

Fanm Rebèl: Digital and Public Heritage Assemblages of Women in the Haitian Revolution

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DOI: pending

Abstract

This article critically reflects on the creation, scope and scholarly implications of *Fanm Rebèl*, an engaged research and digital and public heritage project that reassembles the occluded histories of women in the Haitian Revolution and the period of early Haitian state-making. Centred on the recovery and reimagining of the manifold articulations of women-led resistance, *Fanm Rebèl* explores how fragments of women's lives dispersed across archives, embedded in oral histories and reimagined through creative and expressive practice can be mobilised to generate alternative genealogies of revolutionary memory. Drawing on Haitian ideas of rasanblaj (re/-assembly), the project integrates a range of digital and material "imprints" – from an open-access and bilingual online gallery and archive to commemorative heritage plaques and a YouTube documentary – each constituting an exercise in communal caretakership and decolonial praxis. Through an examination of its collaborative, engaged and inter- and antidisciplinary methodologies, the article interrogates how digital assemblages can resist archival silences and model forms of radical stewardship. While it ponders the ethical and emotional labour demanded by such work and the problems of ephemerality in creating digital outputs in particular, it advocates for a "constellation" of assemblages that have multiple afterlives across digital, material and community spaces. In tracing the multiple trajectories of *Fanm Rebèl*, this article proposes an insurgent and resilient framework for digital and public humanities practice undergirded by ethics of collaboration and care.

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It all started with a dress, or, more accurately, with a newspaper clipping about several "very superb dresses for the Queen and Princesses of Hayti" from the *London Morning Chronicle* in 1815. The clipping was presented to me by the writer Paul Clammer following a talk that I gave on sartorial resistance in pre- and post-revolutionary Haiti and the wider African Atlantic at a conference organised by my colleague Raphaël Hoermann at the Institute for Black Atlantic Research in 2015. ^[1] The clipping conjures a fascinating picture of opulence, refinement and conspicuous consumption in Henry Christophe's Kingdom of Hayti. ^[2] The dresses, made in sumptuous satin, "richly embroidered" in silver and gold thread with flowers of various descriptions and enhanced by various accoutrements including draperies, gold and silver fringe and frogs and tassels, were commissioned to be made for Queen-consort Marie-Louise Christophe and her daughters, the crown princesses Françoise-Améthiste and Anne-Athénaïre, by a fashionable English dressmaker in 1815. This fragment led me down a seemingly bottomless rabbit-hole on the life of Marie-Louise and other women who contributed, to varying degrees, to the project of Haitian independence, statehood and self-determination from colonial rule. Ultimately, it sowed the seeds for my larger research project on Haiti's *fanm rebèl* (a Haitian Kreyòl term translating to "rebel women") and its incarnations as an open-access digital resource with multiple public heritage imprints undergirded by radical collaborations.

As an interdisciplinary scholar with a particular interest in material culture, I was fascinated by the ways in which such a textual fragment could visually conjure from virtual obscurity the unknown possibilities of material reality, and envisioned a project in which such traces could be used as building blocks within the architecture of a project that sought to rehabilitate the stories of *multiple* lives of other women. This article critically reflects on the creation, scope and scholarly implications of *Fanm Rebèl* as a digital initiative that has sought to spotlight the underacknowledged and obfuscated stories of women in the Haitian Revolution and the period of early Haitian state-making. This study likewise examines how public heritage “assemblages” of its digital-pedagogical vision have created, and continue to create, pathways for sustainable legacy-creation.

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Eritaj: Archival Fragments and Interdisciplinary Rasanblaj

As a research project, *Fanm Rebèl* was centred on the premise that the stories of the women that contributed to Haiti's story of anticolonial defiance were both locked deep within and occluded by archives. The very existence of such an imprint in the public ledger detailing the production of fashion items for Marie-Louise and her daughters is evidence in itself of the obvious inequities in the legibility of certain Haitian women's lives. It provides only a narrow insight into the life of several elite, free-born women connected to the project of early Haitian sovereignty — women whose experiences were far from representative of the experiences of the majority of women who laboured and struggled in the service of independence and in the decades thereafter; and whose traces, however scarce, are far more visible by virtue of their purchasing power as elite women. It nevertheless offers myriad possibilities for understanding the kinds of performative gestures that women at all levels of colonial society enacted in the spirit of agency, defiance and state-making that have been largely overlooked or disregarded by those chronicling Haiti's history of triumphal self-making because of the fragmentation, occlusion, dispersal and indeed complete effacement of the very sources that might help us to imagine such possibilities. For example, in examining the highly mythologised figure of Catherine Flon, Jean-Jacques Dessalines' purported niece who, according to Haitian oral history, stitched together the first Haitian flag during the congress of revolutionary leaders at Arcahaie in 1803 that became a linchpin moment of the Haitian Revolution, I sought to demonstrate how women contributed to the Haitian revolutionary project through acts of creativity, artisanship, caregiving, domestic labour and community [Willson 2020]. While the dress commissions for Marie-Louise and her daughters gesture to ways in which they used clothing and self-fashioning to project a vision of sovereign legitimacy, they also provide an interpretative gateway for thinking about how women more broadly used material objects to assert and contest their individual status as free and enslaved or pursued larger collective acts of contestation and autonomy.

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This pervasive disregard of women's extra-military and extra-political contributions to the project of Haitian state-making is compounded by a prevailing historiographical emphasis on “heroic” acts of masculine militarism in the Haitian Revolution and on the triumphs and misdeeds of a class of new Haitian ruling elites that Jean Casimir has described as Haiti's ruling oligarchy [Casimir 2020, 46–47]. As the Haitian feminist scholar Madeleine Sylvain Boucherau observed in the introduction to her pioneering study *Haiti et Ses Femmes*.

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L'Histoire d'Haiti a été entièrement écrite par des hommes et pour les hommes, aussi n'y trouve-t-on guère de trace de la femme, de son influence morale, sociale et économique. L'Histoire de l'haïtienne est encore à écrire; celui qui entreprendra cette tâche difficile aura fort à faire et ce n'est que par bribes, raccrochées çà et là, qu'il pourra arriver à détinir la condition de la femme à une période donnée. The history of Haiti has been entirely written by men and for men, and one hardly finds any trace of women, of their moral, social and economic influence. The history of the Haitian woman is yet to be written; the person who undertakes this difficult task will have much to do, and it will only be through fragments, hitched together here and there, that they will be able to determine the condition of women in any given period ([Boucherau 1957, 1], my translation).

