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Caribbean Literature and Art: Writers Who Paint

Not surprisingly, Caribbean art and literature have developed along similar paths, especially in the last century. Veerle Poupeye, in *Caribbean Art* (1998), states that “most national schools originated in the decolonisation process . . . and the resulting quest for cultural identity has remained a unifying concern” (10). Poupeye’s comments could as easily apply to the development of Caribbean literature. Notions of authenticity in both cases have been based on rejections of products of cultural imperialism and have resulted in a foregrounding of the folk. Both forms are the creative products of displaced people. Both are expressions of *creolité*. Again not surprisingly, then, there are a number of Caribbean writers who are artists, and artists who are writers. Nobel literature laureate Derek Walcott is also a painter; VS Naipaul studied art in his teens and was considered proficient; Jamaican writers Roger Mais, Lorna Goodison and Earl McKenzie spring readily to mind.

This paper begins an exploration of a selection of Caribbean writers who are also artists. Is there a special creative sensitivity, sensibility or narrative aesthetic revealed in the writings of those writers who also paint? Does the Caribbean environment in any way especially encourage or promote visual-verbal combinations of creative expression?