

# Shiraz Bayjoo

## Ile de France

*Research and Film shoot 2014*

In 2014 I undertook a nine month research and production project in Mauritius for the completion of the Ile de France project. The initial ten weeks was part of the Gas Works fellowship programme. This allowed me to explore the various public and private archives around the island as well as working with several local historians. During this period I also completed the final location scouting for the Ile de France film which culminated in the film production in September, and the post production editing from October to January (2015).

Below is a summary of activities undertaken during this period:

### Week 1 Diary of Activities

Start of archive research at the National Library - limited material but some interesting photographs of the first independent government and newspapers covering the period of transition from Britain during 1968.



Visit to the French Institute and to the art school at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute where I will be presenting and showing works at the end of the Gas Works residency.

I begin the final in depth location recce for the 'Ile de France film', which will be shot in Mauritius from mid August. This is the final process in forming a detailed visual and audio storyboard. I begin by exploring some of the street furniture built by the British and French, at the Company gardens in Port Louis. There is a loud speaker that broadcasts one of the national radio stations, set amongst vines and tropical bird songs.



Play via Sound Cloud:  
Sound recordings from the Jardin de Company in Port Louis.  
A popular city centre park where the national radio station is played through loud speakers against the sounds of tropical birds.

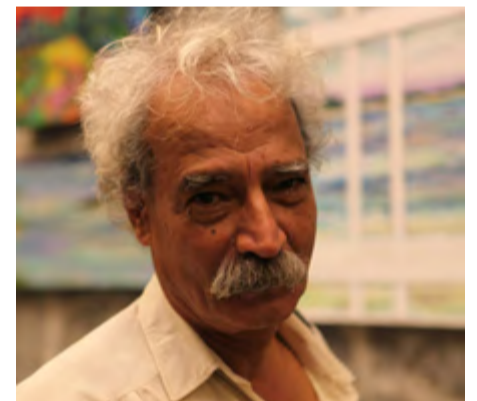
## Week 2 Diary of Activities

Continuation of location recce in Port Louis - I explore the abandoned central railway station 'Victoria' which is now used for a daily vegetable market. I make several tours of the site recording the sounds as I walk. I explore more sites and street furniture around the old civic centre.



Play via Sound Cloud:  
Victoria Station- formerly the  
central train station built by  
the British, now abandoned.

Visit to private photographic museum that may have the best photographic archive on the island. I meet Mr Breville who has been single handedly archiving the country for the past 40 years.



Archive research moves to the National Archives in Coromandel - there are only a few copies of Lithographs and limited photographic material.

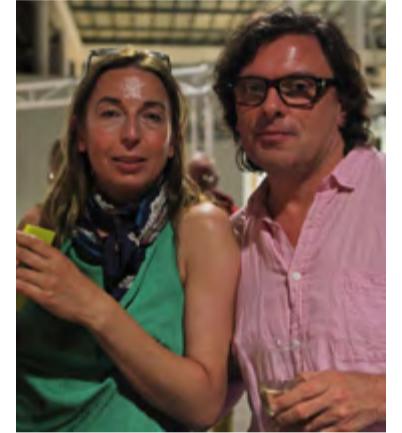
I gather information and portraits of key figures in the slave trade and the opposition during the late Napoleonic and British period of governance.

### Week 3 Diary of Activities

Visit to the Natural History Museum archives in Port Louis - great drawings by early Dutch explorers of Dodos and the Aphanaptery Bonasia (Red Hen).



I check out some of the islands art scene, at a local gallery opening. I'm joined by two new artists, Maja Godlewska and Marek Ranis at Partage, and we attend a talk at the French institute by Serge Lemoine, director of the Musee D'Orsay.



Visit to Mare Chicose dump in search of materials for the next series of installation works is unsuccessful.



Site recce at Rochester falls in the south of the island.



## Week 4 Diary of Activities

Mr Breville from the Photographic museum in Port Louis agrees to allow me use of some of the images from his archive.



Site recce in the south of the island - I visit the Black River and record sounds in the rain forests. This is the last remaining area of rain forest on the island.



Play via Sound Cloud:  
Audio recording from the  
Black river gorge national park



Site recce - the tomb of Pere Laval one of the few priests that tried to alleviate the hardships of ex-slaves, during a period when French Catholicism supported slavery and gave theological reasoning for the continuation of it.

I move on to Le Morne Mountain, a Unesco site, which was the last hiding place for maroons (escaped slaves). It is privately owned with no public access.



## Week 5 Diary of Activities

Archive research continues - National History Museum in Mahebourg where I find a great selection of Lithographs, maps and photographs. The museum director kindly allows me to document some of the material.



Site recce takes me to a Catholic graveyard hidden in a sugar cane field, and to the village of Cassis and the St Sacrement church.



Search for materials takes me to an auction house where I meet the auctioneer Monsieur Lazzare who agrees to assist me.



I finally locate some abandoned items for my first installation at the French Institute.



Interview for Mauritian TV- where I give a call out asking families with home videos from Pre-1980s to contact me.

