meaning attributed to objects.
paper, or paint, or any of the other ready-made decorative pieces may be easier, but is it worth losing the uniqueness of crepe paper to imitate others. All that glitters is not Junkanoo.”

The discourse of nostalgia is a common form of epistemology adopted by many small, local museums to dictate the interpretation of their collections. In the museum context, interpreting objects through nostalgic lenses delivers a positive rendition of history and memorializes these objects as remnants of better times. The museum’s authority then sanctions these idealized versions as truth. Likewise, the National Junkanoo Museum constructs a discourse of nostalgia in two manners, the first in regards to its material objects and the second in regards to a traditional Junkanoo practice. First, the museum subverts the festival’s objectionable elements and minimizes alternative narratives by choosing to exhibit only the types of costumes which confirm the romanticized and picturesque qualities of Junkanoo the museum wishes to perpetuate. The museum does not exhibit the Bush Warrior’s unimpressive straw costumes or their politically overt noosed figures; instead, it showcases costumes that feature ornate representations of dragons and King Neptune, themes that do not stray from the nostalgic narrative (Figs. 3, 19, and 28). Since the museum is part of the island’s heritage industry, it exhibits an abbreviated and simplified account of Junkanoo which can be more easily marketed to tourists. Accordingly, the production of an idealized version of the festival demonstrates the present-day interests and needs of contemporary groups, chiefly, the museum’s current agenda to bolster cultural tourism.

Second, the National Junkanoo Museum constructs a discourse of nostalgia by providing the Junkanoo artists with the opportunity to destroy their exhibited costumes. Since nostalgia embraces traditional practices as “authentic” in order to maintain a sense of continuity with the past, upholding the costumes’ traditional ephemeral nature instills a much needed connection to a former golden age, thereby dignifying certain aspects of Junkanoo history and supposedly reversing the decline of contemporary Junkanoo practices. The costume’s ephemeral nature was once an important aspect of Junkanoo, and the museum attempts to restore some of the costume’s lost authenticity as a result of their new function as museum objects. Furthermore, permitting artists the opportunity to reclaim their costumes offsets the sense of lost freedom and personal


autonomy precipitated by the modernization of Junkanoo and the festival’s ever-increasing dependency on bureaucracy.

Nevertheless, the museum’s application of nostalgia complicates the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity. The museum constructs a discourse of nostalgia (by selectively exhibiting costumes that support a romanticized version of the past and reinstituting a traditional practice that maintains continuity with the past) in order to authenticate the exhibited costumes. However, nostalgia also dictates that contemporary practices—and I contend material objects as well—that break from tradition are indeed inauthentic since they do not maintain continuity with the past. Ironically, to construct this discourse of nostalgia the museum uses contemporary costumes; the type of commercialized and bedazzled costumes that certainly do not maintain continuity with the past. Essentially, the National Junkanoo Museum arguably uses “inauthentic” costumes to construct a discourse of nostalgia. Nostalgic attitudes would prefer that contemporary costumes reflect the integrity of the crépe-paper or the eye-catching qualities of the sponge costumes, traditions that date back to the golden age of Junkanoo (Fig. 33). Instead, the museum proudly displays contemporary costumes that demonstrate the abundant use of decorative materials and the ever-increasing size and three-dimensionality of Lead Pieces (which resemble Trinidadian floats more than Junkanoo costumes) (Fig. 34). Although plans for the future museum do include the display of a large timeline that illustrates the evolution of the Junkanoo costumes, the museum still severs a connection with older costumes by allowing only the newest ones to be exhibited, a practice that eclipses signs of influence from previous generations.