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For those who left few traces of their lives in written records, including many of the women who were so central to the saga of Haiti's revolutionary and post-revolutionary history, such fragments open a discursive and imaginative gateway for the reconstruction of other lives and other stories. In this sense, as Sonya Donaldson acknowledges, “history is never really lost because these traces allude to the ways in which we might reconstruct history” [Donaldson 2021, 19]. They also beckon questions that seldom arise in historical accounts of Haiti's big men — the types of questions that the

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artist Lubaina Himid implants into our minds in the captions to her series of watercolours from *Scenes from the Life of Toussaint Louverture*, which expands the focus of the revolutionary lens to encompass the domestic and familial concerns of such lauded military heroes. In the second diptych from the series, Toussaint Louverture is shown in repose, reclining on a cot, with his discarded clothes and the paraphernalia of war strategy strewn about the space that he inhabits (Figure 1). The captions to the images read “An afternoon snooze / who cooked the midday meal?” and “who will do the laundry?” In posing such questions, Himid not only signposts the invisibilised and undocumented female figure that grand historical narratives so often occlude, but also gestures to the importance of domestic and emotional labour undertaken largely by women both at home and on the battlefield. Though the visualisation of Suzanne Louverture elsewhere in the series in part represents an active engagement with these questions, Suzanne is a synecdochic signifier for the numerous and nameless women whose important efforts remain *unseen*. The visual representation of the material world inhabited by Louverture and his family and the material absence of other critical interlocutors opens up the discursive and imaginative space for the contemplation of such questions.

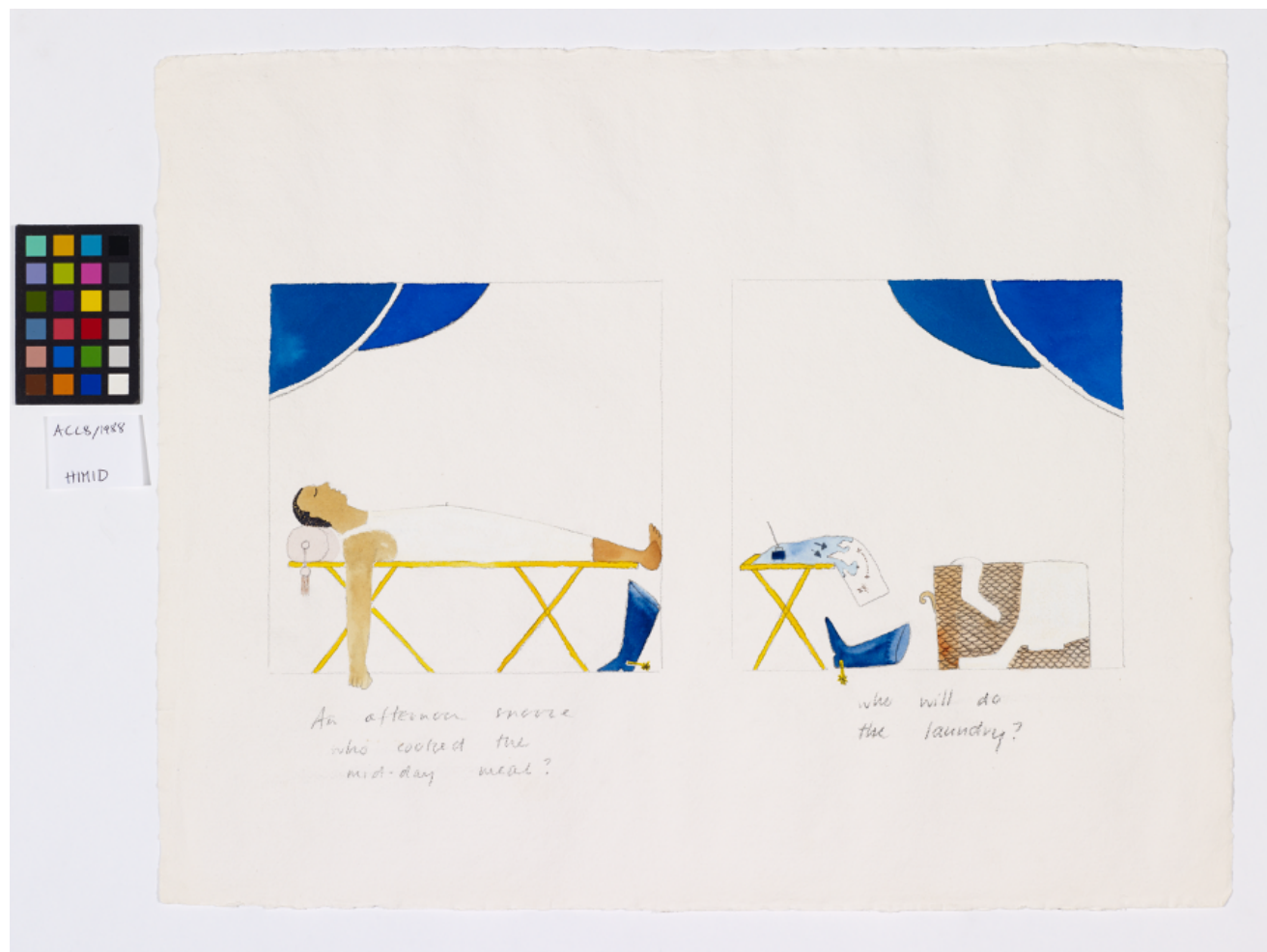


Figure 1. Lubaina Himid, *Scenes from the Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture: 2* (1987), watercolour and pencil on paper, 39.5 x 50 cm. Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London © Lubaina Himid.

Even in the absence of surviving material artefacts, knowledge of their once existence offers a point of entry for imaginative rehabilitation in the vein of Himid's that create new, alternative archives of understanding through expressive modalities. For those who seek tangible answers within archives of loss, which are characterised by the very paucity of the tangible ([Sharpe 2020, 3]), any small fragment is often seized upon with abundant enthusiasm in the hope that it might lead to greater truths — a larger jigsaw that the part unlocks. The descriptive fragment of the royal dresses is all the more valuable since there is no record of their preservation, nor any (known) extant portrait of Marie-Louise Christophe which might serve to demonstrate how such garments were utilised symbolically in the craft of state-making. Items of such obvious pecuniary value were likely removed along with the “ornaments, lighting fixtures, and

even the floorboards” which “were broken, spoiled, prised up, torn down and looted” from Henry Christophe’s Sans Souci Palace in the wake of the Kingdom’s fall [McIntosh and Pierrot 2017, 145]. It is equally possible that they — and indeed any lost portrait — escaped the opportunistic plunder of Sans Souci and remain nestled within one of the many proudly cultivated vaults of Haiti’s private collectors. Those seeking to unearth hidden treasures from this unique and important period in Haitian history — especially those attempting to do so from outside of Haiti, whose colonial histories have shaped the dominant epistemologies and discursive violence that has led to the endangerment and erasure of Haitian heritage both within and beyond its sovereign borders — ought to be reminded that, as Marlene Daut has suggested, “we do not necessarily have a right to this knowledge” [Daut 2019a]. For what and for whom does such knowledge serve? Is it to be used only in the service of creating new archives which, despite claims to promote a democracy of access, unwittingly “reproduce patterns of domination or cultural exploitation” ([Daut 2019a])? Showing respect for these archival opacities is also important to the true work of archival decolonisation; given the force of the types of colonial extraction that has led to Haiti’s treasures being plundered and dispersed, it is easy to understand why Haitians in particular may not want to “open up” collections that have been amassed over generations and passed on through families (even, in some instances, to their own national heritage institutions).^[3] Venturing into such spaces demands equitable terms of engagement.

