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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FRAMEWORK PANEL #20
Contemporary Art in the Caribbean
Wednesday, May 14
12 – 1:30pm

**Art Museum of the Americas,
Organization of American States
201 18th St., Washington, DC
Gallery 5, 2nd Floor**



Attendance is FREE!

Transformer continues our ongoing *FRAMEWORK Panel Series* with **FRAMEWORK Panel #20: *Contemporary Art in the Caribbean***. This panel will highlight emerging Jamaican & Trinidadian artists perspectives on current trends and best practices by Caribbean based artists & arts organizations, with additional insight from scholars and curators specializing in the contemporary art work of the region. Transformer is very honored to present **FRAMEWORK Panel #20: *Contemporary Art in the Caribbean*** in collaboration with AMA I Art Museum of the Americas of the OAS.

FRAMEWORK Panel #20: *Contemporary Art in the Caribbean* Panelists include: **Deborah Anzinger**, NLS Kingston (Kingston, Jamaica); **Marlon James**, artist, (Trinidad); **Leasho Johnson**, artist, (Jamaica); and **Nicole Smythe-Johnson**, *Float* curator & former Senior Curator of the National Gallery of Jamaica. The panel will be moderated by **Erica Moiah James**, Professor of Art History and Africana Studies at Yale (New haven, CT).

This panel is presented in tandem with the launch of the ***Float*** exhibition at Transformer, May 17 – June 21, 2014. Organized in collaboration with Jamaican based non-profit NLS Kingston, and curated by **Nicole Smythe-Johnson**, *Float* features photography, sculpture and mixed media work by four dynamic, emerging Jamaican & Trinidadian artists: **Deborah Anzinger**, **Rodell Warner**, **Leasho Johnson**, and **Marlon James**. Through their work, the artists' redefine the physical and social boundaries assigned to them, positing a renegotiation of identity, insistent on the recognition of the invisible but central role that "margins" play in the making of our cosmopolitan present and future.

Launched in December 2002, **Transformer's FRAMEWORK Panel Series** engages DC, national, and internationally based artists, arts professionals, and cultural leaders in conversation with DC artists and audiences providing an oral 'field guide' to encourage and support individual emerging artists in our community, and to educate audiences through the sharing of best practices within the contemporary visual arts. Transformer presents our *FRAMEWORK* Panels 2-3 times per year via collaboration with a broad range of educational & cultural institution partners.

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ABOUT THE PANELISTS:

Deborah Anzinger (b. 1978) has exhibited her work in Jamaica at the National Gallery of Jamaica, in the Caribbean at the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival and Liquid Courage Gallery (Nassau, Bahamas), and in the DC area at Arlington Art Center, George Mason University, Civilian Art Projects, Hillyer Art Space, Delicious Spectacle, Porch Projects, Corcoran Gallery of Art with Transformer Gallery, and the District of Columbia Arts Center. She is founding director of the Kingston-based non-profit contemporary art organization New Local Space (NLS) in Jamaica. Through NLS she has organized and curated exhibitions of work by other artists, written for ARC Magazine and sat on panels for San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and hosted artist studio visits for the Pérez Art Museum Miami and Thyssen Bornemisza Art Foundation. Anzinger's art juxtaposes banality and wildness through automated abstraction in which digital media, text and physical experience with material all collide. Her work examines psychical fragility as well as a desire for transcendence and existential freedom. Anzinger received her PhD in immunology and microbiology in 2005 at Rush Medical Center, Chicago.

Jamaican artist **Marlon James** (b. 1980) works in digital photography, primarily portraiture. James captures subjects that defy hegemonic conceptions of Jamaican-ness and/or are deemed unsuitable subjects for fine art. His images redefine his subjects, framing them as icons and stars. His works included in the show are *Vogue*- a portrait of a transvestite male, *Storm*- a portrait of young, precocious filmmaker Storm Saulter, *Was*- a portrait of a teen who has disfigured his skin with bleaching cream, *Afifa*- a deejay/sound artist and activist, and *Lehrone* and *Jabhari*, students at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts where James worked for many years. James has shown at the National Gallery of Jamaica, The Art Gallery of Mississauga in Ontario, Museum of the Americas in Washington DC and the Bargehouse in London. In 2013, he had his first solo exhibition *Intimate Encounters* at New Local Space (NLS) in Kingston Jamaica. James studied photography and illustration at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts in Kingston, Jamaica (2003).

