

Screens, Greens and Washing Machines

by Joanna Lewis

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The many facets of artist, landscape designer, and writer Margaret Barwick are captured at the National Gallery's latest exhibition, *Screens, Greens and Washing Machines*.

On show at the gallery's Harbour Place location on South Church Street, George Town, the exhibition aims to showcase a diverse selection of Mrs. Barwick's work.

"Essentially the exhibition is a distillation of my work," the New Zealand-born artist said.

Work on display captures the various vehicles of artistic expression in Mrs. Barwick's oeuvre, from original landscape designs, murals, paintings and stamps.

The exhibition space is decorated with birch trees, a nod to Barwick's career as a landscape designer and her passion for gardening and tropical plants.

Much of the work the artist describes as painted in an extremely detailed "super-real style." Others are airted with a much freer style.

Artwork spans from the early 1960s to the present day, including the latest piece, a landscape design

quail Bypass.

While many of the works showcase stunning landscapes and tropical plants, many offer social commentary. Paintings *French Embassy*, circa 1976, *High Tension Pylons*, and *Heaven on Earth*, comment on the social and economic divide the artist witnessed while living in Malawi in the late 1960s early 70s, highlighting the unrest caused by the authoritarian regime of Malawi dictator Dr. Kamuzu Hastings Banda.

"While in Africa I felt a strong passion to paint social comment," the artist said. "In Cayman I've never felt driven to. There's not that social/economic divide."

Other artworks poignantly reflect on Cayman's development. The landscape *Daybreak in South Sound*, circa 1987, shows casuarinas trees sweeping along the breadth of South Sound coast, now a heavily developed area.

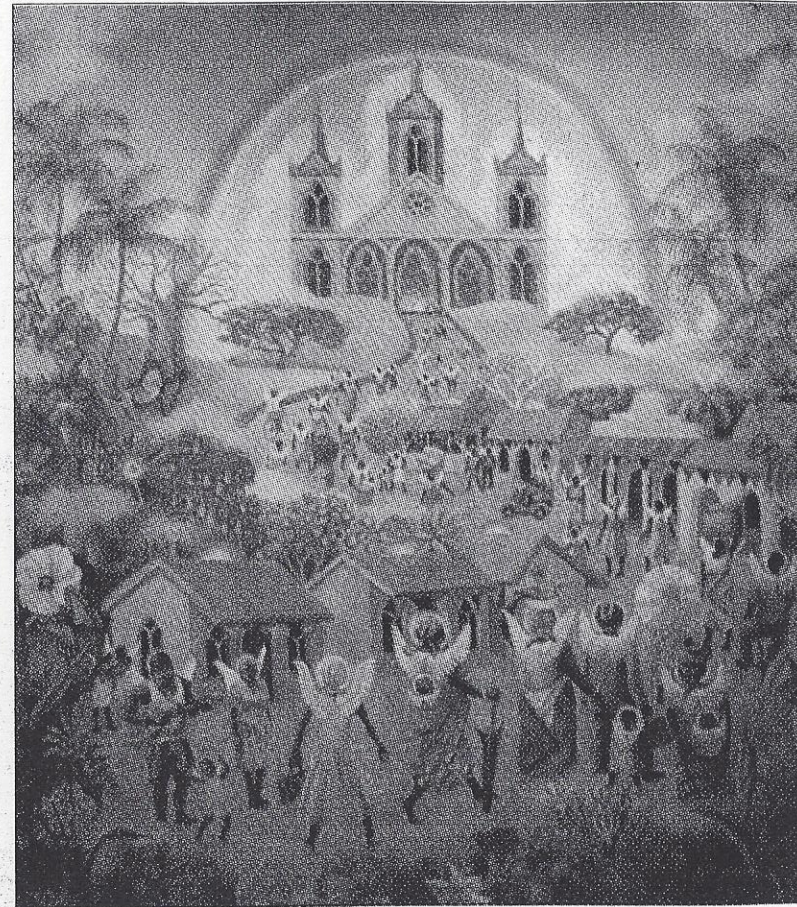
Barwick graduated in 1949 from Wellington Teacher's Training College as a primary school teacher specializing in teaching art. Her fascinating life, and career, has seen her live in the Solomon Islands, Malawi and the British Virgin Islands, where her husband,



Artist, landscape designer and writer, Margaret Barwick.

Photos: Joanna Lewis

Her career has seen her design the first set of definitive stamps for the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in 1963, re-establish a failed government primary school in the British Solomon Islands in the late 1950s, help set up and serve as president for the Visual Arts Society in



Heaven on Earth, 2007, reproduced from missing original, 1976. Oil on canvas.

Elizabeth Park in the British Virgin Islands as well as Cayman's Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Gardens and nature trails.

Mrs. Barwick has exhibited her work in Malawi, London, Miami, New Zealand, Barbados, France and Cayman.

lived for much of the 1970s and 80s, and France. She is currently working on a new book, *Climbing Plants of the World*, and her memoirs.

An extensive catalogue is available for visitors to the exhibition, featuring a timeline of Mrs. Barwick's career, biographical information with quotes

of featured artworks on display. All artwork is accompanied with a brief synopsis played alongside.

Curated by David Bridgman and Natalie Coleman, the exhibition runs through 26 March.

The National Gallery is open to the public, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Sat