At the foundation of any effort to recover or reconstruct what has been lost, secreted, forgotten, overlooked and effaced should be a commitment to uplifting and spotlighting the histories that have been relegated to the margins through acts of communality, collaboration and collective responsibility. *Fanm Rebèl* endeavours to respond to this collective call to action while respecting custodianship and modelling a decolonial praxis. In this way, it cannot be viewed as a standard archival research project (though what exists within and beyond archives remains a key point of articulation). Neither, however, is it ostensibly a digital humanities or public humanities project. It is rather a constellation of resources, pathways and synergies upheld by the principle of *rasanblaj*. A Haitian Kreyòl term deployed by Gina Athena Ulysse to describe a process of (re-)assembly, *rasanblaj* represents an “explicitly decolonial project” which “demands that we consider and confront the limited scope of segregated frameworks to explore what remains excluded in this landscape that is scorched yet full of life, riddled with inequities and dangerous and haunting memories” [Ulysse 2017, 70]. In other words, those spectral fragments — which represent mere pieces and remnants; which are signifiers of loss, of plunder and devastation — are also tethered to the memory of the fuller, complex and kaleidoscopic stories of which they form a part. In excavating and “hitching together” these fragments; in reimagining the myriad lives of a dress and its wearer; in surveying the testimonies of those at the centre of this mission of recovery; in promoting ongoing dialogue and collaboration and in building on the important groundwork laid by others working in this domain, we can begin to (re)assemble stories of revolutionary possibility. This model — which draws, moreover, on explicitly Haitian epistemologies — illuminates a pathway by which the ethical tensions of archival access and archival reproduction articulated by Daut can be negotiated with epistemic responsibility.

Through a succession of installations inspired by Marie-Louise Christophe, her daughters and the worlds that they traversed, the mixed-media artist Firelei Báez deploys a form of *rasanblaj* to examine the fault-lines of the colonial archive and mobilise material histories to visualise the unseen and unknowable. In each of these installations, which use textures of peeling paint to reference ruin and dilapidation, viewers bear witness to the neglect and devastation of the ornate receptacles that house these women and their stories. In so doing, they are also, however, invited to peel back the layers and look beneath the veneer: to engage in radical acts of caretakership and re-assembly. The mottled visages of Marie-Louise, Améthiste and Athénaïre point to the limits of what is knowable, and reject the idea of an essentialised vision of archival “truth” (Figures 2, 3 and 4). Their visual anonymity likewise gives them the power of transgenerational metamorphosis. Although the women depicted might be Marie-Louise or her daughters, they also represent the numerous and nameless Haitian women and “Anacaonas” occluded by history. In each incarnation, the subjects’ eyes remain clearly visible, and lock the viewer into a reciprocal gaze that holds them to account and enlists them in the service of this collective endeavour to gather, tell and imagine.



Figure 2. Firelei Báez, *For Marie-Louise Coidavid, exiled, keeper of order, Anacaona* (2018). Oil and acrylic on canvas over panel, with hand-painted wood frame, and oil, acrylic, and torn paper on gypsum board, 320 x 528.3 cm. © Firelei Báez.



Figure 3. Firelei Báez, *For Marie-Louise Coidavid, exiled, keeper of order, Anacaona* (detail: 2018). Oil and acrylic on canvas over panel, with hand-painted wood frame, and oil, acrylic, and torn paper on gypsum board, 320 x 528.3 cm. © Firelei Báez.



Figure 4. *For Améthyste and Athénaire (Exiled Muses Beyond Jean Luc Nancy's Canon)*, Anacaonas (2018). Oil on canvas over panel, with hand-painted wood frames, 304.8 x 640.1 cm. © Firelei Báez.

In the same vein, the various constellations of *Fanm Rebèl* seek to gather, tell and imagine through a trifold mission of pedagogy, commemoration and care. The project attempts not to complete the jigsaw, but rather to provide a platform for its pieces — to collate stories and advance conversations via images, objects, sounds and spaces. It unites the knowledge and expertise of scholars, digital humanists, heritage specialists, collectors, archivists and community organisers invested in the shared goal of gathering and re-assembling histories of Haiti's rebel women and re-assembling ideas of what it might mean to be a "rebel" within the genealogy of the Haitian Revolution and beyond. Above all, it aspires to enlist others in the service of this goal in order to create a legacy that serves the community and outlives any ephemeral work through multiple digital and public heritage assemblages or "imprints".

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Kolektif: Collaboration and Community as Radical Caretakership

The digital output fanmrebel.com was, first and foremost, grounded in a commitment to making material connections — to creating a digital repository of curated fragments "hitched together," held up side by side to demonstrate the complex and numerous articulations of women-led resistance before, during and in the immediate aftermath of the Haitian Revolution. It was intended to be both a space for promoting access to historical documents and an interactive curated gallery showcasing artefacts and artistic productions engaging imaginatively with the untold and undocumented stories of Haiti's rebel women "in an effort to show the continuing force, circularity and diasporic mobility of revolutionary stories as well as their historic roots" [Willson2019]. However, it grew around the conversations and relationships built within and beyond the digital terrain with scholars, artists, collectors, conservators, curators, community organisers, advocacy organisations and others to encompass much more. These connections, in turn, fostered a series of broader collaborations which nourished and refined its digital and public heritage vision, and sparked efforts to create legacies that would have material "afterlives," manifesting in two commemorative blue heritage plaques mounted at Marie-Louise Christophe's former British residences in London and Hastings. Such achievements, it is fair to say, could not have been realised without the input of active collaborators and supportive communities.

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Across the terrain of Haitian Studies, pedagogically rich and beautifully imagined digital humanities resources abound. Though many of these projects were the genus of an individual idea or discrete research project, and though much of the labour associated with the preservation of such projects is often shouldered disproportionately by individuals, their vitality is sustained by the diverse contributions of the collective: from programmers and research assistants to transcribers and translators. Many of these projects actively solicit a wider pool of collaborators through crowdsourced

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information. Marlene Daut's *La Gazette Royale d'Haïti*, for example, which "is designed to gather together and in one place for the first time all of the known issues of the two newspapers published during Henry Christophe's rule of northern Haiti, as well as the six different versions of the *Almanach Royal d'Hayti* issued by the royal press" ([Daut]) uses *hypothèses* to invite corrections or annotations to the digital transcriptions of these important documents in order to deepen understanding about "the many people who lived in the north of Haiti in the early nineteenth-century". It is also a resource that self-avowedly owes its expansion to generous contributions from scholars and archivists who have shared digital facsimiles of the widely dispersed issues of the several periodicals that Daut's website aspires to collate together. By amalgamating resources and knowledge across the collective, such projects foster a sense of community, characterised by what Daut, referencing Jacques Roumain's novel *Gouverneurs de la Rosée* about a rural community that mobilises to irrigate the land upon which they depend, terms the "konbit" [Daut 2019a].^[4] In this sense, they are not purely platforms for reference, but for reciprocal exchange that widen both access and dialogue.

