PAUL GARDERE

Born in 1944, Port-au-Prince, HT
Died in 2011, New York, NY

Paul Claude Gardère was a Haitian and American mixed-media artist who received artistic training at The Art Student's League of New York ('63), Cooper Union (BFA '67) and Hunter College (MFA '72). He holds the distinction of being the first Haitian Artist-in-Residence at The Studio Museum in Harlem ('89-90), was awarded a residency at Fondation Claude Monet ('93) and received the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award for Painting in 1998, among other notable achievements. During his 40+ year career, he worked and exhibited in both the United States and Haiti, but maintained his primary residence in Brooklyn, NY.

Exhibiting vast technical and stylistic range, Gardère's painting and mixed-media discipline realized diverse works and series, all of which investigate the phenomenology of racial and cultural relations (both conflict and syncretism) produced by Western imperialism and transnational migration in his native and adoptive countries. Drawing on history and symbology from Haitian, French, and US American cultures, Gardère's work unites the national histories that informed his cultural experience and conveys the complex, often paradoxical multiplicities implicit in Afro-Caribbean diaspora identity and the post-colonial immigrant experience. His works simultaneously reflect his own inner tensions as well as the dynamics of power and cultural identity at play in global populations reckoning with histories of exploitation and forced acculturation to Eurocentric systems and values.

Recent years have seen increased attention to Paul Gardère, with exhibitions such as Paul Gardere: Vantage Points, The Cooper Union Stuyvesant Fish House, New York, NY (2024-25); inclusion in Surrealism and US: Caribbean and African Diasporic Artists Since 1940, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, TX (2024); Repossession: Didier William and Paul Gardère, Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ (2024); and Paul Gardère & Didier William, Soft Network, New York, NY (2022). Gardère's work is included in public collections such as the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC, The Studio Museum in Harlem. New York, NY, St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO, New Orleans Museum of Art. New Orleans, LA, the Herbert F Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University. Ithaca, NY, the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art. Memphis, TN, the Milwaukee Art Museum. Milwaukee, WI, and many others.

Despite institutional and curatorial acclaim, his career largely escaped recognition in the for-profit gallery economy of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. His sudden death in 2011 at age 66 left behind a formidable estate of un-exhibited works. He remains a lesser known American artist of Caribbean descent in the canons of Western contemporary art. The Estate of Paul Gardère is managed by his daughter, Catherine, to protect the artist's remaining body of work and promote his artistic legacy. Operating publicly as Paul Gardère Studio out of the artist's original studio in Cobble Hill Brooklyn, the estate employs a mission to preserve the artist's archive and inventory, to support cultural scholarship by making his materials available for research, to encourage curatorial challenge of historically dominant and colonialist paradigms, and to enhance dialogue in and about the global Caribbean diaspora.

Freize
April 23, 2025

FRIEZE

The New York Galleries Shaping the Scene

As the city's art world feels the strain, Francis Irv, KAJE and Soft Network lead a bold new wave of risk-taking spaces

+5 BY **TRAVIS DIEHL, WILL FENSTERMAKER, MARKO GLUHAICH, JANE URSULA HARRIS** AND **TERENCE TROUILLOT** IN **ROUNDTABLES** | 23 APR 25

Soft Network

Soft Network now operates Artist Foundation and Estate Leaders List, a professional organization for estate workers and a two-year residency programme that provides necessary infrastructure for fundraising and the custodial work of estate management. Its third resident, following the estates of Paul Gardère and Susan Brockman, is Turkish-American photographer Sheyla Baykal, who captured New York's downtown art scene in the 1970s, including portraits of Jackie Curtis and Peter Hujar. Lacking the resources to print and exhibit her work during her lifetime, Baykal bequeathed her archive to her friend, performance artist and playwright Penny Arcade, upon her death in 1997. Soft Network has solicited a council of experts – including conservator Marina Ruiz-Molina, art historian Marcelo Gabriel Yáñez and director Steve Zehentner – to help prepare Baykal's work for exhibition in April.

Paul Gardère, *First Letters*, 1987, acrylic, plaster and mixed media on canvas board and wood, 76 × 122 cm. Courtesy: © Paul Gardère Studio

Hyperallergic
February 24, 2025

HYPERALLERGIC

Art

Five New York City Art Shows to See Right Now

Sylvia Sleigh, Kenneth Tam, Christine Sun Kim, Paul Gardère, and Rudy Burckhardt are ideal for anyone who desires a glimpse into an artist's personal life and worldview.

Natalie Haddad, Hrag Vartanian, Lisa Yin Zhang and John Yau February 24, 2025

Paul Gardère: Vantage Points

Stuyvesant-Fish House, 21 Stuyvesant Street, East Village, Manhattan
Through June 6

Paul Gardère, "Rowing to Giverny" (1999) (photo Natalie Haddad/*Hyperallergic*)

"Gardère's techniques and materials merge with his subject matter to sketch out a portrait of his life" —*NH*

Hyperallergic
February 23, 2025

HYPERALLERGIC

Art Reviews

A Haitian-American Artist's Many Lenses on Life

Through his mixed media artworks, Paul Gardère invites his audience into a meaningful and personable dialogue and offers a glimpse into his life.