Jamaican artist **Leasho Johnson** (b. 1984) works in painting, ceramics, as well as graphic and fashion design. Johnson has shown locally at the Mutual Gallery and National Gallery of Jamaica, and internationally at Kadé Gallery in the Netherlands, and Real Art Ways in Connecticut. He is also a founding member of the Dirty Crayons collective, and has organized exhibitions in non-traditional spaces as part of that group. Johnson renders the raw and rejected of contemporary Jamaican culture using techniques traditionally esteemed in Jamaica. His work included in the show is *Pum Pum Tun Up Dive* (2014), a ceramic avatar that adopts the Kawaii aesthetic from Japanese art to reference dancehall dancers. Johnson received his BFA in Visual Communication at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts in Jamaica (2009).

Nicole Smythe-Johnson is a curator and writer living in Jamaica and working across the Caribbean region. In 2013, she completed her tenure as Senior Curator with the National Gallery of Jamaica where she worked on the 2012 *National Biennial*, *Natural Histories* (2013) and *New Roots* (2013) exhibitions. Since then, she has worked with contemporary Caribbean art and culture magazine *ARC* as an editor and writer, as well as providing programming and curatorial support on the Trinidad + Tobago Film Festival's *NewMedia* exhibition, and the *Caribbean Linked II* residency project (a collaboration between ARC, the Fresh Milk Platform in Barbados and the hosting organization- Atelier'89) in Aruba. Nicole also works with Jamaica-based

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contemporary art organization New Local Space (NLS) as outreach coordinator and host of NLS' online art conversation series *IN*. Most recently, she was invited to the Bahamas to curate an exhibition at the Hillside House gallery as part of the 10th anniversary of the *Transforming Spaces* art tour. Nicole studied Cultural Studies at Macalester College in St Paul, Minnesota (2007) and wrote her MA in Postcolonial Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds in England (2011). Her interests are broad, but all informed by an interest in the mediation of meaning. Contemporary art excites her because it is the frontier of meaning-making.

ABOUT THE MODERATOR:

Erica Moiah James is Assistant Professor in the Departments of The History of Art and African American Studies at Yale University. Before arriving at Yale she served as the founding Director and Chief Curator of the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas. Dr. James earned an MFA from The University of Chicago and a PhD in art history from Duke University. Professor James has curated more than a dozen exhibitions and has published more than thirty essays and exhibition catalogues, most recently "Speaking in Tongues: Metapictures and the Discourse of Violence in Caribbean Art" (*Small Axe* 37, 2012) and "Blue Curry: Art, Image and Objecthood" (*ARC*, 2012). In 2012 she also completed a four-year book project focused on one of the largest private collections in the Caribbean entitled *Love and Responsibility: The Collection of Dawn Davies* (2012). Professor James is currently finalizing a manuscript entitled *Caribbean Art in The Global Imaginary*, working on an essay focused on the political aesthetics of the American artist Charles White, and co-editing a special issue of *MaComere Journal* (UToronto, 2014) on the art of women artists from the global Caribbean. She also serves on the editorial board of *Small Axe: A Caribbean Platform for Criticism*. Her teaching and research focuses on epistemology, non-linear approaches to art history, the nexus of representing race, violence and modernity, methods of writing the art histories of historically marginalized traditions in relation to modern art and globalism, and institution building in post-colonial societies.

Image Credit: *Students of the Time-based Media course at Edna Manley College participate in a studio visit at NLS, Kingston*

t r a n s f o r m e r is a Washington, DC based 501 (c) 3 artist-centered non-profit visual arts organization, providing a consistent, supportive, and professional platform for emerging artists to explore and present experimental artistic concepts, build audiences for their work, and advance their careers. A catalyst and advocate for contemporary artists and emergent expression in the visual arts, Transformer connects and promotes emerging visual artists within regional, national and international contexts through exhibition and programs partnerships with artists, curators, commercial galleries, museums and other cultural institutions.

Transformer's 2013/2014 Exhibition Series and programs are supported by: The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The CrossCurrents Foundation, The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities/ NEA, The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, The Robert Lehman Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts' Access to Artistic Excellence Award, and The Visionary Friends of Transformer – individual donors, members of our Annual Auction Host Committee, and Corporate Sponsors.

Transformer's 2013/14 FRAMEWORK Panel Series is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts' *Access to Artistic Excellence* grant, "to encourage and support artistic excellence, preserve our cultural heritage, and provide access to the arts for all Americans."

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AMA | Art Museum of the Americas' work is based on the principle that the arts are transformative for individuals and communities. This belief simultaneously serves to promote the core values of the Organization of American States (OAS) by providing a space for cultural expression, creativity, dialogue and learning, highlighting themes such as democracy, development, human rights, justice, freedom of expression, and innovation. AMA's work advances the inter-American agenda, drawing on the arts to showcase a constructive vision of the future of the Americas via local and hemispheric cultural exchange. This is achieved by showcasing cutting-edge exhibits of artists whose output creatively combine aesthetics with topical social and political issues and by establishing a dialogue of these works with AMA's Permanent Collection.

