

# Tribute to

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# EDNA MANLEY

On Friday, a tribute to the late Edna Manley was held at St. Andrew High School for Girls, Kingston, in recognition of one of Jamaica's great artists and women. Librarian, Nadine Marriott, explained that the tribute was "part of a programme to enhance the student's knowledge and appreciation of the work of leading artists in Jamaica, and to arrive at greater interaction."

This was being done through talks, discussion and display of selection of works that highlight the artists' achievements and contribution to development.

The tribute was attended by both students and interested friends of the school as well as friends of Edna Manley. The focus of the display was a large piece of sculpture made from mahogany, entitled 'Sawyers' (1938) of which the school is the proud owner. Like this one, the late Mrs. Manley's figures are often distinguished by the smoothness and fluidity of edges and the chiselled effect of the surface.

Her works are done in a range of media including watercolour eg. 'Moses' and a print called 'Worship' — her last completed work (1986) which features the faces of two 'religious sisters'. There was also 'Horse of the Morning' (1943) with emphasis on the head and an elegantly poised limb.

Other samples of her works included a selection of miniature photographs from 1933-38 and a set from the '40s, and full-sized ones of e.g. the classic 'Negro Aroused' — a head of a Jamaican intensely absorbed in the events

surrounding him'; others draw on Jamaican religion or the human figure.

The readings in tribute to Edna Manley featured Easton Lee, Fae Ellington, Rachel Manley and Vera Moore. Lee provided snippets of information about Edna Manley, who was a close friend and colleague of his.

Rachel Manley, editor of The Diaries of Edna Manley read from the work explaining that it was people that inspired her (Edna) and she pondered often on religion. The discussion revealed the importance of her contribution to the arts in Jamaica.

She had a passion that was a "nurturing one — always in support of the artist." She had an "undying commitment to the artist," and was also concerned about art education for the youth.

Poems read reflected the times during which she lived and worked. Broadcaster, Fae Ellington, read a poem on Jamaican fishermen by Philip Sherlock; Vera Moore contributed 'Our Times' by George Campbell, present in the audience and close to Mrs. Manley during her life.

With very lively accounts that brought her personality to life, and great humour to the proceedings, Lee spoke of Edna Manley as a human being with a great sense of humour, her passions being... family, artists, dogs, children, horses, stew peas and Norman.

Readings included 'My Country Grows' by H.D. Carberry and Fae Ellington, and 'We Tear Our Leaders Down' by Carl Campbell. There was

also audience participation in the discussion of her works.

Some of the responses of those who attended were:

"I've enjoyed it very much — there are so many aspects of her life that I didn't know of";

"Very innovative idea for a school library";

"She was a magnificent person... her spiritual insight ... grappling with faith ... when science gets in the way of faith to prevent you from believing";

(First form student): "She was a nice lady... unusual";

(Second student): "I could identify with her, feel what she was like";

(Both): "...like you knew her personally"

Edna Manley was born on the 28th or 29th of February (there is some uncertainty over which date). In any case, the forward to the Diaries of Edna Manley by grand daughter Rachel says that she was born on leap year day, 1990. She studied art in London and married her first cousin, Norman Manley (National Hero). After graduating from University they 'returned' home to Jamaica.

Edna found a place for herself in the development of Jamaica's art during this era. A visionary artist with a faith and belief in Jamaica, she was part of the inspiration behind the founding of the National Art Gallery. A large collection of her works can be found there. Others are housed in art galleries and museums in Britain, Italy and New York.