In regards to the discourse of nostalgia, which aspects of Junkanoo should be considered authentic? Are the commercialized, bedazzled costumes of the present more authentic because they correspond with the fundamental, competitive spirit of Junkanoo which has always shown a preference for innovation and new construction designs and techniques? Or, are the crépe-paper costumes more authentic because they demonstrate continuity with the past and are the type of costumes the government has strove to preserve? Does the fact that crépe-paper is not an indigenous Bahamian material, and that the majority of the colored papers used in the costumes are imported from other countries, change the costumes authenticity? Perhaps the scrapper

---

152 As the costumes become larger and more extravagant, the Lead Pieces are becoming more float-like and now include tiers, props, and spaces for seated individuals.
costumes constitute a heightened degree of authenticity since their simplified costumes signify a period in Junkanoo’s history before the commodification of the festival, a period when Bahamians masqueraded for purely social and political objectives, and not for tourist entertainment. As suggested by the opening quote in Chapter one, people falsely believe that a culture is defined by its materials objects, and as a consequence of this conviction, they become very protective over these objects. Nostalgia operates in a similar manner, giving validity to certain traditions and objects of that past which people then become much attached to. However, criticism of the discourse reveals that nostalgia, as a form of consciousness, invents a fabricated, romanticized version of the past, which implies that the exact markings of authenticity are inconsequential to the larger issue of why certain elements are deemed authentic over others. As demonstrated earlier in this paper, the Bahamian government’s direct involvement with the earlier practices of Junkanoo and the country’s complete dependence on tourism account for the construction of authenticity.

**Analysis of the Museum’s Reinstitution of Tradition**

Even more troublesome for the National Junkanoo Museum is that forefronting the costume’s traditional ephemerality conflicts with the museum’s touristic program. As demonstrated by Chapter three, the museum intends for the exhibited costumes to assume a new commercial function and augment the Ministry’s cultural tourism program. Nonetheless, the museum ignores the contemporary role of Junkanoo by reinstituting a tradition that does not reflect the current use of the costumes as symbols of Bahamian culture and as promotional tools for attracting tourists. Nostalgia dictates that the costumes should maintain a sense of continuity with Junkanoo’s past, and destroying the items speaks to a time when the costumes were smaller, less ornate, and thus more “authentic.” Beyond the fact that the contemporary costumes have reached a new level of extravagance and cost, the art form has also become so ingrained in the Bahamian community—being performed at funerals, beauty pageants, hotel conventions, and summer festivals—that destroying the costumes is impractical for most artists. Arguably, the museum defeats its own touristic agenda by sanctioning the destruction of the very objects meant to be consumed.

While the National Junkanoo Museum’s policy undermines its commercialized function, at the same time, the practice also augments the costumes’ touristic appeal. Upon comparing the
museum’s original mission to its current goal, one discovers an ironic situation that helps explain how a discourse can both contradict and support the museum’s economic agenda. Originally, the Junkanoo artists established the Expo as a means to preserve and recognize the “indigenous” traditions of the Bahamian people. The costumes had assumed a level of aesthetic development that warranted their signification as national symbols of culture, fashioning their traditional ephemeral nature incompatible with their new function. In essence, the Junkanoo community decided that the costume’s ephemeral nature was no longer critical to its meaning, and the costumes were then relocated from the street to a more suitable environment, a national museum. When the Junkanoo Expo re-opened in 2004 as the National Junkanoo Museum, the Junkanoo community intended for the institution to focus on tourism and further develop Junkanoo’s economic potential. An important motivating factor for tourists is the possibility of experiencing the authentic, and a perceived level of authenticity is key for augmenting an object or culture’s touristic appeal. In order to enhance the costume’s authenticity and thus satisfy the touristic paradigm, the museum became a non-collecting institution. At this juncture, the costumes’ previously considered irrelevant ephemeral nature became once more important; although this time, for an entirely different reason. While destroying the costumes once solved logistical problems, as well as signified the importance of innovation and competition, the practice now is performed to provide tourists with an authentic tradition, thereby increasing their touristic appeal and commercial function.

Additionally, assuring the costumes’ authenticity is especially important to the National Junkanoo Museum since the typical tourist only experiences the costumes within the safe confines of simulated environments. Despite the Ministry of Tourism’s extensive promotional campaigns, the majority of tourists never attend the Boxing Day and New Year’s Day parades.