Natalie Haddad February 23, 2025

Paul Gardère, "Le Pont" (1995) (all photos Natalie Haddad/*Hyperallergic*)

In a fortuitous coincidence, I arrived at *Paul Gardère: Vantage Points* just as the artist's daughter was walking another visitor through the show. Catherine Gardère, who manages her late father's estate, generously invited me to join. Just two days earlier, I was unfamiliar with both Paul Gardère and the Stuyvesant-Fish House, the historic home, now owned by Cooper Union, hosting the show; the artist's work caught my eye online. Seeing his vibrant multimedia pieces with his daughter among the trappings of a home felt like a most fitting introduction.

Gardère, a Cooper Union alumnus, was born in Haiti in 1944 and moved to New York with his mother and brother as a teenager. His works deftly combine iconography and symbolism from multiple cultures. The resulting tension is not just between influences from Haiti and United States, but also between Gardère's Catholic, Francophone background in Haiti (threatened by autocrat François Duvalier's bloody regime, prompting the Gardère family to leave the country) in contrast with Haitian traditions and art separate from French colonization. "Triplex Horizon" (1998), a commanding mixed-media work flanked by two semi-abstract blue paintings (the show's two earliest pieces), holds these cultural elements in an uneasy balance: A reproduction of "Shipwreck" (1965) by Haitian artist Rigaud Benoit is torn into multiple pieces and paired with a small recreation of a Monet painting, along with photographs of the US coastline. The dominant colors — red and glittery blue — reflect the flags of Haiti, France, and the United States, yet each country's imagery is isolated from the others, and Haiti's is literally ripped apart.

Installation view of *Paul Gardère: Vantage Points* at the Stuyvesant-Fish House. Left to right: "Untitled" (1972), "Triplex Horizon" (1998), "Untitled" (1972)

What makes *Vantage Points* so distinctive, and poignant, is Gardère's personal touch. His departure from both the classical, European-influenced Haitian painting that he took up after graduate school and the American Modernism of professors including Robert Morris and John McCracken led him toward a mixed-media and, at times, maximalist aesthetic. But nothing in the show is visually overwhelming. Instead, his techniques and materials merge with his subject matter to sketch out a portrait of his life; even when Gardère is

commenting on topics as weighty as colonialism and racism, the sense of an individual in the studio, with a singular history and a daily routine, lingers. In "Rowing to Giverny" (1999) and "Le Pont" (1995), views of Monet's famous garden in Giverny, France, are inspired by the artist's 1993 residency at the Fondation Claude Monet, but the landscapes are not pure Monet — a bit of Haiti is mixed in. The shimmering mud surrounding the painting in "Le Pont" makes this work — which hung for decades in Gardère's studio — about the realities and textures of place, nature as a life-sustaining entity, not an object to be tamed in the name of art.

In this way, Gardère's life is contained in each of his works. And through them, he invites his audience into a meaningful and personable dialogue, just as his daughter did in sharing the stories of her father's art.

Installation view of *Paul Gardère: Vantage Points* at the Stuyvesant-Fish House. Pictured above the fireplace: "The Bones of Apollo" (1998)

Paul Gardère: Vantage Points *continues at the Stuyvesant-Fish House (21 Stuyvesant Street, East Village, Manhattan) through June 6. The exhibition was presented courtesy of the Estate of Paul Gardère with coordination by Cooper Union School of Art Dean Adriana Farmiga and Assistant Dean Yuri Masny.*

ARTnews
January 14, 2025

ARTnews

As the Canon Expands, the Business of Artists' Estates Booms

BY MADDIE KLETT January 14, 2025 11:50am

Paul Gardère's work has begun entering museums, in part thanks to the work of Soft Network. Cooper Union is now mounting a survey of his work.
PHOTO JOÃO ENXUTO

When artist **Paul Gardère** died in 2011, his daughter, Cat Gardère, undertook her promise to steward his estate and legacy. Having worked as a studio manager and an exhibition coordinator, "I had a lot of familiarity working with artists, archives, and studios," she told *ARTnews*. She began the long process of fulfilling her commitment to her father, but there was one catch: the elder Gardère had not set up a trust.

First, she cataloged his assets to prepare the estate for probate—or an inventory and appraisal of artworks to secure ownership in court. Being the sole benefactor of her late parents' assets meant having some financial resources to begin this work, which involved hiring archivists and working 40 hours a week over 3 years to document inventory and create a digital archive. By 2022, with this digitization largely complete but dwindling funds, she realized there was far more to do in advocating for her father—namely, the work of getting his art into exhibitions and collections.

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On Instagram, Gardère saw that her high school classmate, Max Warsh, was posting about the work of his late aunt, the writer and textile artist **Rosemary Mayer**. Mayer had a posthumous retrospective at the Swiss Institute in New York in 2021, which traveled to three institutions in Europe. "I thought it was serendipitous that somebody in my network was also doing art estate work," Gardère said. It ended up being a blessing.

Warsh connected her to the Artist's Foundation & Estate Leaders' List (AFELL), a Google group started by Chelsea Spengemann, with Tracy Bartley, in 2019 for others in this situation to share resources. AFELL's more than 300 members range from individuals to operations like the Joan Mitchell Foundation and the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation. While much of its focus is devoted to helping steward the legacies of dead artists, some living artists, like Simone Leigh, have also used AFELL's resources with the hope of learning best practices for legacy planning.

