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Flower Power, mixed media, 2006

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In September 2006 a Caribbean-wide anthurium workshop was held at the University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine campus. In his article “Anthurium Workshop Sows Seeds for Blooming Flower Industry,” Dr. Pathmanathan Umaharan, Senior Lecturer in Life Sciences, stated that the aim of the workshop was to revive the region’s anthurium industry as “a major global force.” Dr. Umaharan reported that in the late 80s and early 90s there was a great demand for anthuriums. At that time, he noted, the Caribbean’s “ornamental industry was flourishing;” the Caribbean “was poised to become the major exporter of tropical ornaments into North America and a major player in the global market.” However, diseases and pests hampered the growth of the industry. In the past decade, UWI, in collaboration with Kairi Blooms Ltd., the major anthurium grower in Trinidad and Tobago, sought to restore life to the anthurium industry. Efforts have included research on the production of new colors and patterns and the creation of bio-engineered anthurium varieties because “the absence of blues, purples and yellows [was] a limiting factor in marketing [Caribbean] anthuriums.”

This mixed media artwork, entitled “Flower Power,” is a visual commentary about the injection of power into symbols. It considers the use of objects or ornaments to represent or conjure up places. Ms. Pearce pieces together and incorporates actual words taken from travel magazines to link the anthurium flower to a tropical Eden experience and to highlight the connection between the flower and a notion of tropical places that can be purchased. The words

in the artwork are words that are seemingly bound up in the marketing of the anthurium as a tropical ornament. They read:

Experience the exotic ... unspoiled island wild. Experience the natural wonders of a paradise. Escape to an enchanted, tropical garden by the sea. Own a piece of Eden. Immerse yourself in a place created for the senses, a world where life is sweet: The Caribbean.

“Flower Power” speaks about power relations between the exotic/tropical “Other” and the West. The artwork includes a patterned anthurium along with flowers in the “powerful” colors of blue, yellow and purple—colors identified as important to making the Caribbean a global player.

Works Cited

Umaharan, Pathmanathan. “Anthurium Workshop Sows Seeds for Blooming Flower Industry.” *UWI Today: St Augustine Campus*. 17 Oct 2006.
<<http://sta.uwi.edu/uwiToday/2006/october/anthrm.asp>>