154 At this time, the museum staff verbally informs the visitors of its non-collecting policy.

155 This observation has been stated by many Junkanoo artists, including McKay, Dames, and both Burnside brothers, and confirmed by my experiences with the 2009 New Year’s Day parade. See also Strachan, Paradise and Plantation, 129. Buying tickets for the parade is a very cumbersome task as Festival Place, the hotels, and cruise ships advertise for Junkanoo and report to sell tickets, but in reality, have none available for tourists. These places do not purposely withhold Junkanoo tickets from tourists, but lack of planning and organization on the part of the Ministry of Tourism prevents most tourists from purchasing tickets. As I discovered, a tourist that makes repeated attempts to find tickets is finally told that local churches, schools, and community centers—located far from the tourist district of Nassau—actually sell the tickets. The few tourists lucky enough to acquire tickets are further
Instead, tourists primarily view the Junkanoo costumes in the secure and sterile environment of their hotels, restaurants, and Festival Place (Fig. 35). In addition, there is also a summer festival, Junkanoo in June, which offers tourists another sheltered opportunity to participate in the festival (Fig. 26). In 1999, the Ministry of Tourism developed the summer festival as a means “to fill the void in what is considered to be a ‘slow month’ for the country’s tourism industry.” Throughout the month of June, nightly parades and musical ensembles are performed for tourists at Awarak Cay, a popular restaurant hub located adjacent to Bay Street. During the performances, Bahamian vendors encourage tourists to purchase “authentic” crafts and cuisines, even going so far as to offer for sale costume pieces and instruments so that tourists may participate in the parade. Unlike the Boxing Day and New Year’s Day parades, the June in Junkanoo festival occurs earlier in the evening, usually starting around 5:00PM, in order to better accommodate the tourists’ day-time schedule.

Similarly, the National Junkanoo Museum provides tourists with another opportunity to experience the costumes without having to attend the actual festival. The museum displays the costumes within a space suggestive of their original context, with walls painted brightly to mimic the other colorful costumes that typically surround them and placed in an expansive, open space that alludes to the festival’s outdoor environment. Additionally, the museum plays music from actual parades to help recreate the costumes’ performative context. Since the institutional and physical confines of the National Junkanoo Museum prevent the museum from ever completely replicating the Junkanoo parades, sanctioning the costumes’ traditional ephemerality is a calculated measure to maintain some type of authenticity.

---


158 Ibid.

159 McKay, interview.
Criticism of Junkanoo and Postcolonial Museums

The conflicts and paradoxes that arise from the National Junkanoo Museum’s use of nostalgia conjure up two very important questions regarding contemporary practices of Junkanoo. How does the museum’s manipulation of a perceived “authenticity” affect the costumes and the festival and what does it say about the people whose art it displays for touristic consumption? Ultimately, the fact that the costume’s ephemerality can be disregarded and then reconsidered in the wake of tourism indicates the fluidity and complexity of the Junkanoo tradition itself. Throughout the festival’s history, the Bahamians have continually altered the stylistic and physical qualities of the costumes, as well as reinvented the purpose and meaning behind the art of masquerading in order to better accommodate the current interests of the people it serves. Today, Junkanoo is simultaneously a propagandistic tool for denoting national sovereignty, a commodified cultural product for achieving economic stability, and highly valued representation of Bahamian cultural identity. Acknowledging the multifaceted functions of the costumes do not diminish the “Bahamianess” of Junkanoo, but instead, reveals how deeply entrenched the festival is in Bahamian society.

Despite the growing support for the festival’s commercial function, several Bahamians continue to find disturbing the commodification and institutionalization of Junkanoo. One angry editorial for the Nassau Guardian expressed his concern by stating, “The history books will record that in a little under two years, the generational cultural expression known as Junkanoo was reduced to rubble, sacrificed on the altar of personal egos and immature administrative agendas. Our beloved Junkanoo has been left abandoned, void of cultural vision with the national good forsaken for future political gain.” However, one cannot simply dismiss Junkanoo’s economic value and function. Since the 1920s, the festival has constituted an economic significance that I argue is as intrinsic to its meaning as the goat-skin drums and fringe costumes.