AFELL is just one outfit that has emerged in the past decade to help artists and their descendants ensure a future for their art. And as under-recognized artists get more and more attention within galleries and museums, these entities are increasingly important, working behind the scenes to help mount projects that would otherwise have been impossible.

Take the case of Soft Network, a New York–based operation that is "part shared workspace and active storage space for multiple artists estates, and part space for exhibitions and programs," as Spengemann put it in a phone interview. Spengemann runs Soft Network with Warsh's sister, the art historian Marie Warsh, and together they have helped steer the estates of Mayer and Stan VanDerBeek. They call their labor "legacy work." This past September, they formerly launched AFELL as a part of their organization.

One such project was a Paul Gardère show held at Soft Network's exhibition space, located down the hall from the operation's offices in a SoHo building. In 2022, Cat Gardère was the inaugural participant in a burgeoning residency program run by Soft Network. "They said they would act as mentors and a support network," Gardère recalled. The organization also presented a solo booth of Gardère's work at the Independent art fair in September of that year.

Cat Gardère credits this exposure with helping secure exhibiting opportunities, including a museum presentation of that same two-person show with Didier Williams at the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University. She also said her father was included in "Surrealism and Us," a 2024 exhibition about of Surrealism in the Caribbean and the African diaspora that appeared the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, after Soft Network spotlighted his work. The curator of that exhibition, María Elena Ortiz, knew about his work but had never seen a piece in person until the Independent presentation. Without Spengemann and Warsh starting the conversation about his work, "I don't think that connection would have been made," Cat said. A solo survey of Gardère's is currently on view in New York at Cooper Union.

NJ Arts
December 17, 2024

NJArts.net

VISUAL ARTS

Top 15 NJ art shows of 2024

5. "Repossession: Didier William and Paul Gardère" at Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick

Didier William's "What We Will Make Together."

The Zimmerli is a big museum by Jersey standards, and it throws shows commensurate with its size. They are almost always worth a visit. But the best reason to visit the building on the Rutgers campus this year was tucked in the back gallery on the basement floor.

"Repossession" paired work by Mason Gross professor Didier William with that of the late Brooklyn-based painter Paul Gardère in a manner that enhanced the hypnotic power of both artists' visions. These two Haitian-American artists made their work at the smoldering connection between Caribbean and North American styles, and neither man was interested in downplaying contradictions or disguising the violence inherent in cultural collisions. William's human figures, made of thousands of eye-like marks in hot-colored acrylic, seemed to be charged (and perhaps tortured) by electrical current. Gardère, who laid paint on his canvases in thicknesses that suggested fertile soil, put symbols and signs from Haitian folk art in dialogue with forms associated with traditional European portraiture. A feeling of raised stakes and desperation radiated from each of the works in this small show — as if one artist was reaching out to the other in a gesture of comfort, communication and warning.

ARTnews
November 29, 2024

artnet

Haitian Art Is Coming Into the International Spotlight. It's Not the First Time

The nation's artists are winning high-profile show and Venice Biennale appearances—and their prices are rising.

by Brian Boucher • November 29, 2024

When Haiti makes headlines in the American press, the news is all too often tragic: catastrophic earthquakes in 2010 and 2021, the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, the recent takeover of swathes of the country by gangs.

While no art world developments could possibly ameliorate these crises, it is, at least, heartening to see that Haitian art has been gaining newfound attention throughout the U.S. and Europe, with museum spotlights, gallery shows, and rising market interest.

"What Haiti proves is art's amazing ability as a tool for survival," El-Saieh said. "Myrlande, for example, has made all her recent works, including the works that were in the Venice Biennale, through this political strife. Her career has oddly blossomed through this and it's been able to save her life and her family's life, because it gives them something to work towards." And yet, he pointed out, the artist was unable to get visas to see the Venice exhibition and the Fowler retrospective.

A Haitian artist was also the catalyst for a show that Wayne Northcross recently staged at New York's Canada gallery, where he is director of museum and institutional relations. The show dealt with African American contemporary art's links with religious and spiritual practices, looking at how works are invested with spiritual meaning. When he encountered the work of the Port-au-Prince–born, New York–based Paul Gardère (1944-2011), who painted symbols and figures from Haitian Vodou traditions, it all started to come together.

"Charismatic Goods" at Canada Gallery, with Paul Gardère, *Untitled* (1986), left, and Rubem Valentim, *Emblema 87* (1987), right.

The show, "Charismatic Goods," featured an intergenerational group of Black, Indigenous, and Latinx artists, including Patrisse Cullors (also known as a co-founder of Black Lives Matter) and Xaviera Simmons. In an untitled 1986 work, Gardère distilled images of three important Vodou cosmic figures: Damballah (snake), Grand Bois (bough), and Legba (curved staff). Other artists in the show traveled through Haiti, Northcross said in a phone interview.

Gardère is also the subject of a solo show at New York's Cooper Union, where he earned a BFA before going on to earn an MFA from Hunter College in the city. "Paul Gardère: Vantage Points," at the landmark Stuyvesant-Fish House, spans his work from the early 1970s to the late 2000s, with some focus on the legacies of colonialism.