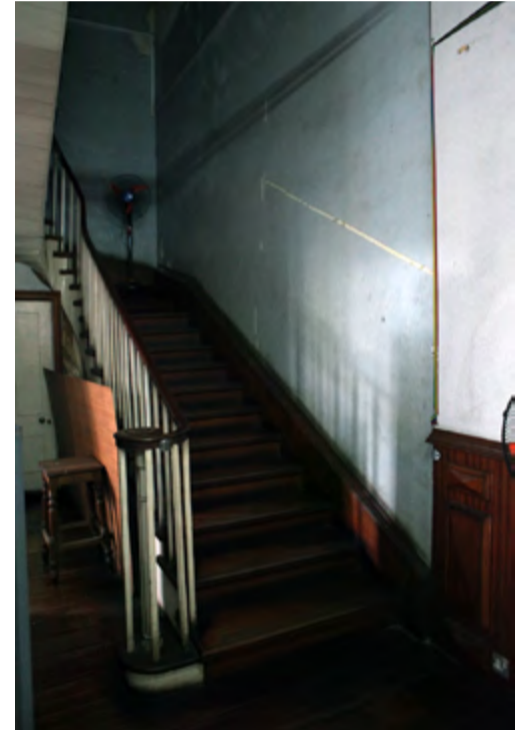


## Week 6 Diary of Activities

After presenting the project to the board of directors at the Mauritian postal service I'm allowed access to their archive. Early postmen in the French administrative era were slaves.



I am also given access to the Port Louis postal sorting house as a potential location for the film. A historic site- originally a prison for escaped slaves- it later became a hospital.



I begin a new series of paintings on paper and continue to work on some new installation pieces.



Meeting with historian at the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund- who gives me advice on some interesting locations to scout.

(Aapravasi Ghat is an immigration museum and research centre focusing on the period of indentured labour in Mauritius).



## Week 7 Diary of Activities

Meeting with historian Jean Marie Celin who suggests some hidden sites around the north of the island to scout as potential locations in the film. He also generously shares a large selection of archival photographs and post cards.



Meeting with Mauritian Film Development Corporation to discuss shooting schedules and permits.

Visit to the Folk museum at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute- the museum focuses on Indian indentured labour to Mauritius.

Meeting with the Le Morne heritage trust- Le Morne mountain is a Unesco world heritage site. It is described as having held a large ma-roon (escaped slave) community living on and around the mountain. I visit the surrounding site including a recently discovered cemetery in a coastal forest flood plain, and a Banyan tree site where free slaves would practice Segga dancing and share oral histories linking back to their African and Malagasy roots.



Discovery of a box of family photos in an old biscuit tin left in an outhouse.



I scout the church of St. Brigitte in Palmie.



Visit to a Martello tower in the East of the island- reveals a great fading interior of stalactites and mineral deposits.



## Week 8 Diary of Activities

Location scouting with historian Jean Marie Celin- I visit several sites in the north of the island, including Balaklava water mill and sugar estate ruins, 19th Century romanticism statues from Paris in the heart of the port, an abandoned orphanage for the freed slave and indentured labour camps.



Meeting with the Blue Penny Museum- requesting access to their archive- they grant permission for use of some images. The museum holds the Mauritian Commercial Bank's private archive and collection.

I scout some of the earliest religious sites on the island- including the Jummah Mosque, Kailasam Temple, and Gookoola temple.



Invite to visit the interior of a rare Port-Louis French colonial house.



Following the recommendations of historian Satyendra Peerthum I explore the Grand Riviere area- visiting several sites including a 19th century jail for slaves.

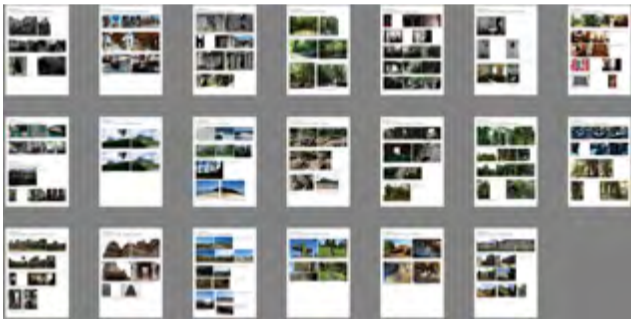


## August Diary of Activities

Following the end of the Fellowship I leave pARTage and move studio to the outskirts of the Port, where I scout the last of the potential shoot locations completing over 70 sites. I head to the east of the island where I visit an 18th Century sugar factory and prison for slaves.



The storyboard and shoot schedule is finalised, and I begin requesting permissions to 26 different sites. This is a difficult process, dealing with various government ministries, and private owners. Several of the interior locations withdraw their initial agreement to shooting, so I search for alternative sites, which reveal some surprising and wonderful spaces. I come across the abandoned house of Surcouf an 18th century corsair and French Naval captain, and several wonderful examples of Port Louis houses of the 19th century.



The film crew arrives and preps the equipment; I go on a final scout of all the locations with director of photography Simon Minett.



## September Diary of Activities

The first week of the shoot goes well- starting at the Kailasam Temple to the north of Port Louis. We continue to shoot some of the wonderful wooden houses around the port from the French administrative era, including the house of French corsair Surcouf, and my grandmother's house. Now dilapidated it is claimed to originally have belonged to the French governor Desforge.

Play video on YouTube:  
Kailasam Temple shoot



In the second stage of the shoot we head to the Pamplemousse district in the north of the island. We shoot some of the ruins and factories of early French industrialism, before gaining permission to enter the Powder Mills estate, a former orphanage and asylum. We finally head back to the port to capture some of the monuments that would not be out of place on a Parisian blvd.



In the final week- the shoot heads towards the forests and coast, we shoot sites around the Le Morne mountain and Black River forest. On the coast we capture some of the ferocious cliff faces of the south and the Souillac marine cemetery, holding some of the oldest graves on the island including corsairs and pirates. The shoots ends at Vieux Grand Port, and the site of the first Dutch settlers.