These collective exchanges fuel socially just advances that enrich these evolving platforms — such as in the case of Stephanie Curci and Chris Jones's *Mapping the Haitian Revolution* project, which began as an English-language resource but "acknowledge[d] the problems of power in such an approach." It has since advanced its scope to make the project available in French, Kreyòl and Spanish with the assistance of translators at CreoleTrans (Curci and Jones, "The Project"). These multilingual routes of access are mirrored in Stephanie Curci's *Mapping Haitian History* project, which provides an "extensive and collaborative online visual record in English, Krèyol, and French" of Haiti's preeminent historical sites designed for use by "scholars and researchers, historical enthusiasts, schoolchildren, tourists and adventure travelers" [Curci 2008, 121]. As a digital humanities project that took its lead from these rich online platforms celebrating Haitian cultural history, *Fanm Rebèl* likewise grew thanks to valuable contributions designed to widen access and linguistic reach to its content. However, the expansion of its access points and the growth of its content was by no means predetermined; its conceptual evolution was driven by interactions across an evolving network — or "kolektif" as [Smith 2022] once described it — that came into being through digital dialogue.

Before the genesis of *fanmrebel.com*, exchanges and collaborations across the digital realm helped to shape and extend the vision for what it might become. After discovering a facsimile of a translated copy of Marie-Louise Christophe's last will and testament in the UK National Archives in 2019, I began the work of transcribing this document in collaboration with Paul Clammer and Grégory Pierrot with a view to creating an open-access platform for its dissemination. News of the existence of this important document shedding light on the life of a Haitian queen in exile circulated across online networked spaces such as H-Haiti and Twitter (X), re-affirming and compounding enthusiasm within existing digital communities and uniting new ones keen to explore ways of remembering and re-assembling the lesser-known histories of women like Marie-Louise. This enthusiasm highlighted the need for a space where the original facsimile could be easily signposted and the transcription could be universally accessed. However, given the difficulty in transcribing much of the barely legible secretarial script of the original transcriber from the London Public Records Office, it also warranted the input of a wider pool of transcribers with a better knowledge of the specific notarial palaeography. Our imperfect transcription existed initially as a collaborative Google document, but considerations around its further dissemination and collaborative input from the wider community were shaped by issues around security, indexing and discoverability of a resource that existed only on the Google cloud. Given that *Fanm Rebèl* was in an embryonic phase of development, migrating this resource to a platform that would allow for customisation and integration with other potential resources connected with stories of women in the Haitian Revolution was another primary concern. Consequently, I began to build a dedicated home for this resource within the cosmos of *fanmrebel.com* that would enable collaborative interactions — especially from a wider pool of digital transcribers. Squarespace satisfied the initial requirement for a user-friendly interface with collaboration tools, social media integration and adaptable templates that could be regularly and easily updated, and also facilitated design modification through the use of custom CSS. This, in turn, gave me the ability to integrate *hypothèses* like Daut's *Gazette Royale* site, which would allow users to annotate the transcribed document.

Though in its infancy the website was only a portal for accessing the transcription and the National Archives facsimile (and also for building collaborative exchanges across these documents), its pedagogical and interactive scope was broader: it was designed to simulate the multi-sensory experience of walking through an exhibition space. This space

would not be static, but would be constantly evolving to showcase myriad imaginative interpretations of Haiti's women revolutionaries through artworks, artefacts, musical reconstructions and living heritage sites. Some of its earliest content was assembled from existing online and offline collections and archives, such as the Haiti Philatelic Society, the Musée du Panthéon National Haïtien (MUPANAH), the Folger Special Collections Library and the British Museum's Prints and Drawings collection. However, the majority of its assembled "fragments" were collated through interactions with artists such as Patricia Brintle, Richard Barbot, Lubaina Himid and Kimathi Donkor, and Haitian private collectors such as Joseph Guerdy Lissade and Alex Von Lignau. Spotlighting the importance of diaspora stories, memory and the transgenerational reverberations of Haitian histories, these interactions became the foundation upon which the website and the broader vision for the project and its numerous constellations were built. That is to say that in curating this exhibition space, I wanted to highlight not just the contested identities and interpretative possibilities surrounding the histories of women protagonists such as Marie-Jeanne Lamartinière, Cécile Fatiman and Suzanne Sanitte/Sanité Bélair, but also to demonstrate the symbolic connections between individual artists, collectors and conservators and the material articles that they acquired, inherited, created and cared for.

The conversations around these material things were thus in essence as central to the rasanblaj as the things themselves. This was especially the case for the beautiful muslin gown belonging to Dame Eléonore Cheruxi (Richeux), a former *Dame d'Honneur* in Marie-Louise Christophe's court retinue, which was donated to MUPANAH in 2015 by Alex Von Lignau and is featured in *Fanm Rebèl's* gallery of "Objects/Objè" (Figure 5). Discussions with [Bonnet 2020], the textiles restorer who worked to restore the dress, revealed interesting insights about its periodisation, the processes and resources required for appropriate caretakership and the surprising resilience of Haitian heritage objects. Though the dress was catalogued by MUPANAH as a "robe Empire" and has many of the features of cotton chemise gowns that were popular in the French Atlantic (both in the metropole and in the colonies) from the late eighteenth century onwards (including the gathered sleeves that were made iconic by >Marie-Antoinette), the lower waistline is indicative of the fact that the dress is probably from a slightly later period, according to Bonnet (around 1830, she believes). Given that Christophe's kingdom fell in 1820 and Marie-Louise departed Haiti for Europe in 1821, this periodisation suggests that Eléonore Cheruxi crafted an existence *beyond* Christophe's court. In this way, the dress takes on a new signification: as a relic not only of the plundered kingdom and its many unheralded personalities, but as an artefact which bears witness to the creative strategies used by women to make meaning outside of these dynastic frameworks bookmarked by the lives of Haiti's "big men".



Figure 5. *Robe longue en mousseline de coton blanc* (c. 1830). Collection Musée du Panthéon National Haïtien.

Interactions with the numismatist Joseph Guerdy Lissade, vice-president of the Haitian Society of History, Geography and Geology and founder of the collection Monnaies et Médailles d'Haïti about women depicted in Haitian currency led to other significant connections — not least with Alex Von Lignau, the private collector and benefactor who donated the Cheruxi dress to MUPANAH, and Richard Barbot, the Haitian-Canadian artist responsible for the vignette of Suzanne Sanitte/Sanité Bélair included on the Haitian dix gourdes banknote printed to commemorate the bicentenary of Haitian independence in 2004 (Figure 6). A widely circulated image (thanks, no doubt, to its association with Haitian currency), Barbot's iconic vignette has become a foundational template for many subsequent reproductions and imaginative renderings of the lauded combatant of Saint Domingue's *Armée Indigène*. This is discernibly visible in the work of other Haitian artists such as Youseline Vital, Anne-Isabelle Bonifassi and Hertz Nazaire, whose adult colouring book interlaces a reproduction of the commemorative banknote vignette with beautiful geometric patterns and a silhouette of the *Nèg Mawon*— the statue erected outside Haiti's National Palace in Port-au-Prince in 1967 (2017). However, ongoing conversations with Barbot have revealed ways in which Sanitte/Sanité has been re-conceptualised in his own work in the two decades since the bicentenary. In this way, the iconicity of the vignette and the banknote on which it features is called into question by the artist himself. In juxtaposing these various representations in the *Fanm Rebèl* Gallery, these tensions are brought to the foreground. In Barbot's 2019 acrylic on canvas portrait (Figure 7), for example, though Sanitte/Sanité is once again depicted in full military regalia, complete with epaulettes and a bicorn hat, her furrowed brows encode a story of strain and strife, reminding us that, like many other women who contributed to the revolutionary saga, she made epic sacrifices. The fixed and immutable icon is rendered unstable, complex and, above all, human. This is significant given the unfavourable representations of Sanitte/Sanité Bélair by Haiti's early chroniclers of independence, such as Thomas Madiou whose *Histoire d'Haïti* describes her as a "brigande" and imagines her as the

protagonist of violent atrocities avowedly committed by the renegade army with whom she was associated ([Madiou 1989, 364]). As an image tethered to Haitian currency and thus, as a synecdochic signifier of that object of currency, Barbot's original vignette is likewise tethered to a narrative of Haitian patrimony. As a constantly evolving and reimagined personality across Barbot's artistic oeuvre, Sanitte/Sanité escapes these constraints to create new narratives of possibility.



