Suriname: Cultural Diversity

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Introduction

- Suriname is located on the North East coast of South America. The name is being said to be derived from an Amer-Indian tribe named “Surinen” living along the river named Suriname River. It was discovered by Columbus.
- The capital is Paramaribo.

Brief Important of the Diaspora’s out of which the Arts and Cultural Heritage of Suriname for a large part has emerged
- Suriname as a Profit Center of Dutch Colonists
- Slaves from Africa (abolishment 1 July 1863)
- Chinese Indent Labourers (1873)
- Indian Indent labourers
- Indonesian/Javanese Indent labourers
Art, Culture, Politics and Social Life in general express all the typical features of the peoples and the extremely beautiful natural environment of Suriname. Nature as well as politics and social life are the key inspirators for arts, culture and cultural products.
In the field of literature, poetry is probably more prominent than prose. The multilingual society of Suriname has brought forth many poetic artists. Sometimes they use Sranan Tongo, or very often one of the languages of the ethnic group they belong to.

One of the Suriname se poets also well known throughout the Caribbean, is the late Dobru, whose real name was Robin Ravales. Dobru’s best known poem, ‘wan bon’ (translated ‘one tree’), symbolizes the many different people of Suriname in one united nation.
• Some other famous authors from Suriname are Shrinivasi, Bea Vianen, Trefossa, Johanna Schouten – Elsenhout, Cynthia Macleod, John de Bye, Gerrit Barron, Ismene Krishnadath and Clark Accord.

• Cynthia Macleod and John de Bye are well known for their fascinating historical novels. Gerrit Barron and Ismene Krishnadath are known for their literature for young Caribbean people, while Clark Accord is very popular in the Netherlands, where he lived.
Cynthia Mc Leod

The Cost of Sugar

wanna bonn
someni wiwiri
wanna bonn

wanna liba
someni kriki
ala e go na wanna see

wanna ede
someni prakseri
prakseri pe wanna bun mus’ de

wanna Gado
someni fasi fu anbegi
ma wanna Papa

wanna Sranan
someni wiwiri
someni skin
someni tongo
wanna pipel

one tree
so many leaves
one tree

one river
so many creeks
all going to one sea

one head
so many thoughts
thoughts among which one
good one must be

one God
so many ways of
worshipping
but one Father

one Suriname
so many hair types
so many skin colors
so many tongues

one people

Robin Raveles ‘Dobru’
• There are so many forms of craft art in Suriname, that it is nearly impossible to name all the different techniques in which Suriname craft workers excell.

• Woodcraft products are typical for the Maroon Communities. Articles like wooden hair combs, chairs, canoes, paddles, doors and windows and all kind of other household and community objects, decorated with beautiful symbols, are made by this group.
CRAFT

• The Amerindians, the original indigenous tribes, also in the interior of Suriname, use other materials and techniques than the Maroons. The Amer-Indian tribe, named the Cariben, make pottery from for instance ‘alenyo – clay’. The trio Indians, another Indian tribe in Suriname, do imaginative work with beads and seeds.
• Basketry is done by Amerindians as well as by Javanese artisans.
The indigenous ancestors did not only make pottery; they also made miniature figures that represented people or animals, their manner of creative expression. Anthropologists were able to learn a lot about the culture and manner of life of these early civilizations as a result of found earthenware.
The introduction of metal pots and plastic buckets has led to pottery-making becoming less important. Nowadays *prapis* are made in order to be sold as souvenirs or works of art. Meanwhile the old people are the only ones who still know all about the old craft. There's always a risk of failure in the process of making pottery; therefore the indigenous people believe that a woman who is menstruating must not be allowed to take part in the production of pottery.
Calabashes are sometimes colored with green, red, brown, blue or white enamel paint. The motifs are carved with negative spaces around them and little white dots are used as the finishing touch.
Crafters are appreciative of the fibrous husk known as ‘coir’, cushioning the inner nut, and of the hard shell. The coir fiber is elastic enough to twist into flower baskets, grow poles and to weave into doormats. The shell of the coconut is carved into various objects, ranging from cups to buttons and trendy jewelry.
The leaves of the ‘tree of life’ can be used to make traditional hats, a brilliant system of turning the central stem round and then folding the strands in. The bright-green, all natural hat is cool and perfectly comfortable and can last up to twenty years! However, most locals wear imported hats and sell their craft to visitors.
The Surinamese population of the twenty-first century has roots originating from practically all over the world. As a result influences can be found in the visual arts. Sometimes this is rather obvious: Indian patterns in the work of an artist from West Indian descent or batik techniques applied by an artist with Javanese (Indonesian) origins. Often however, there are surprising cross-cultural manifestations: Kit-Ling Tjon Pian Gi, with Chinese roots, who uses the motifs from the Maroons and the Indigenous Peoples, the Afro-Surinamese artist Rinaldo Klas whose sculptures show clear similarities with Chinese characters.
the developments in the area of visual art in Suriname have taken off at tremendous speed in the past decade. The industry is active and growing. Workshops, exhibitions, publications: all types of initiatives contribute to a vivid totality. The past few years have seen an increase in exhibition facilities. Several galleries regularly organize selling exhibitions or art displays in which (recent) work from an artist is shown.
VISUAL ARTS

• The National Art Fair is a yearly recurring event where a great number of local artists put their work on display for an ever increasing public. This event has been organized every year for 42 years now, since 1965.

