

The 'West Indian' Front Room in the African Diaspora (Abstract)

The Front Room is an icon of kitsch furniture, consumer fetish and home-made furnishings, that resonates throughout the African Diaspora. Diaspora here, echoes Stuart Hall's concept of cultural identity as a performative process: dialectically continuous and disruptive. The term '*West Indian*' is inscribed in the representation of the '*Front Room*', and refers to a particular juncture, when cultural political shifts mediated by anti-colonialist struggles, signified a decolonising process. Second generation black artists have largely over-domesticated and stereotyped their parents as conservative in representing the Front Room, yet it's dressing, reflected an aspirational attitude through black women's participation in consumer culture. It's practice raises issues of '*good grooming*' amongst people of African descent, that echoes Daniel Miller's duality: *transcendent* and *transient*: '*artificial things which are viewed as long-lasting, and things covered over which are seen as cherished for the future.*' The juxtaposition of Jim Reeves, crochet doilies, '*Blue-Spot*' gramophones, Jesus Christ in 3D at *The Last Supper*, plastic covered upholstery, was less about valorised white-bias ideals of beauty, than the creolisation of popular culture. It's contradictory nature, reveals diasporic identities; inter-generational identifications and disavowal; gendered practices in the domestic domain and struggles over meaning and authenticity in the museum/gallery culture.

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