---

160 Festivals and museums occupy different sides of the spectrum and the inherent attributes of festivals differ considerably from museum’s Enlightenment principles. Specifically, the sensory experiences typified in festivals do not correspond with the passivity of museums. While festivals indulge the senses and actively engage the audience through loud music, tantalizing smells, and unusual sights, the normative museum experience invites visitors to silently contemplate objects only with their eyes. Additionally, the dynamic environment of festivals encourages participation and interactivity which contradicts significantly with the impeding physical and intellectual barriers in museums that separate audiences from objects. Retrospectively, the museum guards, the glass display cases, and the white-washed walls further removes festival objects from their performative context and conditions a greater need for interpretation. See Ivan Karp, “Festivals,” in Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1991), 279-83.

The National Junkanoo Museum and its unusual exhibition policies also bring up the question: Is the Western concept of a museum appropriate for museums in postcolonial societies? Arguably museums are the epitome of colonial institutions and one wonders what makes a new nation attempting to deflect their colonial past aspire for a museum. While this thesis did not intend to provide a definite answer to this question, the study of Junkanoo and the National Junkanoo Museum reveals that the art of collecting—significant for understanding how societies construct and identify with their past and how objects infer or deny meaning—is not central to all museums. The National Junkanoo Museum avoids the practice of not collecting for practical reasons (insufficient funds and space to hold a permanent collection), in order to restore the costume’s original life cycle, and to satisfy the touristic paradigm so vital to the museum’s success.


163 Malcom McLeod, “Museums Without Collections: Museum Philosophy in West Africa,” in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. by Bettina Messias Carbonell (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 456, 459. Museums in West Africa grapple with similar concerns, attempting to provide a viable solution for dusty, rotting collections that have long lost their meaning after being relegated to a museum space and not used anymore. The National Museum of Mali has arrived at the same conclusion as the National Junkanoo Museum in which the museum exhibited and toured loaned family memorabilia and local heirlooms to the museum, still in use and therefore maintaining a connection with the local society, but then returned to the families and never entering the museum’s permanent collection. The Manhyia Palace Museum in Kumasi, Ghana decided that collecting and preserving objects had little to do with their concept of the past and thus devised an alternative solution for recreating the past. The museum exist completely without any permanent collection and restores meanings to its objects by allowing royal objects to continue being used by chiefs and instead placing replicas of the objects on display. Although the use of replicas may at first appear contradictory to the purpose of a museum, the Asante people find the solution extremely appropriate since it was customary to replicate royal objects for continued use once they wore out. In essence, the revered royal objects had always been some sort of copy of the original and the Asante accepted the museum replicas as carrying the same meaning as the objects in use.

164 Although a museum’s ability to transcend objects into artifacts or art seemingly signifies that a nation is finally recognizing its past and educating its community members, the practice of collecting may also represent the death of a culture, especially cultural practices originated from festivals whose celebratory and ephemeral nature conflict with the static and eternal characteristics of a museum. See Kaeppler, “Paradise Regained,” 19.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

Although Bahamian traditionalists denounce the contemporary aspects of Junkanoo, the festival—notably the Junkanoo costumes—encompasses substantive touristic and commercial functions that are fundamental to the formation of a Bahamian national and cultural identity. My thesis analyzed the relationship between authenticity, tourism, nostalgia, Junkanoo, and Bahamian identity and provided the first historical account of the National Junkanoo Museum, an institution which I argued uses a discourse of nostalgia and the myth of authenticity to augment the costume’s touristic value.

Originally, the institution of slavery and the racial barriers enacted under colonial rule contributed to the early traditions of Junkanoo. The observance of a three-day Christmas holiday granted to all Bahamian slaves provided a small window of freedom for masquerading, a practice which later developed into a processional act that culminated on Bay Street during the post-emancipation period of the mid-nineteenth century. As the costumes grew in size and sophistication, the Bahamian government assumed control of the festival, and instituted a series of rules and regulations meant to transform the unruly celebration into a wholesome, tourist-friendly event. Concurrently, the Bahamian Development Board began marketing the islands as a “picturesque, tropical destination,” and the costumes’ exotic and indigenous qualities corresponded well with the image of Paradise that the Board intended to promote. Overall, the institutionalization of Junkanoo enabled the festival to maintain key, distinguishable features that were later appropriated by the newly independent state to reinforce their nationalistic programs.