For example, his work *Triplex Horizon* (1998), which prominently features the colors of the Haitian flag, puts a torn and collaged reproduction of Haitian artist Rigaud Benoit's work *Shipwreck* (1965) in dialogue with both Claude Monet's idyllic rendering of bourgeois leisure in his famed painting *Garden at Sainte-Adresse* (1867) and two photographs of the American coastline.

Paul Gardère, *Triplex Horizon* (1998). © The Estate of Paul Gardère.

ARTnews
September 10, 2022

ARTnews

The Best Booths at Independent 20th Century, From Surrealist Visions to Powerful Scenes Confronting Trauma

Paul Gardère at Soft Network

BY TESSA SOLOMON September 10, 2022

Paul Gardère, First Letters, 1987.
Photo : Courtesy of Soft Network and the Estate of Paul Gardère

Paul Gardère, a Haitian-born artist who spent most of his life in the United States, said in a 1999 interview that the diaspora experience was captured in his work by "a sense of not being in a specific space or time but rather in a cultural bubble flying in a high wind." His life story unfolds over a series of paintings, collages, and works on paper in a similar way. The subject slips between private moments, epochs in Haitian history, and first-hand accounts of the Harlem Renaissance. He developed an iconographic language anchored by the interplay between Kreyòl identity and the history of modernism, in the process investigating the colonial context of each. These are restless works by someone who dedicated themselves to a question—how to exist between worlds—that has no easy reconciliation.

The Art Newspaper
September 9, 2022

THE ART NEWSPAPER

At Independent 20th Century, artists who pushed material boundaries get their dues, belatedly

Paul Gardère, *Giverny Revisited*, 1997
Courtesy the artist's estate and Soft Network

New York gallery Soft Network, which specialises in bringing artists' estates to wider audiences, is showing paintings (from $40,000 to $55,000) and works on paper (priced at $12,000) by the late Haitian-American artist Paul Gardère (1944-2011). The presentation, organised in partnership with the artist's daughter Catherine Gardère, reflects the rich range of histories and practices that informed the artist's work, from Haitian Vodou traditions—themselves hybrids of African and Christian mythologies—to the Neo-Geo and Neo-Expressionist movements Gardère was exposed to in the Downtown New York art scene of the 1980s and 90s. The most visually striking, a trio of mixed-media works that incorporate paint, glitter, mud, metal, wood, clay and collage elements, convey the hybridity of Gardère's identity and artistic influences.

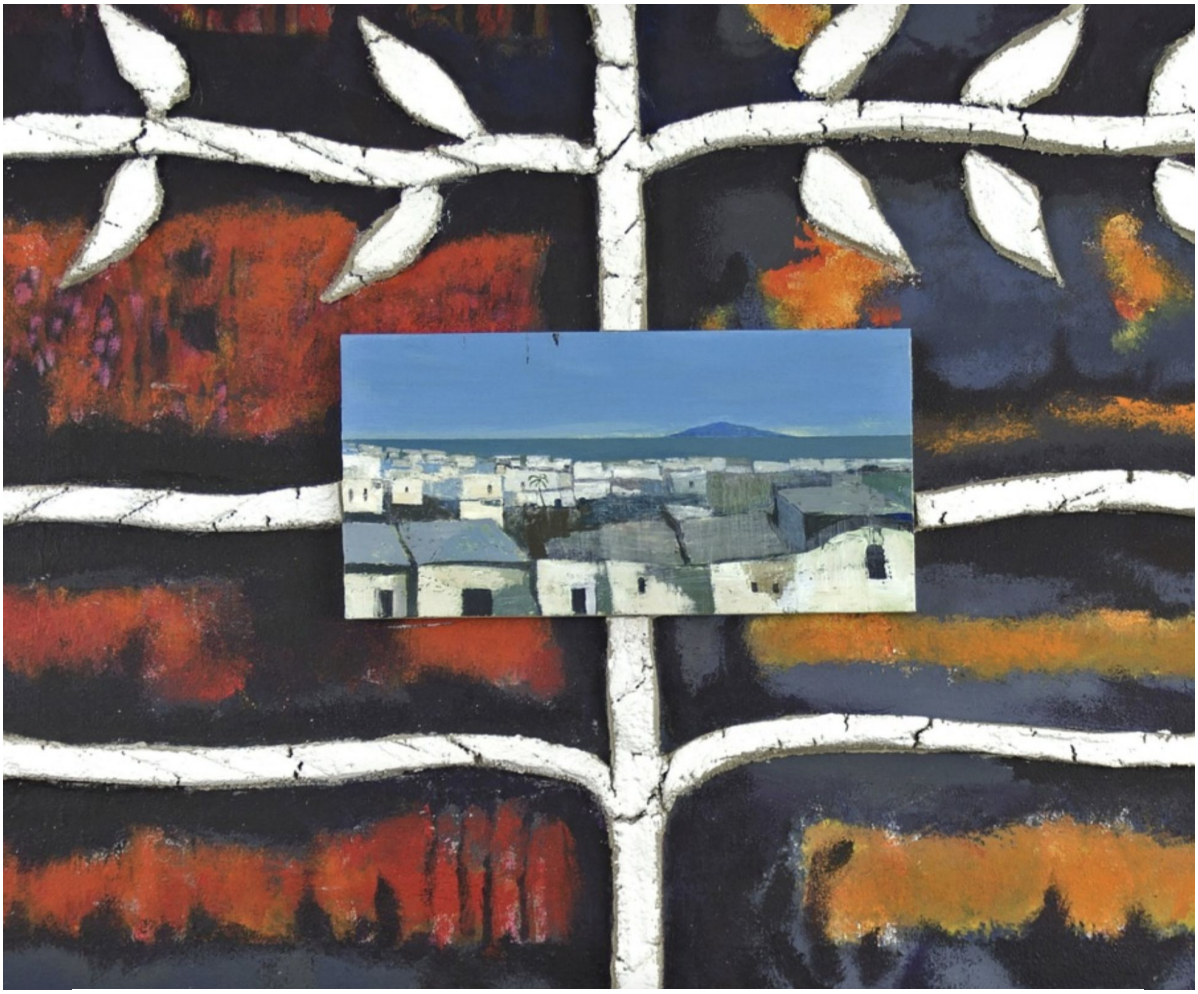
"These mixed-media works are all about dislocations and mashups," the artist's daughter says. "He was very interested in the forces that are dispersing people around the world. He talked about deracination as a good thing, as opposed to notions of purity."