Figure 6. 10 Gourdes Banknote, Bicentenaire de l'Indépendance d'Haïti/Bisantè Endepandans Dayiti, Collection Richard Barbot.



Figure 7. Richard Barbot, *Sanité Bélair* (2019). Acrylic and oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in. © Richard Barbot.

An abundance of similar dialogic exchanges, across the *Fanm Rebèl* kolektif (both online and offline) have expanded its possibilities as a resource and as a site of further interaction, exchange and pedagogy. In his class on “Repozwa and Repositories: Mourning in Haitian Literature,” for example, longstanding network collaborator Nathan Dize used the site with his students at Oberlin College to think about how images of women could be conjured (or assembled) from literary fragments. In turn, his students used some of the images, especially artworks by Brintle and Barbot, to create their own imaginative responses on this theme [Dize 2024]. While the interactions and exchanges that have shaped *Fanm Rebèl*’s growth as a multimodal project have inevitably strengthened its network, interactions with its dialogic and pedagogic content have also thus fed into new forms of rasanblaj and network-formation. In this sense, *Fanm Rebèl* is not only a kolektif in its own right, but a point of convergence for others navigating imaginative pathways for the reassembly of Haiti’s revolutionary histories.

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Though its mission has been to create assemblages through community interaction and provide space of imaginative and pedagogic connection, *Fanm Rebèl* has benefited from being connected with other established communities and kolektifs. The most celebrated achievements of the project owe a debt to inter-community collaboration, especially with the Haitian Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain, the Knowledge Project (formerly the Haitian Heritage Group, a charity that aims to “build legacies for youth” from a foundation of cultural pride in the UK), Black Butterfly (a Black heritage, wellbeing and social justice organisation based in the UK town of Hastings), the Haiti Support Group (a UK-based advocacy organisation for Haiti) and to generous colleagues within the international Haitian Studies, Haitian and Haitian diaspora communities. The collective force of will and spirit of mutual support and care across these communities has highlighted the centrality of these values at their point of intersection, which has brought into being two blue heritage plaques (one of which was supported by a Crowdfunder promoted across these various networks) and a

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YouTube documentary that has received close to 250,000 views.

Moreover, the importance of connections and collaborations with other likeminded digital communities that span the terrain of Haitian and Black Atlantic Studies, such as Siobhan Meï and Jonathan Michael Square's *Rendering Revolution: Sartorial Approaches to Haitian History* project, cannot be overstated. As a project that lives almost exclusively on Instagram, supporting Square's belief "in the power of social media as a platform for radical pedagogy" ([Square(b)]), *Rendering Revolution* represents "a queer, bilingual, feminist experiment in digital interdisciplinary scholarship that uses the lens of fashion and material culture to trace the aesthetic, social, and political reverberations of the Haitian Revolution as a world-historical moment" [Meï and Square]. Replicating a model of digital curatorship sophisticatedly honed in Square's constellatory project *Fashioning the Self in Slavery and Freedom* ([Square(a)]), *Rendering Revolution* operates largely across Instagram (using the wider Meta infrastructure for dissemination). Additionally, it harnesses a number of digital communication channels that are free at the point of use (including Google Workspace and Whatsapp) to mobilise its network of collaborators and translators. In this way, *Rendering Revolution* has an agility and inclusivity as a truly collaborative and constantly evolving project that centres the ethos of the lakou. It also provides a blueprint for how digital humanities projects might elude the subscription and hosting fees and intensive and time-consuming individual labour of purposely-curated research and pedagogical websites. As a bilingual initiative that relies on a network of paid translators (who ensure that its English-language content is also accessible in Haitian Kreyòl), its ability to keep pace with its own rapid tempo is invariably contingent: curating accessible multilingual content and upholding its ethos of "renumerat[ing] translators whose intellectual and creative work is so often devalued and invisibilized" ([Meï 2020b]), for example, would not be possible without capital of any kind. ^[5] Nevertheless, its prolific early growth as a bilingual project has undoubtedly helped to galvanise interconnected communities and ensure its visibility for those whom it was designed to reach, especially people in Haiti and across the diaspora.

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Its conception by Meï and Square as a truly collaborative and co-curated resource, fortified by their original "Call for Contributors and Collaborators" on *H-Haiti* ([Meï 2020a]), also raised the stakes for digital humanities offerings often established across small communities of research collaborators and in isolation by bridging gaps across communities. Most importantly, *Rendering Revolution*, and the dynamic, agile, interactive and inclusive efforts of Meï and Square in steering the project, expanded *Fanm Rebèl's* vision, demonstrating how it could operate with a communal, lakou ethos and exist as a series of imprints (or as a constellated resource beyond the website as it was initially conceived) — on YouTube, on Instagram, in various material forms and in conversation and collaboration with other projects and communities. It also reinforced the importance of multilingual access. Through *Rendering Revolution's* network of translators, and with the assistance of Danielle Dorvil in particular, I was able to build localised content into the website to ensure that much of the self-authored and curated content that I had painstakingly added to *Fanm Rebèl* during the first wave of COVID-19 lockdowns was also accessible in Haitian Kreyòl. As an eager early respondent to Meï and Square's call on *H-Haiti* (and as an ongoing though admittedly infrequent collaborator), I have endeavoured to support the aims of our intimately enmeshed communities centring artistic imagination and material culture. To this end, I have curated posts (and was generously solicited to author the inaugural Instagram post featuring Patricia Brintle's 2011 painting of Catherine Flon), supported grant applications, and attended virtual meet-ups with collaborators across multiple time zones and languages. Our combined vision for inclusive and accessible spaces that de-centre colonialist texts and androcentric perspectives and spotlight the often occluded stories of marginal figures through the creation of alternative archives, has been mutually generative and sustaining, emboldening and empowering our aspirations for what these assemblages might become.