• One of the most nationwide and international famous visual artists of Suriname is Erwin de Vries. De Vries has been creating high quality works of art for almost sixty years and began his career in 1949. He was awarded the Damsko Millenium Award for Expressive Arts in 1999, in 2000 the Caribbean Arts and Culture Award for Outstanding Contribution and in 2005 the ‘Grootmeester van de Ere-Orde’.
In Suriname we have different forms of theatre. There still is the age – old theatre form from ancient India, or the traditional performances from the rice fields of Java, Indonesia, which can last a whole day.

We also have modern day theatrical adaption's of oral history, which is firmly rooted in the Maroon culture. We also do have theatre with a highbrow parody of the bureaucracy in the government for the more intellectual audience or just the popular comedy of the laugh – or – i’ll – shoot form.
Creole Theatre: Creole Folk Theatre; In addition, you had Creole stage and Cabaret of Kruisland, Braam, de la Fuente and internationally renowned stage directors, such as Henk Tjon (†) and Thea Doelwijt with their “Do Theatre”. These entertained a larger public namely the middle class across all ethnic groups.
• Unique in the Caribbean are the Javanese dances with the wooden horses - the ‘dyaran kepan’ - as well as the Indonesian martial arts performances, ‘pencak silat’.
• in this same range, the Afro – Surinamese community allows visitors at their ‘winti preys’, where believers can call upon their individual spirits as well as the spirits of their ancestors to bring them good health, prosperity or just clarity in their lives.
Ramlila, the story of Rama is staged annually as an open-air theatre in August/September. It is a tradition of India, taken to the New World by the Hindostani immigrants. Ramlila derives from the Ramayana, the great epic in which the heroic deeds of prince Rama are sung. The story is spread over ten days and reaches its climax when Rama defeats the demon king Ravan.
DANCE

Due to the cultural diversity Suriname has many dance forms:

• for instance ‘the awasa’, a Maroon dance. It’s a traditional dance on the beat of the so called ‘apintie drums’.

• Indian classical dance forms such as Bharat Natyam and Kathak are very popular.

• We also have Javanese dances where elegance captures the audience into a state of hypnosis.
• Creole dance tradition. An interesting phenomenon was the "Dogla Dance style" as developed and implemented by Ilse marie Hayari (†): this is a fusion of Hindustani and Creole dance forms and patterns.
• during several decades the Creoles developed different dance forms which were transferred from one generation to the other. (Creole setdans). Certain dance forms and styles within the Creole culture were also influenced by European culture but they gave it an own touch such as the Creole waltz, polonaise and other dance forms and patterns.
Of course we also have ballet and modern ballet, often citing from the great variety of non-verbal cultural expressions that all different ethnic groups in Suriname have to offer.

A very popular dance festival is Salsuri, International Salsa Festival. The Salsuri Foundation was established in October 2004 to organize an international salsa festival, Salsuri, in Suriname's capital city at Paramaribo. The first Salsuri was held in November 2005. It's an annual festival that brings together teachers, artists, participants, and fans from around the world.
MUSIC

• Traditional songs have been inherited from past generations, and furthermore, through the times, music styles have blended and influenced each other.

• The most colorful music ensemble in Suriname is the ‘ala kondre dron’, where percussionists of all ethnic backgrounds of the country, play together. Ala kondre dron literally translated is ‘all nations drums’, symbolizing unity and reconciliation.

• ‘kaseko’ and ‘kawina’ are very typical Suriname music styles that have a Caribbean flavor.
Indian music arrived with immigrants from South Asia. This originally included folk music played with dhantal, tabla, sitar, harmonium and dholak, later including tassa drums.

There is a respectable number of music composers, singers and instrumentalists and there is also a huge number of music bands, but also classic music formations. It would take too much to mention all the names and to let you hear their music skills in this frame work of a ten minutes’ presentation. Amongst them are internationally famous singers, composers and instrumentalists.
Bongo Charlie’s instruments reflect the originality of this artisan, who creates traditional and newly invented percussion instruments. A creative percussionist himself, he transforms materials such as cedar wood, calabashes, goat skin and all kinds of seeds into drums, xylophones, maracas and Brazilian berimbau.
The first Surinamese movie was Wan Pipel (1976) by Pim de la Parra. He was born in Suriname in 1940 and after studies at the Dutch Film Academy in Amsterdam, he began making films in Holland in the 1960s. In 2008 he received a Golden Calf award from the Dutch Film Festival, in honor of his career in filmmaking.

After restored by The Eye Institute Netherlands the movie went back in premiere on 4 August 2011. The restoration of Wan Pipel is part of the project “images for the future” that digitizes and conserves the audiovisual heritage available for a wide audience.
Cinematography

• I-write competition:
The purpose of I-WRITE is to stimulate the film production sector in Suriname. It is mainly for Screenwriters, directors, actors, camera people, sound people, animators, musicians, editors, decor builders, et cetera, to get the opportunity to gain experience, to work together on developing the cinematography in Suriname.

Surinamese people get the chance to submit scripts. An expert jury chooses the 5 best scripts and these scripts are filmed. After that, the public can choose the best movie, best actor, etc.
THANK YOU