Independent
August 2022

INDEPENDENT

PAUL GARDÈRE'S SYNCRETIC MODERNISM

by Will Fenstermaker
August 2022



Paul Gardère, *The Apple Tree*, 1994, acrylic, cement, plaster, glitter on canvas and wood, 35 × 47 1/2 × 4 1/4 in.
Courtesy of Soft Network and the Estate of Paul Gardère

Paul Claude Gardère was 14 when he first left Haiti. The son of a photographer and part of a prominent French-speaking Haitian family, Gardère emigrated to New York in 1959, two years after François "Papa Doc" Duvalier was elected president of the world's first free Black republic. A Noiriste, Duvalier viewed "mulattos" such as Gardère as embodiments of European influence, opposed to the interests of the Black majority; they were persecuted under his populist government and barred from universities. In New York, Gardère attended the Art Students League—where he studied under the influential Harlem Renaissance painter Charles Alston—and went on graduate from the Cooper Union and Hunter College. Painting presented a way for Gardère to reconcile the conditions of his exile. Displacement and diaspora are reflected in his work by "a sense of not being in a specific space or time but rather in a cultural bubble flying in a high wind", he told curator Alejandro Anreus in a 1999 interview.

Paul Gardère in his studio, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, ca. 1980. Photo: Marcia Gardère, © Estate of Paul Gardère

It wasn't until Gardère returned to Haiti in 1978 that he found his artistic raison d'être. Under Duvalier's despotic rule, a "chasm" had opened between traditional paintings of pastoral peasant life and the country's dire political reality. "There is a cut-off point between when that culture was real and when it became artificial," Gardère told the scholar Karen McCarthy Brown. He set out to challenge the picturesque, and his formative encounters with American social realists like Robert Gwathmey showed how he could "take elements of this whole florid culture and adapt them to the vocabulary of modernism". For six years in Port-au-Prince, living in the house his grandfather built, he sought "to either adapt myself to Haiti or adapt it to me".

Paul Gardère, *Untitled*, 1984, ink on paper, framed, 29 × 22 × 1 1/2 in.
Courtesy of Soft Network and the Estate of Paul Gardère

Haitian Kreyòl culture was ripe for such adaptation. During Spanish and French colonial rule of the island of Hispaniola, enslaved people integrated various religious beliefs into a new bricolage. The practice of Vodou grew out of a blend of customs imported from West and Central Africa and Roman Catholicism. Even after Haiti won independence in 1804, its syncretic culture was constantly being reconfigured. Duvalier used Vodou for his own political ends, fashioning his image as an "immaterial being" merging Jesus Christ and Bawon Samedi, the *lwa* or spirit of death. "Creolization may seem bizarre, ironic, eclectic, but it is not primitive," Gardère told Anreus. "It is selective and, in its own way, sophisticated. It requires a deep comprehension of the themes underlying the aesthetics of both cultures."

(L) Paul Gardère, *Untitled*, 1984, ink on paper, framed, 22 × 28 × 1 1/2 in. Courtesy of Soft Network and the Estate of Paul Gardère (R) Paul Gardère, *Untitled*, 1984, ink on paper, framed, 22 × 28 × 1 1/2 in. Courtesy of Soft Network and the Estate of Paul Gardère

Four ink-on-paper drawings from 1984, presented at Independent 20th Century by Soft Network in partnership with the Estate of Paul Gardère, reveal the artist's own syncretic methodology. Characterized by dense, runic mark-making, the images contain emblematic components of *vèvès* (Vodou symbols for the different *lwa*), notably the heart and the cross; lilies and palm trees; celestial bodies; skulls; and spirits floating across mountains or arranged in crests.