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Access, Ephemerality and Commemoration: Digital and Material Imprints of Fanm Rebèl

Conversations across an expanding kolektif also created opportunities for innovation at the intersection of digital and material worlds, leading to various constellated material and digital "imprints" of *Fanm Rebèl* (or new forms of rasanblaj). Conceived with the objective of permanence (or near-permanence) in mind, these imprints have manifested in several public heritage projects (the installation of two blue heritage plaques commemorating Marie-Louise Christophe and her daughters' residency in Britain and a panel documenting her connection to the "Story of Hastings" at the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery), and a number of digitally-conceived outputs (including reconstructions and

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recordings of music from the Court of Christophe and the short documentary film *Marie-Louise Christophe: A Haitian Queen in Great Britain*—all of which have been published on YouTube). In essence, these various constellations and the circumstantially responsive and collaboratively conceived forms that they took were exercises in what Alan Rice ([Rice 2010, 15–16]) has described as “guerilla memorialisation,” representing an attempt to “interven[e]” through engaged praxis, and, above all, through forms of *rasanblaj*, to extend the reach of *Fanm Rebèl* and to make the histories of the women at its core more visible and accessible.

In grappling with the complex “reality of loss” in the digital humanities ([Donaldson 2021, 20]), I recognised early that *Fanm Rebèl*’s existence as a digital humanities resource might only ever be temporal. To circumvent threats of ephemerality, I intended to create fanmrebel.com as a hub or portal for accessing resources that were clustered across various other platforms. I envisioned a digital ecosystem (integrating content across platforms such as Flickr, Instagram and YouTube) that would facilitate a model of resilient digital curation, inspired by digital archiving projects advanced by the likes of the Smithsonian, the British Library, Royal Museums Greenwich and other heritage institutions that made curated content and archival collections publicly accessible and used forms of crowdsourcing to collate and expand digital exhibition spaces to create a digital commons. Given the limits of my own digital literacy (and the integration limits of the Squarespace platform that I had used to build fanmrebel.com), my grand ambitions for a “constellated” and co-curated resource were stymied. In the earliest days of the project, Squarespace did not have an aesthetically engaging integration model that would allow me to build a compelling gallery. Moreover, such an integration would also prohibit me from building localised content into the website framework that would transform the curated experience for users who wished to access that content in Kreyòl. Using Squarespace was therefore crucial to achieving a visually-engaging multilingual platform, but came at the cost of relinquishing a constellated vision of clustered digital resources housed within a central digital “hub”. This localised platform would not be able to circumvent all threats of erasure, removal or disinvestment, as I had intended. As such, I sought ways to reproduce *Fanm Rebèl* in multiple digital and material spaces and in ways that promoted active, community engagement with the imprints it produced. Embedding mechanisms of sustainable stewardship that would allow a resource subsidised by time-limited grant funding to have various “afterlives” thus remained a crucial objective.

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Though the goal of creating sustainable and accessible legacies for *Fanm Rebèl* was embedded in its original research plan, many of its imprints emerged organically and unintentionally, in a true path-breaking and guerilla sense, in large part through the combined energies of the kolektif and in response to shifting circumstances surrounding the practical application of the larger research project — namely as a result of the increasing instability that characterised the political climate in Haiti from the point of the project’s commencement late in 2019, and the national and international shutdowns occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. These factors (among others) hastened the partial reconceptualisation of the project and what its deployment as a “research output” might look like without access to archives. Community, conservation and legacy also became pressing priorities in the wake of these crises, which brought into sharp relief issues of inequity and endangerment, especially in relation to Haitian heritage. The devastation wrought by a fire that gutted the duomo of the Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception church at the UNESCO World Heritage site in Milot that is home to both the Citadelle and the ruins of the Sans Souci palace on Easter Sunday in 2020 was a clarion call to not “laisser périr dans l’indifférence, ses richesses patrimoniales ... symboliques de son éthos” (let perish in indifference its patrimonial riches ... symbolic of its ethos: [Saturné], and further highlighted the importance of creating constellated “afterlives” for the *Fanm Rebèl* website.

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The shift toward digital community-formation during this unprecedented moment created space for the mobilisation of innovative public heritage initiatives that might not have been attempted at an earlier juncture, and also promulgated necessary conversations about the need for dynamic, evolving, sustainable and community-centred imprints of heritage projects that often have a shallow, academic reach. Exchanges on Twitter (X) in August 2020 with Michelet Romulus, the Vice-President of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain, led to the first in a series of collaborative initiatives that made use of accessible digital spaces and resources to execute focused public heritage projects.

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Assembling all resources at our disposal (highlighting the value of *rasanblaj* as methodological praxis as well as theoretical tool), we collaborated to produce a documentary retracing the footsteps of Marie-Louise on her diasporic journey across Britain between 1821-1824. In so doing, we hoped to seize the bicentennial moment of the fall of

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Christophe's kingdom and give visibility to Haitian history and heritage and its global reaches at a moment of increasing global distraction. Its reach could be magnified, moreover, as a free and widely accessible resource on YouTube (published across multiple channels to safeguard against threats of ephemerality and as a reflection of our jointly-realised inter-community vision). In this way, we strove to create maximum benefit for Haitian communities so often denied access to their cultural patrimony and for international lay publics unfamiliar with Haiti's rich history of post-revolutionary self-making.

The launch of the film on 1 January 2021 (Haitian Independence Day) highlighted, in the various dialogues to which it gave rise, the cross-cultural significance of a Black queen who had made Georgian Britain her home in an age of colonial enslavement. This was especially germane to debates surrounding the release of Netflix's *Bridgerton* in late December 2020, which, as Marlene Daut observed, used the "shallow representational ruse" of "Black actors inserted into a white storyline" rather than drawing on the "awe-inspiring world of black nobility [which] did actually exist in the nineteenth century" [Daut 2021]. The visibility that the documentary likewise achieved upon social media (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram), led to it rapidly going "viral". By its third month of release, it had been viewed almost 110,000 times. The unprecedented and rapid distribution of the film across digital platforms demonstrated both the compelling communicative power of such "guerilla" intervention tactics in disseminating public history and heritage, and the community-generating possibilities of compelling histories of unsung Haitian women. Though the film was never intended to offer an exhaustive account of Marie-Louise's experience in exile, and interrogated the shortcomings of attempting to do so in the absence of extensive testimonial sources (Willson, Marous and Romulus, 00:16:25-00:17:04), it generated large-scale digital visibility for a figure who dominant (white, male, colonialist) written narratives have consigned to the margins. It also demonstrated how conversations across diaspora communities in the present could offer engaged insights into historic diasporic encounters, instigating new forms of *rasanblaj* that expand the limits of the archive's absences and erasures.

