



APT LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN CHAPTER

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BIOGRAPHY



Ms. Germaine Joseph Bsc Arch

Germaine Joseph is the Principal Director of Bâtie Ste. Lucie an architectural firm specializing in the conservation of built heritage and holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Architecture with over twenty years of architectural experience. Seven years of her 20 years of experience is in the conservation and preservation of Cultural Heritage which she pursued with the Saint Lucia National Trust.

Specializing in Built Heritage developing a register of 250 historic buildings island wide for listing and supporting draft legislation for the preservation and conservation of these historic buildings. Recently certified in Museum Conservation Skills and Values Heritage Management at the University of the West Indies in conjunction with the OAS. Her current research interests include Cultural Heritage Management, Vernacular Architecture, and the restoration of Built Heritage.

Ms. Joseph led the reconstruction of Walcott House Urban Regeneration Project with the first Phase, the Walcott House Museum opening its doors for the first time, an historic moment for Saint Lucia. Certified in Museum Conservation Skills and Values Based Heritage Management at the University of the West Indies (UWI) in conjunction with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OAS) Germaine also took on the curatorial role at Walcott House Museum and was awarded a 2019 fellowship with the Museums Association of the Caribbean for her lead in the reconstruction of Walcott House. Ms. Joseph is currently a Vice President of the APTI Latin America and Caribbean Chapter and also an APTI 2023 Getty Scholar Awardee.

Vernacular Architecture in Saint Lucia



Figure 1: Communal tradition of sawing timber to build wooden structures.

Vernacular architecture is a vital element of the Caribbean's heritage and similar attributes can be found in numerous historic towns regionally. In recent years Saint Lucia's, vernacular architecture faces the risk of extinction due to neglect, underuse, and decay, with climate change further exacerbating these challenges. Little has been done to address disaster risk management and protect built heritage.

Saint Lucia has a complex history that reflects the convergence of various civilizations in the Caribbean. According to Dr. Didicus Jules "the Caribbean has been at the confluence of human civilization", resulting in a unique cultural and architectural landscape in Saint Lucia. While the European narrative portrays Saint Lucia as seven times British and seven times French, its colonization was more syncretic, merging traditions from Amerindians, Africans, British, and French. Dr. Patricia Green argues that this syncretism led to cultural exchanges and adaptations among the indigenous people who encountered people from the "New World".

In the wake of emancipation and the industrial age, the "Ti kay" underwent rapid evolution. Following the 1834 emancipation declaration in the English Caribbean, "la cas" began to incorporate ornate decorative timber cut-work motifs known as 'fretwork' (Figure 3) on various parts of the building. These motifs, originated from African influences, are still present in vernacular buildings in Saint Lucia today.

Vernacular buildings featured a portico or covered balcony lobby before the main entrance, sometimes enclosed with jalousie windows. Elaborate fretwork decorations or gingerbread adorned the facade of these vernacular buildings (Figure 2). Dr. Patricia Green suggests that these decorations served both as climatic elements, providing ventilation and mitigating hurricane forces. The addition of finials at the roof's highest point served as decorative elements in Saint Lucia's vernacular architecture. In other places like Jamaica, the finials had spiritual significance, warding off evil spirits. In addition to being decorative, Fretwork was also functional, as it scattered the sonar of bats to prevent them from living in the buildings' eaves.

A study by Mr. Bruce Corley on the Walcott family residence in Castries highlights the syncretic nature and typology process of the building in Saint Lucia. The building's hybrid construction, combining post and beam layout and joinery with conventional light frame construction, is unusual and embodies several vernacular influences from different periods in St. Lucia's development (Figure 6).

A later addition to the Walcott Residence incorporated wooden trusses marked with Roman numerals, a practice from Roman and medieval architecture (Figure 6). Local craftsmen confirmed that prefabricated components like these trusses were transported by boat from neighbouring coastal communities.



Figure 2: Material & Tradition- Fretwork, balconies.



Figure 3: Vernacular built from breadfruit boards.



Figure 4: unique T-Truss in roof space hold the walls and roof together.



Figure 5: Fretwork & dowels forming a delicate ecosystem.



Figure 6: Trusses numbered with carved roman numerals.



Craftsmen in Saint Lucia would venture into the forest, carrying lengths of tree trunks on their shoulders, which were then sawed by hand into twelve-inch timber boards and left to dry. This activity was carried out during a community-centered ritual (Figure 1). The timber planks used in vernacular architecture hold historic significance and contribute to the authenticity of the "ti kay." Recently the adaptive reuse of the "ti kay" acts as a spin off to preserve Saint Lucia's Vernacular Architecture. These models focus on reconstructing vernacular architecture while educating visitors and exploring the economic benefits and management of historic sites (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Adapted- 250-year-old plantation house to gift shop



• Saint Lucia