Madonna (Madame Duvalier), 1983, acrylic on masonite, 33 × 48 inches. Collection of Figge Museum, Davenport IA. Photo: © Estate of Paul Gardère

An early series of acrylic-on-masonite paintings is even more assured in its quotations. These works, supported by the influential Port-au-Prince art school and gallery Le Centre d'Art, were social-realist interpretations of Haiti's revolutionary history and spiritual traditions. *Madonna* (*Madame Duvalier*) (1983), which is now part of the Haitian art collection at the Figge Art Museum in Iowa, depicts a woman in red on a painted throne. She embodies both the Vodou mother spirit Ezili Dantò and the Virgin Mary, and holds a doll-like Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier (the son and presidential successor of "Papa Doc"), who resembles the Divine Child.

Gardère's later images became increasingly abstract and iconic. *First Letters* (1987) depicts astrological signs, the Latin alphabet, and a gridded heart—recalling the *vèvè* for the *lwa* of love Ezili Freda—arrayed as if part of a constellation. *A Single Stone* (1987) pairs a smooth black rock with an emblem of the benevolent snake-spirit Damballa. Spare and striking, these works evoke entire metaphysical systems pared down to their most essential elements.

Paul Gardère, *First Letters*, 1987, acrylic, plaster, cement, on canvas board and wood, 30 × 48 × 2 1/2 in. Courtesy of Soft Network and the Estate of Paul Gardère

The modernist techniques of collage and pastiche find their parallels in the Kreyòl processes of *métissage* (cultural mixing) and appropriation. In this interplay between Vodou imagery and Western painting, Gardère found an iconographic language that was capacious and beautiful enough to express the nuances and paradoxes of Kreyòl identity. Gardère's adaptive use of *vèvè* symbols moves beyond their immediate colonial and religious contexts to invoke a contemporary Haiti. In his cosmology, the *lwa* accompany the thousands of "boat people" who fled Port-au-Prince's corruption, poverty, and overpopulation. They speak with the victims and survivors of the *goudou goudou*, or earthquake, that devastated Port-au-Prince in 2010. They bear witness to the vicissitudes of dictatorship and translocate Caribbean wisdom to the "cultural bubbles" of the diaspora.

Paul Gardère, *A Single Stone*, 1987, acrylic, plaster, cement on canvas board with wood, 30 × 48 × 2 1/4 in. Courtesy of Soft Network and the Estate of Paul Gardère

Gardère left Haiti for the second time in 1984, amid growing tensions under the second Duvalier regime. In 1989, he became the first Haitian artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem, where he increasingly used earth in his paintings. Dried and cracked mud often frames anonymous composite portraits made in watercolor, such as *Conflict* (1990), now in the Studio Museum collection. He used rope to tie together disparate elements, an unequivocal symbol of bondage. For Gardère, "it was the soil itself that led me to examine the concepts of nature that inform Western art, and to search for an echo in Caribbean culture."

(L) Paul Gardère, *Exotic Garden*, 1995, acrylic, glitter, mud, photographs and mixed media on wood, 50 1/2 × 36 × 3 3/4 in. Courtesy of Soft Network and the Estate of Paul Gardère (R) Paul Gardère, *Desire*, 1996, acrylic, glitter, mud, tin and fabric on wood, 65 × 46 × 4 in. Courtesy of Soft Network and the Estate of Paul Gardère

Several years later, as an artist-in-residence at Claude Monet's gardens in Giverny, France, he found a way of folding this framework into his own paintings. The garden was itself a form of bricolage—a fantasy, a tableaux, "a resource to be painted", as Gardère put it. Monet's imported lilies, bamboo, and Japanese bridge reflected a European vision of order and dominion. "Gardening," Gardère went on to say, "is an apt metaphor for global colonialism", and he quoted Giverny explicitly in *Exotic Garden* (1995), *Desire* (1996), and *Giverny Revisited* (1997), among many other paintings. In these works, "the debris of 'superior' cultures are recast into a new vision".

(L) Paul Gardère, *Giverny Revisited*, 1997, acrylic, glitter, found objects and mixed media on wood, 48 × 52 × 4 in. Courtesy of Soft Network and the Estate of Paul Gardère (R) Paul Gardère, *The Big Book*, 1998, acrylic, mud, glitter, found objects and mixed media on wood, 60 × 44 × 4 in. Courtesy of Soft Network and the Estate of Paul Gardère

Views of the lily pond are juxtaposed with elements of *vèvès*, conquistadors, scenes from the slave trade, unspoiled Caribbean landscapes, colonial architecture, prostitutes, and pornography. Soil is mixed with glitter and sequins in reference to embroidered Vodou flags (*drapo*). The bric-a-brac compositions recall conceptualist collage techniques prevalent in the 1980s. The works are clearly confrontations; their elements can jar, refusing to cohere. But even as they reflect a dissonant relationship, they reveal how civilizational strife is embodied and transformed by the individual—how, according to Gardère, "colonialism is a powerful engine of culture making".

From 20th-century figures like Hector Hyppolite and Rigaud Benoit, who were championed by the Surrealist André Breton, to Gardère's contemporaries Edouard Duval-Carrié and Frantz Zéphirin, Haitian artists have long merged the island's magic and religion with global painting traditions as a way of articulating the country's postcolonial environment. Paul Gardère's confluence was unique; he found his inspiration in social realism, Impressionism, Cubism, and religious icons. From this vantage, the history that he paints extends beyond Haiti and its diaspora. It is also a vision of how even the ideologies and power mechanics that fuel colonialism can be dismantled and woven into something auspicious, something new.

