On Aug. 6, 2012, Jamaica celebrates its 50th anniversary of independence. As a way to commemorate this anniversary and bring awareness to Jamaica’s art and culture, The Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum is currently hosting an exhibition entirely put together by the students of the Graduate Certificate of the Museum Studies program as part of their annual event.

They started this event last year to give the students hands-on experience with the field and to provide them with a wider understanding of what it takes to curate an art exhibition. They plan on focusing on a different cultural group every year. This year, Jamaica is the chosen group. The exhibition has been up and running since April 25 and will continue until Sept. 16, thus including the date of the independence anniversary.

The exhibit, titled, “Jamaican Intuitive Art,” is made up of a collection of artwork donated by a group of self taught artists, through which they depict what the nation is about, other than what it’s popularly known for. Those artists have not had any sort of academic training, so they focus mostly on the content of their work. Not having any rules to follow, the artists have the freedom to use the canvas how they wish.

They are known as “Intuitives,” and through their artistic careers they have developed their own styles to tell their stories, what they see around them and what they feel within. Their work refers back to ancient African traditions as they work at a spiritual level, and most are results of intense personal visions.

Attendees get to contemplate these painted and sculpted stories about Jamaica’s history, people, culture and what the nation is based on. The artwork is arranged to represent the colors of Jamaica’s flag: black for strength, green for resources and gold for wealth.

This exhibition is not only a great way for viewers to learn about Jamaica, but it also helps the students who organized it. “They learn the complexity of teamwork and the responsibility it takes to put together an art show,” said Annette B. Fromm, program coordinator.

She went on to emphasize that they didn’t just throw a couple of artworks together; they had to carefully prepare everything by going through multiple steps, starting from the basics and researching the backgrounds of the different artists, learning about the art styles involved, putting together a catalog, a family guide and a video about one of the donors.

This year was also special because they got to work closely with the collector, Wayne Cox, and his wife, Myrene Cox. “This is a rare opportunity, but it is what a university museum should be about,” said
Mrs. Cox.

Having such an event is very valuable to the students, the museum and the attendees. “It is an opportunity for our Museum Studies students to apply what they learn,” said Carol Damian, director of the Frost Art Museum.

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