This guerilla intervention in the digital realm advanced efforts to create physical public heritage imprints of Marie-Louise's life in Britain via the aforementioned blue heritage plaques mounted at residences in London and Hastings. Despite meeting with rejection following an application submitted to the English Heritage Blue Heritage Plaque scheme in 2019, ^[6] *Fanm Rebèl's* expanding kolektif served to galvanise energies to create alternative guerilla pathways to commemoration that transformed a project originally conceived in isolation from the community and using the narrow, historically exclusionary selection parameters of a heritage gatekeeping initiative into a truly inclusive and representative community endeavour. This was achieved through partnerships in London with the Nubian Jak Community Trust, the "only commemorative plaque and sculpture scheme focused on memorialising the historic contributions of Black and minority ethnic people in Britain and beyond" ([Beula n.d.]), and in Hastings with Dawn Dublin, the founder of the Black heritage, wellbeing and social justice organisation Black Butterfly. As an entirely crowdfunded initiative, the Nubian Jak plaque mounted on Marie-Louise's London residence on 7 February 2022 was founded on a premise of collective ownership, in which the community (and the Haitian community in particular) had (and continues to have) a stake (Figures 8 and 9). Similarly, the collaborative initiative in Hastings brought local and more widely dispersed Haitian communities together in an act of commemoration (Figures 10 and 11) to centre the marginalised local "histories and herstories" that Black Butterfly as a community organisation wished to spotlight and "unforget" [Dublin 2022]. As such, these initiatives not only amplified the diaspora story of Marie-Louise Christophe and her daughters for local publics unfamiliar with her existence, but demonstrated how that story is inextricably tethered to the diasporic histories of other unacknowledged and minoritised figures who "official" public history and heritage bodies have either overlooked or do not have fitting criteria to assess. ^[7]



Figure 8. Photograph of (left-right) Wilford Marous, Nicole Willson and Michelet Romulus at unveiling for blue plaque at 49 Weymouth Street, London, 7 February 2022. © PALAssociates Photography.



Figure 9. Photograph of Marie-Louise Christophe blue plaque in situ at 49 Weymouth Street, London, 7 February 2022. © PALAssociates Photography. The sponsor inscription on the edge of the plaque acknowledges "FANM REBEL AND THE HAITIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN GB TOGETHER WITH COMMUNITY SPONSORS".



Figure 10. Photograph of attendees at unveiling for blue plaque at 5 Exmouth Place, Hastings, 3 October 2022. Image credit: author's own.



Figure 11. Photograph of (clockwise from top left) Michelet Romulus, Dawn Dublin, Wilford Marous and Nicole Willson at unveiling for blue plaque at 5 Exmouth Place, Hastings, 3 October 2022. Image credit: author's own.

The experience of creating imprints that would live on and combat ephemerality through their material indelibility was supplemented by the festivities marking their creation that nurtured the ethos of Fanm Rebèl's community vision, centring community joy. As Knowledge Project founder Guilaine Brutus remarked in her speech at the unveiling event ([Brutus 2022]), "as a Capoise, I am proud, as a Haitian, I am honoured, and as a person of African descent, I feel lifted." Brutus's comments remind us that celebrating heritage in meaningful and engaged ways has enduring and transformational resonance for communities, and especially for communities in the diaspora. That the Christophean coat of arms (with its central motif of a phoenix rising from the ashes) and the motto "Je renais de mes cendres" were included on this iteration of the plaque (Figure 12) was therefore significant, championing the resilience not only of the imprint itself, but of the community that brought it to life.



Figure 12. Photograph of Marie-Louise Christophe blue plaque in situ at 5 Exmouth Place, Hastings, 3 October 2022. Image credit: author's own. The centre panel includes the Christophean coat of arms and the dedication inscription reads "JE RENAISS DE MES CENDRES" (I am reborn from my ashes).

The Contingency of Resilience: Emotional Labour, Wellbeing and the Commons

The need to be resilient, to be insurgent, and to make things happen beyond the grant-funded life-cycle of a designated research project that allows us the freedom to create with abandon necessitates a reckoning with the fact that meaningful caretakership demands labour. All too often, much of this labour is unpaid and uncredited, and is incredibly extractive, especially for the untenured and precariously employed who, like me, negotiate caregiving responsibilities and a fractional full-time equivalency. Moreover, as Kaiama Glover has acknowledged in relation to the affordances of the digital ([Glover and Gil 2021, 228]), our radical aspirations need "grounding and reorient[ing]" to better understand the limits of the platforms we use and the resource that sustains them. Whereas a resource such as the collaboratively-conceived *A Colony in Crisis: The Saint-Domingue Grain Shortage of 1789*, which nevertheless owes its existence to the "many hours" of unpaid labour contributed by its authors ([Corlett Rivera et. al 2021]), has become self-sustaining thanks to a longstanding agreement with the institution that has pledged to underwrite it, ^[8] many others have to draw on personal resources to keep their assemblages alive. This was the case for Jasmine Claude Narcisse's (now defunct) *Mémoire de Femmes*, a digital reproduction of a reference work and annotated bibliography on women from Haitian history that Narcisse was commissioned to put together by Unicef in Haiti that was first published in 1997. Hosted on her own self-maintained website ([Narcisse 2020]), Narcisse took down the reproduced book content pertaining to *Mémoire de Femmes* in 2023, partly motivated by her own contentious feelings about a work that was completed "over 30 years ago in Haiti, without access to all the sources available at the moment" but also in response to the fact that the book had "been pillaged," with people "reproduc[ing] parts (big and small) of it with zero credit" [Narcisse 2024]. Though a material imprint of Narcisse's *Mémoire* lives on in the original book that was published as part of the limited Unicef print-run, the void created by its once-presence as an open-access digital resource is a further reminder of the "mutability of the digital" [Donaldson 2021, 26]. Moreover, the excerpted pillaged passages that exist in various online spaces remind us that the affordances and freedoms of the digital do not instinctively nurture "ethical approaches ... to

capturing” or reproducing the work of others that shows respect for original authorship, labour and care [Donaldson 2021, 27].

Christina Sharpe’s directive that “We must become undisciplined” (qtd. in [Donaldson 2021, 19, 27]), should perhaps be foremost in our minds when we think about how our resources can adapt to shifting pressures and outlive any limited funding stream, ephemeral threats, pressures of time and labour, or “pillaging”. Indeed, I would venture that we not only need to be *undisciplined*, but also *antidisciplinary* in our praxis. In the same sense that we need to find alternatives to conventional archives of loss to rehabilitate the histories that have fallen within the interstices, we need to look beyond the academy, beyond the episteme and beyond the “traditional” frameworks of dissemination and communication characterised by “monographs, journal articles, and book chapters” that have been heretofore privileged as most valuable [McCarl et. al 2023]. This is not to discredit the prevailing importance of peer-reviewed scholarship in these forms – this article, after all, operates in dialogue with standards of scholarly rigour. It rather suggests that there are insights to be offered from co-creative, multimodal and interdisciplinary frameworks that do not lead to exclusively “academic” outputs. ^[9]

In order to create pathways toward resilience and sustainability, we need to be “agile, mobile, insurgent” (Sample, qtd. in [Corlett Rivera et. al 2021]): to find new (“guerilla”) interventions, strategies and frameworks that allow us to give our resources and their beneficiaries the care that they demand without extracting all of the time that we have to offer. This may mean that, ultimately, we relinquish ownership, or rather that we entrust our communities with ownership — that we share the land that we collectively till. As Daut entreats us, “we must operate with a form of “lakou consciousness” that moves us away from a logic of individuality (private property) and toward the feeling of togetherness (the commons) that living collectively requires, that is, being a part of a public” [Daut 2019a]. Of course, relinquishing ownership to a collaborative commons is not without ethical conundrums and we must ensure that, in so doing, we do not invisibilise what is in essence also a transference of labour and responsibility. In order to function as a collective endeavour — for the lakou to function as a lakou — there needs to be an equitable division of labour, which, in practice, is almost impossible to achieve without some degree of “discipline”.