The New Yorker
January 4, 2018

THE NEW YORKER

PAUL GARDÈRE

By The New Yorker

January 4, 2018

The Haitian-born, Brooklyn-based painter's final series is titled "Goudou Goudou," the vernacular term for the catastrophic earthquake that devastated Haiti in 2010. Gardère, who died in 2011, at the age of sixty-six, depicts the psychic and physical fractures of the island in its aftermath. In canvases dense with symbols of destruction and recovery, vivid figuration—often of regal, matriarchal characters—is offset by passages of cracked-mud relief. In one untitled work, a finely dressed woman rests, eyes closed, against a pickax around which a vine of purple flowers is winding, either oblivious to or dreaming about the long-legged bird with a man's face which is looking on. On a narrow panel running along the picture's bottom edge, two yellow backhoes dig a deep pit below a crimson sky—a reminder of the mythic proportions of the natural disaster that divided Haiti's recent history into a before and an after.*(Skoto; Through Jan. 20.)*

art on paper
May–June 2003

art on paper

The ten poems by Reagan Upshaw in *Upon a Time* draw affectionately from folklore, fairy tale, and myth, but they feature heroes and heroines off their game. We meet a greedy princess, a loveless saint, a demobilized and downcast soldier. Upshaw invokes supporting players seldom brought to mind—the devil's grandmother, for instance. And he offers advice that ranges from the proverbially succinct ("queens should never end their days as crones") to the shaggily irreducible (how a free-lance medieval jester scores a free meal and a laugh, both at the audience's expense—definitely a trick worth knowing). The artfully mixed messages and hybrid language of Upshaw's poetry are well matched with illustrations by Paul Gardère, a Haitian-born, New York–educated artist who is no stranger to visual Creole. Gardère has contributed vibrant collages of photography and drawing, which appear as tipped-in Iris prints. Small but saturated with color and incident, these collages are caught up in further embellishment, including meandering handwritten versions of Upshaw's poetry, the lines of text shaped, in several cases, into the contours of the featured characters: Mouths agape and eyes bright, they look ready to consume, proverbially, the verse that feeds them.

UPON A TIME

by Reagan Upshaw and Paul Gardère. Printed at 5+5 Gallery in Brooklyn by Raphael Fodde. New York: Reagan Upshaw, 2002. $1,200. Signed and numbered edition of 100.

The New York Times
November 13, 1998

The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

By Holland Cotter
Nov. 13, 1998

'Kongo Criollo'

Taller Boricua Gallery

Julia de Burgos Latino Cultural Center

1680 Lexington Avenue, at 106th Street, East Harlem

Through Nov. 21

Organized to coincide with the spectacular ''Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou'' exhibition at the American Museum of Natural History, this show touches on references to African-derived Caribbean religions in contemporary nonreligious work.

A drawing by the Havana-based artist Belkis Ayon, for example, illustrates a scene from Afro-Cuban myth. Cosmograms appear in mixed media pieces by both Terry Boddie and Barbaro M. Ruiz. And voodoo symbols play a role in the paintings of Paul Claude Gardere.

Stephanie Dinkins effectively updates the Kongo nkisi or ''power figure'' in the form of a small video screen sandwiched between thick boards bristling with nails. Renee Stout evokes African cultures more obliquely in meticulous assemblages that bring African-American history and autobiography together.

The show also includes a section of New World doll figures organized by Alison Laird Craig; those by Grace Williams are particularly elaborate. In some cases, as in a floor cosmogram by Chris Burns, the results feel uncomfortably exoticizing, but on the whole, a distinction between reference and religious function is carefully sustained.

The show concludes with a striking wall painting by the Haitian artist Edouard Duval-Carrie and is punctuated throughout with Phyllis Galembo's wonderful photographs of altars and temples in Haiti. (Both artists play a role in the ''Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou'' exhibition.) Yasmin Ramirez, curator at Taller Boricua, has tackled an important and pertinent subject here -- African-derived religious objects can be found in botanicas in the surrounding East Harlem neighborhood -- and made a lively thing of it. HOLLAND COTTER

The New York Times
April 8, 1995

The New York Times

Haitian Artists' Colony Flourishes in Queens

By Garry Pierre-Pierre
April 8, 1995

Paul Gardere, who lives in Cobble Hill in Brooklyn, is one of the few Haitian artists here who has gained broader attention. The 50-year-old Mr. Gardere, who has studied at Cooper Union and Hunter College, moved to New York in 1959. In 1978, he returned to Haiti for a while and gained a loyal following.

"It's like here they don't see the problem the way it's presented," he said of art collectors in this country. "They see the whole primitive thing as a commercial gimmick. In the milieu that collects serious art, they don't buy Haitian art."

Last year, Mr. Gardere spent four months in France on a Lila Wallace International Arts Foundation grant and painted Monet's garden in Giverny, France. He left Giverny after creating 20 pieces, adding Asian water lilies and African flowers. Tiny multi-color plastic pieces are sprinkled inside a wooden frame.

"I was trying to say that in this garden, the most sacred of European culture, Africa is here too."

Wendy S. Hoff, the director of Perspective Fine Arts on the Upper East Side, who has two of Mr. Gardere's pieces, said: "Paul being Haitian informs his art. When I talk about his art, I talk about his being Haitian. That cultural difference is part and parcel of the work, the conflict he is trying to put forward."

