

## **[EXTENDED DEADLINE] CFP: The Inaugural Caribbean Festival of Arts as Prism: 20th Century Festivals in the Multilingual Caribbean (August 5-7, 2022)**

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Call for Papers

Date:

August 5, 2022 to August 7, 2022

Subject Fields:

Latin American and Caribbean History / Studies, Art, Art History & Visual Studies, Theatre & Performance History / Studies, Asian American History / Studies, Black History / Studies

The Inaugural Caribbean Festival of Arts as Prism: 20th Century Festivals in the Multilingual Caribbean

Virtual Symposium: August 5-7, 2022

[EXTENDED] Deadline for Abstract Submission: June 1, 2022

Please send submissions to [CarifestaAt50@gmail.com](mailto:CarifestaAt50@gmail.com)

### **Call for Papers and Participation**

Fifty years ago, the first Caribbean Festival of Arts (Carifesta), held in Guyana from August to September 1972, marked a significant and deliberate postcolonial moment that embodied the aspirations of a unified Caribbean. A brochure for the inaugural multidisciplinary and transnational festival stated that Carifesta would “depict the life of the people of the region—their heroes, morale, myth, traditions, beliefs, creativeness, ways of expression” and “stimulate and unite the cultural movement throughout the region.”

Carifesta '72 aspired to promote the cultural expressions of the multilingual region. The conceptualizers, who included celebrated poet and historian Kamau Brathwaite, poet and activist Martin Carter, and artist Aubrey Williams, expected that the organizing body would craft a festival that embraced and celebrated the multiracial and multicultural heritage of the region despite the polarized national politics of the day. This meant, in theory, celebrating traditions rooted in the indigenous nations, West Africa, India, Indonesia, China, and Western Europe.

What transpired when the artists, dancers, musicians, writers, directors, filmmakers, and revelers from across the circum-Caribbean and beyond gathered to exchange ideas and idioms, ancestral stories, and contemporary engagements with tradition? What were the ripple effects of the Carifesta '72 event on the region's (festival) culture, politics, and people? What legacies did it build upon or interrupt?

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As we approach the 50th anniversary of the first Carifesta (as well as Carifesta XV in Antigua & Barbuda in 2022), we invite scholars (including graduate students), artists, Carifesta '72 participants, and the Guyanese and Caribbean diaspora to participate in a three-day virtual symposium organized in association with the Guyana Cultural Association of New York, Inc. (GCA) as part of the 2022 Guyana Folk Festival.

We will examine the inaugural Carifesta, its significance, and its legacies. We will collectively explore its possibilities, achievements, and missteps. We will also use this seminal moment as a prism through which Caribbean culture, nationalism, transnationalism, and postcolonialism can be analyzed. We aim to harness the spirit of Carifesta '72 as a transnational and inclusive space to facilitate dialogue about Guyanese and Caribbean culture.

This symposium is a collaboration among GCA, the Asian American Studies Program of Binghamton University, Rice University, and Ohio University in the US; the University of Guyana, the Festival City Youth and Parents Organization, and the Moray House Trust in Guyana; and Guyana Speaks in the UK.

Festivals, by design, are ephemeral entities that take place at specific moments in time. The documents (e.g., pamphlets, brochures, performance guides, personal photographs) that are produced are often taken home by participants. The festivals remain in their memories. Thus, a goal of this symposium is to bring scholars and Carifesta '72 participants together to exchange knowledge and to document this festival, which remains in personal and collective memories. We aim to collect physical materials and oral histories to facilitate the creation of a digital archive that could expand to embrace other regional festivals.

We invite proposals for four categories of presentations: (1) Contextualizing/Historicizing Carifesta '72, (2) Experiencing Carifesta '72, (3) The Legacies of Carifesta '72, and (4) Festival Methodologies. We welcome presentations from Guyanese, Caribbean, and transnational perspectives. We will accept proposals and presentations in all languages spoken in the Caribbean.

Possible topic areas for papers or presentations include but are not limited to:

- Contested visions, interpretations, experiences, and memories of Carifesta '72.
- Personal accounts and recollections from multimedia storytellers (e.g., singers, writers, filmmakers, dancers, oral historians, and visual artists).
- Case studies related to Carifesta '72 (e.g., African American participation or specific presentations or concerts).
- Similarities or differences between Carifesta '72 and earlier or contemporaneous festivals,

including, but not limited to, national festivals (within the region), the Caribbean Festival (Puerto Rico 1952), the Commonwealth Arts Festival (Britain 1965), the First World Festival of Negro Arts (Senegal 1966), and the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (Nigeria 1977).

- The role or place of Carifesta in the ecosystem of regional festivals.
- Intersectional identities and experiences of Carifesta. These include the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class, and religion.
- The aspects of culture that were highlighted, identified, or invented as part of nationalist movements and identities in the decolonization era. What aspects of these cultures were chosen to represent a “nation” (from Guyana and Jamaica to Venezuela and Brazil) at Carifesta ‘72? Why did nations such as Peru and Mexico choose to participate?
- Approaches to understanding, contextualizing, historicizing, and/or theorizing the importance or centrality of festival culture in the Caribbean.
- The intertwining of (festival) culture and politics or the political. This can be a discussion of the use of (festival) culture in political organizing, especially regarding politics or the political in Carifesta.
- The role of (festival) culture in political, economic, cultural, and/or mental decolonization.
- Approaches for analyzing the performance of religious rites, rituals, and celebrations within the secular form of festivals such as Carifesta.
- The effects of festivals (and research about festivals) on methodology and disciplinary specificity.
- Theorizations about what can be gleaned from the history of pan-Caribbean exchanges such as Carifesta and/or about what has been silenced through their understudied nature.

Please send submissions to [CarifestaAt50@gmail.com](mailto:CarifestaAt50@gmail.com) by **June 1, 2022**. For paper presentations, please send a 250-word abstract or description and a short biography. For artist submissions, please send JPEG and/or MP3 or MP4 files and a short biography. Include the title, work date, process,

dimensions, and medium. Dropbox and other FTP links will not be reviewed.

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