After the Bahamas achieved independence from Great Britain, Junkanoo came to symbolize a new national and cultural identity predicated upon the “indigenous” traditions of a diasporic people. Contemporary Junkanoo costumes serve a more commercial function and are performed for tourists at popular hotels, exported internationally as Bahamian cultural products, and constitute the majority of the country’s heritage industry.

The commodification of Bahamian culture fulfills both nationalistic and economic agendas, and the National Junkanoo Museum provides an excellent opportunity to study the effects of the Bahamian heritage industry on the Junkanoo costumes. The history of the museum
can be divided into two distinct phases: its initial stage from 1993 to 2003 when artist Stan Burnside operated the museum as the Junkanoo Expo, and its second stage from 2004 to the present when government liaison Angelique McKay assumed control of the museum. Originally founded as an institution dedicated to the preservation of the Junkanoo tradition, the Junkanoo Expo provided artists with a sufficient space to exhibit their costumes which reinforced their status as icons of Bahamian culture and national identity. Under McKay’s direction, the museum now operates as a cultural tourism site that primarily serves the interests of tourists. The museum’s original nationalistic goal conflicts with its commercial function in that to display the costumes as consumption objects is to evoke the colonial journey. Now exhibited as objects of discovery, the costumes convey an image of the Bahamas (and its people) as an isolated, exotic homeland and thereby perpetuate a colonial discourse that sabotages the country’s attempts to instill a new national and cultural identity.

Since the National Junkanoo Museum is now expected to contribute to the country’s cultural tourism program, the museum must satisfy the touristic paradigm and display the costumes as identifiable, authentic Bahamian products. In order to augment the costumes’ perceived level of authenticity, the museum constructs a discourse of nostalgia and supports the artists’ practice of destroying the costumes as a museum policy. Nostalgia, as a form of museum epistemology, corroborates partial and romanticized historical accounts in order to maintain continuity with an alleged golden age. However, the museum’s construction of a discourse of nostalgia presents a number of controversies. Sanctioning the destruction of the costumes and selectively exhibiting only the grouper costumes blurs the boundaries between authentic and inauthentic. Altogether, the museum actually undermines its commitment to represent the costumes as Bahamian cultural objects. Instead, the museum’s practice indicates a cultural gap between the institution and the evolving practices of Junkanoo in which the tradition of abandoning one’s costume has fallen out favor with the majority of Junkanoo artists. Although allowing the artists the opportunity to reclaim their costumes can be construed as an effort to restore the costumes ephemerality, I contend that the practice indicates the pervasive if often self-contradictory role of the tourism industry in formulating a Bahamian collective identity.

Overall, my study contributes to the scholarship of Junkanoo by calling attention to the festival’s hybrid nature. By demonstrating influences from British colonialism, African masquerading practices, Trinidad’s Carnival, Bahamian commercial enterprises, and American
pop culture, my analysis of Junkanoo’s historical development contradicted the commonly-held perception of the festival as self-contained and indigenous. Throughout the discourse, the majority of scholars frequently emphasis Junkanoo’s African origins and refer to the festival as an expression of the Bahamas’ African heritage. Although the disaporic traditions of Bahamian slaves certainly contributed to the development of Junkanoo, I intended for this study to demonstrate that the link between Africa and Junkanoo is partially a propagandistic tool that went into effect shortly after the country gained independence. In order to divorce their cultural and national identity from their colonial past, the newly independent state promoted Junkanoo as material evidence for an African heritage.

