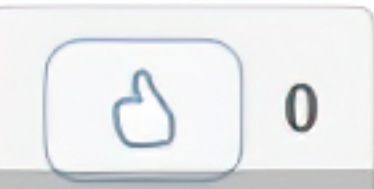


A Portrait Of The Bahamas At 40



As of Tuesday, July 2, 2013

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A COLLECTION of 40 photographic portraits of men and women from all walks of life, who together represent the heart, soul and spirit of the Bahamian character, will be unveiled at the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas on July 11 as part of the 40th Anniversary of Independence celebrations.

Called the Bahamian Collection, the exhibit is the result of the first year of the Bahamian Project and will be opened by the Governor General Sir Arthur Foulkes and Lady Foulkes.

The portraits will remain in the gallery on West Hill Street for three months. Both the opening night and the continuing exhibition are open to the public.

For photographer Duke Wells, who worked tirelessly to catch the right expression and emotion and define the uniqueness of each subject, and his wife Lisa, who documented every step of the journey, the project has been as inspiring as it has been demanding.

They started with an idea of some of the people they wanted to photograph and the list quickly expanded as their collaborators and the general public made suggestions.

In the end, the Bahamian Collection that grew out of the Wells' gift to The Bahamas by its working name, the Bahamian Project, is an eclectic gathering of persons from the legendary conch man of Montagu, Mr Miller, photographed with his conch cracking tools in hand, to the Governor General and Lady Foulkes, photographed in the formal setting of Government House. From the cheerful phone card vendor near Mackey Street to the senior scribe Richard Coulson whose sharp and well-thought out opinions have often affected government policy, the series of portraits in black-and-white mirror much of Bahamian society.

Sixty portraits were taken in all this year, and now, with other local photographers invited to join the effort, the number of portraits is expected to be in the hundreds next year.

Forty of these images have already been selected for the official opening of the exhibit.

"We are eagerly anticipating the exhibition opening on July 11," said Lisa Wells. "We have worked very hard photographing 60 people over the past year, and it will be very rewarding to have the portrait subjects see their pictures for the first time and to finally get feedback from the public will be very exciting."

It is the people of the nation that sets The Bahamas apart, said the couple.

"While much of the focus on The Bahamas highlights the beautiful beaches and waters, we really wanted to emphasise and explore the beauty of the people at this critical juncture in our evolution as a country," said Lisa Wells.

Featured in the 'Bahamian Collection' are names such as James Catalyn, Dr Gail Saunders, Bodine Johnson, Jamaal Rolle and many other Bahamians who have contributed in their own way to the richness of the Bahamian experience. Each photograph is an intimate portrait that captures the essence of the subject in a style that offers "a faithful, permanent and universal means of communication." The project's goal is to create a permanent collection of photographs that fosters cultural awareness and creates a lasting record of the people who make The Bahamas unique. While the first major exhibition is being launched in July, The Bahamian Project's work will be ongoing.

Photographer Duke Wells said: "This first year of the project is coming to an end but, really, the project is just beginning. In the second year we look forward to travelling to the Family Islands. There are so many wonderful Bahamians throughout the archipelago who we want to include. And we will continue to hold photography workshops for children, so we can create an army of young photographers who will help document the character and preserve the legacy of Bahamians from all walks of life and all islands of The Bahamas."

The project also included a Kids Photography Workshop, another facet that will be continued and expanded upon in next year. More information can be found at www.bahamianproject.com.



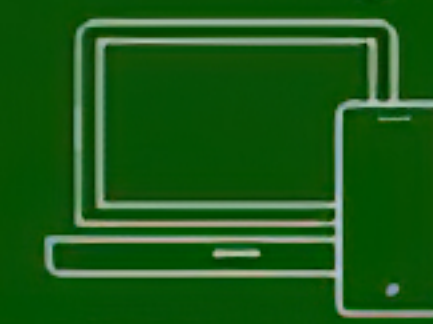
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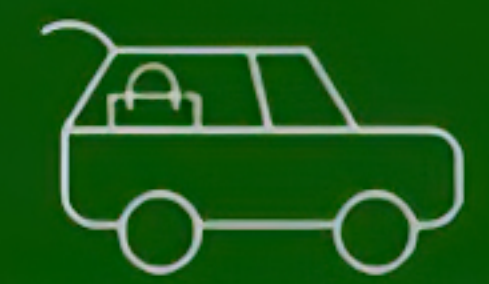
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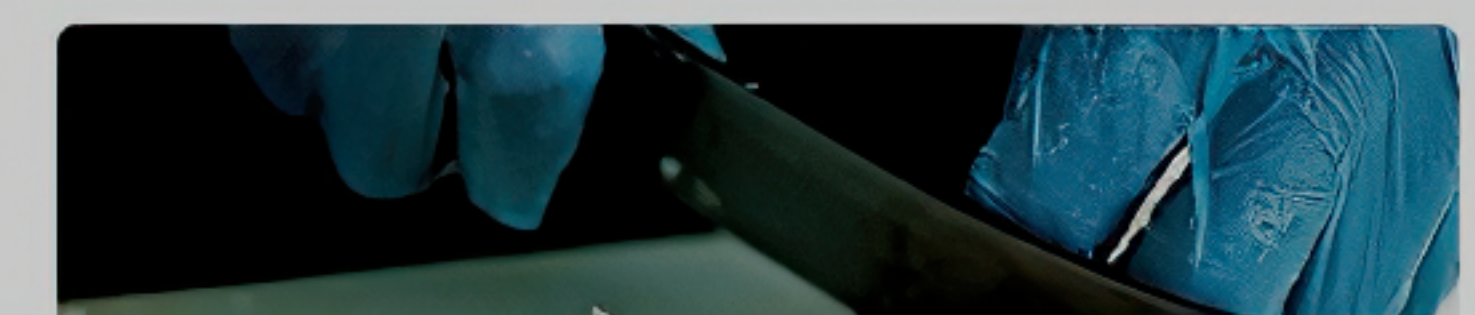
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