Mr. Gardere's relative success, however, is rare. Most of the Haitian artists who have moved to New York City do not find the art world here receptive.

The New York Times
January 25, 1991

The New York Times

Review/Art; Spirituality, Magic and Identity of 3 Harlem Museum Artists

By Michael Brenson

Jan. 25, 1991

"From the Studio: Artists in Residence, 1989-90" is a good example of why the Studio Museum in Harlem is so consistently a pleasure to visit. The emerging artists in this handsome show -- Raul Acero, Paul Gardere and Jerome B. Meadows -- are exceptionally gifted. Their work is independent. It is also refined (even when, in Mr. Gardere's case, it is raw), intense, essentially figurative, hand-crafted and wide ranging in its artistic and cultural references.

All three artists use a variety of materials. Even when their work has the airy fluidity of a dream, it has multiple parts and it suggests a view that human beings are not one essence but a shifting composite of different and often conflicting cultures, experiences and feelings. All the artists, including Mr. Gardere, whose work has a strong political dimension, believe in spirituality and magic.

Each artist is concerned with identity. In Mr. Meadows's wood and stone sculptures, each earthbound, serpentine male force and each sinuous and agile female force seems capable of wildly diverse reactions. Mr. Acero builds fragile yet strangely inviolable stick figures of earth and wood, and he uses ceramic techniques from different cultures (including Roman and Arab) and times (from antiquity to the present). In his mixed-media works, some of them including balls of mud that suggest black globes, black bombs, or

clumps of uprooted black earth, Mr. Gardere appears to be defiantly sure of who he is and yet at the same time to be constantly asking, who am I really?

Mr. Gardere is 36 years old. He was born in Haiti and moved to the United States at the age of 14. His immediate, highly physical mixed-media works, many of them incorporating black mud and thick rope winding in and around black faces, raise the question of how to live with pride and purpose in a condition of permanent exile and alienation.

The exile in Mr. Gardere's works may be political (there are references to Haiti's troubled recent history). It may also be artistic (if Cubist collages appropriated African art and I make collages, he seems to be saying, then does that mean I see African art through Cubist eyes?).

And it may be personal. In one work, the mud figure of a black man is surrounded by easy and sometimes witty biographical drawings that the artist did years ago and that have little relation in style and tone to his art now. In another work, Mr. Gardere surrounds the mud figure of a black man with drawings by his son, whose cultural heroes -- including Batman and Superman -- are clearly not the heroes of his childhood in Haiti.

Just about everything in Mr. Gardere's work has an edge. For example, the mud heads and figures can be passive (shadowy, anonymous and sullen), but they are also energetically modeled, as solid as baked earth, and bristling. Many of the works, among them "Tempest in the Mind" (with mud framing a watercolor portrait of a young man), include rope, which suggests imprisonment and lynching; but the thick sisal rope Mr. Gardere uses comes from Haiti, where rope is identified with bonding and even with religious revelation. Nature and the spiritual traditions of his native country hold Mr. Gardere's work together.

The New York Times
July 17, 1988

The New York Times

ART; In Newark, Works Derived From the African Experience

By William Zimmer
July 17, 1988

LEAD: THE large display space at Aljira, a not-for-profit contemporary arts center here, seems to swell gracefully to accommodate each exhibition. This is what one experiences with the fourth part of its series, ''Art From the African Diaspora,'' which is currently on view. Wry or emblematic paintings at the front of the space yield to monumental sculptures.

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The works reflect what Carl Hazlewood, the curator, calls the African personality or experience, but this reflection may be subtle. The artists are all working in America, in the mainstream more or less; in the first exhibition of the series the artists were from Nigeria and, in succeeding displays, the works drifted, but did so creatively, from the African source.

A form like an alluring burning bush serves as a metaphor for South Africa in Nanette Carter's abstract vocabulary, while Vincent Smith and Paul Gardere build up relief elements and their painting seems hieratic. Mr. Smith utilizes an especially profound brown color, while Mr. Gardere recasts Haitian beliefs. In ''Winter'' the large built-up snake is Da or Dan, the good serpent of the skies, who has both male and female aspects.

The New York Times
February 15, 1987

The New York Times

ART; NEWARK: 'AFRO-DISPORA' SHOW, 'WITH AND WITHOUT ACCLAIM'

By William Zimmer
Feb. 15, 1987

LEAD: ALJIRA ARTS is a large and airy loft space here dedicated to showing the works of emerging visual and performing New Jersey artists.This month, 17 visual artists have been brought together under the title ''With and Without Acclaim'' as part of Black History Month. They form a black and Hispanic grouping from the United States, and some have Caribbean or South

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Paul Gardere, a Haitian, works at his acrylic paint so that it resembles brown clay about a half-inch thick, and he gouges figures and symbols on this surface or paints elements on top of it. His ''Broken Kingdom'' is a diptych; the brown acrylic intriguingly shares the canvas with more vividly colored elements.

Reminiscent of Mr. Gardere's work is the painting ''Elmina Slave Castle,'' by Vincent Smith. Here, actual sand is used, as well as oil and rope, making for a gritty filigree motif.