Moreover, I am the first author to provide a comprehensive study of the history and policies of the National Junkanoo Museum. Bahamian historian Krista Thompson offers an abbreviated account of the Junkanoo Expo in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures and Global Transformations*; however, my analysis examines in more detail the historical development of the museum and the influence of the tourism industry on the ensuing practices. Studying the National Junkanoo Museum is important to the overall scholarship on the Caribbean arts because the institution exemplifies the theoretical and practical concerns facing museums in postcolonial societies. As in many postcolonial societies, the effects of colonization and tourism significantly impact the formation of a national and cultural identity and present a complicated situation that local museums are often times responsible for resolving. Furthermore, in postcolonial societies nostalgic sentiments may even heighten the sensitivity towards cultural objects in that these items represent the independence and sovereignty that was denied to community members for so long. Bahamians experiences all of these circumstances and the National Junkanoo Museum attempts to merge the country’s nationalistic incentives with its economic objectives by displaying only those costumes that convey a picture of the Bahamas as unique and meaningful and by enacting a museum policy that continues the customary destruction of the costumes.
Figure 2. Lead Piece. Date Unknown. Nassau, The Bahamas. Ferguson, *I Come to Get Me!: an Inside Look at the Junkanoo Festival.*
Figure 4. Discarded costumes after the New Year’s Day Junkanoo Parade in 2009. Photo by author.
Figure 5. Junkanoo groups performing in Washington, D.C. 1992. Ferguson, *I Come to Get Me!: an Inside Look at the Junkanoo Festival.*
Figure 6. “Island Hopping” advertisement. The Island of the Bahamas advertisement campaign, Ministry of Tourism. 2004. Thompson, An Eye for the Tropics.
Figure 8. Five dollar bill featuring Junkanoo masqueraders. Bahamian currency. Released in 2007.
Figure 17. New Year’s Day Junkanoo Parade. Scraper group. 2009. Nassau, The Bahamas. Photo by author.
Figure 23. New Year’s Day Junkanoo Parade. Scrapper banner recognizing sponsorship from SOBE Energy Drink. 2009. Nassau, The Bahamas. Photo by author.
Figure 24. Discarded costumes after the Boxing Day parade. 1986. Nassau, The Bahamas. Nunley and Bettelheim, Caribbean Festival Arts.
Figure 25. Aluminum rods and cardboard frames for costumes. Ferguson, *I Come to Get Me!: an Inside Look at the Junkanoo Festival.*
Figure 29. Festival Place market and welcome center. 2008. Nassau, The Bahamas. Photo by Andrew, obtained through Flickr, http://www.flickr.com/photos/8348059@N02/2640040049/
Figure 30. Market stall inside Festival Place. 2009. Nassau, The Bahamas. Photo by author.
Figure 32. Future site of the Junkanoo restaurant, within the museum space. January 2009. Nassau, The Bahamas. Photo by author.
Figure 34. New Year’s Day Junkanoo Parade. The Valley Boys. Lead Piece resembling a float more than a costume. 2009. Nassau, The Bahamas. Photo by author.
Figure 35. Off-the-shoulder costume displayed at Festival Place. 2009. Nassau, The Bahamas. Photo by author.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Burnside, Stanley. Interview by author. Correspondence through phone call. March 10, 2008.


McKay, Angelique. Interview by author. Correspondence through phone call. February 26, 2008.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ressa Mackey received a Bachelor of Science in Studio Art from Florida State University in 2005. Immediately following her graduation, Ressa worked in Jacksonville, Florida at the Karpeles Manuscript Museum as the Outreach Program Coordinator, and was responsible for organizing and managing the museum’s city-funded outreach program. In the fall 2006, Ressa moved to Ft. Lauderdale and worked as an Art Educator at the children’s museum, Young At Art. During the fall 2007, Ressa began her graduate studies in Art History at FSU and pursed a concentration in modern art, focusing on World Arts and the Caribbean. While pursuing her graduate studies, Ressa received an internship at the LeMoyne Center of the Visual Arts in Tallahassee, Florida, where she worked in the museum’s education department. During her second year in graduate school, Ressa served as the president for FSU’s graduate organization, the Art History Association. Also during her second year, Ressa and her husband, Michael, welcomed the birth of their first child, Abigail Renee Tomkiewicz, on March 25, 2009. After graduating from FSU in fall 2009 with a Masters of Arts History and Graduate Certificate in Museum Studies, Ressa intends to work in the Tallahassee area at an art museum or gallery, where she hopes to continue her work in art museum education.