



**Director/Writer/Producer: Michelle Mohabeer (Canada/Tobago, 2008, 50 MINS)**

**BLU IN YOU** is a poetic-essayist rumination mediated through the lens of a female observer, who watches the staged conversations between a writer (Nalo Hopkinson) and a visual arts curator (Andrea Fatona). The aesthetics and conversations in *Blu In You* employs a visual/aural poetics to politically challenge early ethnographic tropes of the colonist gaze and spectacularization; to engage a cultural history of the black female body, subjectivity and sexuality marked by violence, but also celebrated in art and culture. The conversations bridge historical and contemporary art and cultural figures such as the "Hottentot Venus," Jeanne Duval, and cultural icons Josephine Baker and Dorothy Dandridge.

EVOCATION c. 2006 (featured in **BLU IN YOU**) Michelle Mohabeer

Taken from your home with the lure of false promises and the hope of fame and fortune, your genital apron, buttocks and skin the commodity that allowed you to be sold twice over.

Offered up as a primitive spectacle and freak for all of white Europe to jeer, scrutinize, guffaw, and even pity. Their pity was worse of all. You, caged like an animal, head adorned with the plumage of a peacock. Skin buffed and polished -- all the more to exhibit you alongside the other exotic animal specimen.

You were no animal, and neither did they liked being caged and prodded.

You were a young woman violated time over with their gazes and slurs, your body scarred with their bigotry and fascination, with their lust and repulsion.

No animal endured this; it was you my sister,

Naked and often cold from the damp climate, a respiratory problem was not far behind --But dying was not your salvation.

The worse was yet to come --public dissection in life and again in death --plucking your genitalia and brain from your person --the prize of conquest.

Your brain, pickled in a jar stood as the measure of inferiority  
consigned for study and research, displayed for all posterity in their  
curio-museums of hate and disrepute.

Commodified, Fetishized –you became their spectacular vision of the  
primitive other, conferring upon them the safety and assurance of  
their normality and pedigree.

There you lay dismembered and dislocated, did your brain still  
Remember and note these atrocities?

Did it shudder now, bare and exposed in the fluids of your despair,  
as you watched your own genitalia nearby.

What a dear price you paid my sister, a body violated by history and  
science --plucked and pillaged, looted of all dignity and humanity.

Your sexuality and sex did you no favour!

***EVOCATION*** c. Michelle Mohabeer (2006)

*COCONUT /CANE & CUTLASS* (Director/Writer/Producer: Michelle Mohabeer, Guyana/Canada, 32 mins (1994))



(Film still of Actors from *Coconut/Cane & Cutlass*: S. Lewis, and S. Dhillon, courtesy of filmmaker)

**Coconut/Cane & Cutlass** weaves a rich lyrical tapestry of imagery shot on location in Guyana melded with dramatic scenes shot in Toronto to communicate a complex, lyrical and touching rumination on exile and displacement. Narrated from the point of view of a mixed race Indo-Caribbean lesbian, "the exile" (and filmmaker) who immigrated to Canada as a young girl, this beautiful film explores personal experiences of identity as they relate to colonial and sexual oppression.

## The Return HOME

(c. Michelle Mohabeer, 1993) Voice-over poem from **Coconut/Cane & Cutlass**)

I have felt your absence for the past twenty years. Parts of you have dissolved in my memory but yet I long for some connection with you, intangible as that may seem.

I want to still claim you as home but how can I when I no longer feel your embrace for all that I am. Living away from here for so long has dislocated my psyche into fragmentary romantic longings for that space where memory and reality blur ....

I am a foreigner of sorts in what used to be my homeland  
We have both changed you and I, you are at once a welcome respite in  
some of the familiar memories you evoke.

The scent of early morning, the succulent fruit and brilliant hues of the bougenvillas, lilies and orchids mesmerize my senses and fill me with a deep awe of the simplicity of what I once over looked.

Tracing the journeys of my ancestors who came before, from there to here, India to Guyana and the Caribbean, like nomads carving out a space and time in a hostile landscape, a landscape marred by the legacies of colonial brutality and haunted by the spirits of the martyred and enslaved ones, who resisted the constant barrage to their psyche, mind and physical bodies.