Antidisciplinary approaches are not a summons to chaos, however, but rather an insurgent pushback against the structures that conspire to limit our endeavours. Insurgency is, like Daut acknowledges of the principle of collaboration and rasanblaj ([Daut 2019a]), deeply embedded in Haitian culture. Relinquishing ownership within this framework of undisciplined and insurgent praxis is about creating heritable legacies for our digital and public heritage assemblages, not about keeping them perpetually alive. Indeed, it is the process of allowing it to die so that it can have a new life as something else: a phoenix reborn from the ashes (to borrow the motif from the Christophean coat of arms). As Donaldson reminds us, “inhabiting the space of the undisciplined ... require[s] recognizing and contending with the temporalities of digital material.” In this way, though we may not always be able to tend to our gardens, in planting multiple seeds — intermingled with the seeds sown by others — we might hope that some will flower and continue to flourish even in our absence. Though Narcisse’s *Mémoire de Femmes* is no longer accessible as a transcribed digital resource, it has served as a source of inspiration for artists, scholars and others (including myself) who interrogate the absences and erasures of “official” histories and seek to reimagine and reassemble the lives of the brilliant Haitian women that grand narratives have overlooked. Moreover, and most importantly, the original book remains accessible in numerous research libraries globally. Though the impermanence of digital resources can make them difficult to cite reliably or verify over time, creating multiple imprints of these resources (by way of physical texts, exhibits, material objects, archiving exercises or other digital assemblages) enables them to exist within an evolving and dynamic ecosystem that is undergirded by the principles of rasanblaj.

Through the various constellations of *Fanm Rebèl*, I have endeavoured to be undisciplined and insurgent: creating multiple digital and public heritage assemblages which have in turn been nurtured and, in many instances, made possible by the lakou (or kolektif). My efforts to promote resilience for these assemblages are manifested in their multiplicity and their multimodality. Each assemblage, whether material or digital, exists as an imprint. A heritage plaque wrought in cast aluminium and affixed to a building confers a sense of permanence and indelibility that a website that is subject to problems of ephemerality and reliant on continued maintenance does not. However, this presupposes the steadfastness and resilience of the walls to which this avowedly indelible object is affixed. During the Blitz bombings of

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the second World War, much of the Portman Estate development that encompassed Marie-Louise Christophe's Marylebone dwelling was destroyed. It is a miracle that the original townhouse still stands. Nothing in the realm of digital or public heritage is *truly* permanent, however indelible it may *seem*. The fact remains, however, that even despite its fallibilities, imprints of its significance as a public heritage site exist elsewhere: on social media; on recorded livestreams; in newspaper articles (including the front page of Haiti's premier newspaper, *Le Nouvelliste*); in the radio archives of *Radio France International*; in the collective memory of those who attended its unveiling; in the indexed database of "Historical Landmarks" on Google Maps; in the minds of all the passersby who have given pause to observe it since; and in the will of the pilgrims who continue to make special journeys to pay tribute to a site that connects them with the memory of Haiti's first and only queen.

There is always more work — more labour — to be given in creating heritable and resilient pathways for our assemblages. We can always do more to push the boundaries of our "radical collaborations" to create what Huet, Alteri and Taylor have termed "transformational access" [Huet et al. 2021, 104]. I, for one, hope that *Fanm Rebèl* continues to expand its limits with likeminded partners, producing more curated digital content with *Rendering Revolution* and developing open-access educational resources and community outreach programmes in association with the Haitian Chamber of Commerce, the Knowledge Project and Black Butterfly. Whether or not each assemblage is able to endure, however, what is most important is that the imprints of the histories at their core exist elsewhere, nurtured by the activist aspirations and collaborative endeavours of other caring hands. In the hands of the many, these imprints will, it is hoped, continue to multiply, converge (and diverge) to resist colonialist violence and neglect and create possibilities of *rasanblaj* for Haiti's *fanm rebèl* anew.

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Acknowledgements

Scholarship related to this article was made possible by a Leverhulme Trust Early Career Research Fellowship.

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Notes

[1] Paul Clammer is the author of the Bradt travel guide on *Haiti* (2012/2017) and the biography *Black Crown* (2023). The conference paper became the basis of an article for a special issue of *Atlantic Studies* on Colonial Caribbean visual cultures [Willson 2021].

[2] The Kingdom of Hayti (1811-1820) was a short-lived exercise in monarchic sovereignty inaugurated by former Haitian revolutionary general Henry Christophe. Following the assassination of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Haiti's first independent head of state and later self-anointed emperor, in 1806, a schism emerged between the surviving political players who had contributed to his downfall. The territorial governance of independent Haiti was divided between a southern Republic of Hayti and a northern State of Hayti in 1807. Under the stewardship of Christophe, the northern State of Hayti became a Kingdom in 1811 and Christophe was crowned king in a coronation ceremony conducted by Jean-Baptiste Joseph (Cornille) Brelle, Grand Archbishop of Haiti. Christophe's reign as a black monarch in the New World was short-lived, ending dramatically in October 1820 following a stroke, a political coup and his death by suicide. For more on the history of the Kingdom of Hayti, see Daut [Daut 2019b] and [Clammer 2023].

[3] Though I have been given privileged access to the archival and heritage collections of Haitian private Haitian collectors such as Joseph Guerdy Lissade, Gaéton Mentor and Alex Von Lignau, this has resulted from respectful solicitation and meaningful, ongoing and reciprocal interactions across the life cycle of a project and beyond.

[4] In rural Haitian communities, *konbit* refers to a type of agrarian labour cooperative that galvanises around defined community projects. The labour is often supplemented by wider communal contributions designed to nourish and inspire joy, such as the preparation of food and drink and communal labour songs. The *konbit* is in essence, however, a reciprocal pact whereby those who solicit the support of their fellow community members are implicitly expected to return the gesture when called upon (See Jennie M. Smith, 2001, pp. 84-87).

[5] In addition to a Mount Holyoke College Alumnae Fellowship, Meï and Square have been successful in securing successive rounds of funding from a Research Support Grant at the University of Massachusetts Amherst which have, to date, ensured that the project could continue living as a bilingual resource.

[6] Despite the fact that only twelve new blue plaques are granted each year by English Heritage, only 4% of figures honoured by the their Blue Heritage Plaque scheme have been from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background.

[7] The nomination form for the English Heritage Blue Plaque scheme stipulates that the following criteria should be met for the nominated person(s):i. They shall be understood to have made some important positive contribution to human welfare or happiness; andii. Their achievements should have made an exceptional impact in terms of public recognition; oriii. There shall be strong grounds for believing that the subjects are regarded as eminent and distinguished by a majority of members of their own profession or calling.'

[8] *A Colony in Crisis* is able to continue running thanks to the financial support of the University of Maryland Libraries.

[9] Chancy and Willson's *Rasanblaj Fanm* conference [Chancy and Willson 2024] and Meï and Square's *Revolisyon Toupatou* exhibition [Meï and Square 2025] are examples of imprints of digital public heritage assemblages that combined performance showcases, exhibits and opportunities to build community, upheld by ethics of care and inclusion.

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