



Friends of Caracol Newsletter Summer 2008

Hello from Belize - Firstly, we apologise to all Friends of Caracol for the delay in sending out this Newsletter. We shall say it is because so much has happened since the exhibitions in the UK and we just didn't know how or where to start. Whatever the reason, we send our thanks and best wishes to all supporters. The following update shares a little of what has been happening in Arenal Belize and Guatemala since October 2007.

Workshops - Since October 2007, the training for the *Caracoles* in Arenal has been continuous and has included; juggling, prop-making, stilt walking, creative writing, environmental education, alternative photographic techniques, theatre, puppetry, digital animation, storytelling and project planning. Workshops have been delivered by facilitators from Guatemala, Australia, Britain, Spain and the United States and give the *Caracoles* unique opportunities to learn from experienced people willing to share their knowledge.



Caja Lúdica & the Guatemalan Community Arts Network - Caja Lúdica is a Guatemalan organisation that trains young people from numerous communities in the art of Carnival and Circus. Caracol is a member of a Community Arts Network that enables facilitators to come and train the *Caracoles* who will, eventually, train other young people. Caracol hosts facilitators, participates in coordination meetings and shares expertise with other groups in the network.



Los *Caracoles* participate in Caja Lúdica workshops and produce their first carnival in Arenal.

La Casita de Caracol (Caracol - Youth Development Centre) - In March of this year, Caracol was given the keys to an old school building in Arenal to use as our Youth Development Centre (the name of the centre is still to be decided). While the building is not owned by Caracol (it is on long-term loan by the Catholic Church) we have been allowed to make it our own and after some investment in necessary repairs the *Caracoles* have begun the more interesting task of interior mural design and workshops.



Los Caracoles prepare the walls for mural painting.



Los Caracoles painting the nature mural.

Mural Design

English theatre set designer, Christabel Cant came to Belize in May and trained a group of 10 *Caracoles* in Mural design. Under her guidance during 18 days of work the group designed and produced a mural for the Caracol Youth development Centre. The Mural combines distinctive environmental characteristics of Belize and Guatemala. The mural group will now work to realize designs for two more walls using the techniques they have learned.

Living on the Borderline - The exhibition of 30 banners has continued touring Belize accompanied by presentations given by young *Los Caracoles*. It has been shown at a Cultural Day in the Maya Mopan village of San Jose (Toledo District), at Galen University and at Mount Carmel High School (Cayo District).

Teachers and students at Mount Cramel High School view the Living on the Borderline exhibition. April 2008



Alternative Photography - Laura Blacklow, of the Boston Museum School and Massachusetts College of Art, has been delivering workshops at Fotokids of Guatemala for the past 10 years. Thanks to a travel grant she came to Arenal on her way to Guatemala in May and facilitated workshops on alternative photographic techniques.

Caracol members learning Polaroid Lifts

Some examples of Polaroid Lifts and Polaroid Transfers.





Caracol Environmental Group participate in Earth Day 2008 with a river clean

Environmental Education & River Clean

Caracol environmental coordinator Shannon Kenny has been working with the environmental group since August 2007. They have worked on environmental banners, studies of the Arenal fauna and flora, a Mopan River clean (as part of Earth Day), compass usage and mapping. The group hope to begin a plant nursery project soon.



Caracol Environmental Group reuse plastic bottles as seed nurseries.

English as a Second Language

This peer education programme involves training Caracoles to be youth leaders and to share their knowledge with others. Rachel Hartgen, a student at Belize's Galen University, facilitated two months of English as a Second Language classes to a group of 4 Caracoles who will give classes to Caracol members from Arenal, Guatemala. Caracols youth development worker, Claudia Orantes continues giving ESL training.

Culture-Nature – New Paintings by Maritza Barrera

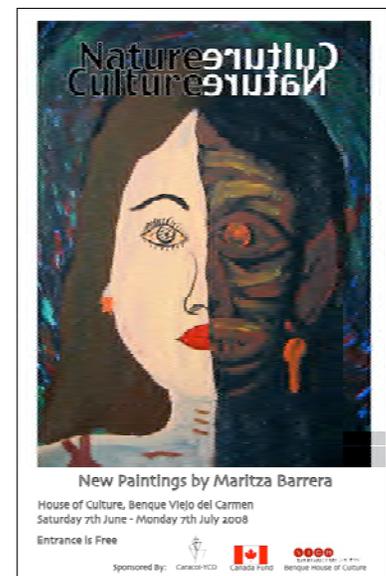
On Friday 6th June 2008 Caracol student, Maritza Barrera opened her first solo exhibition of paintings and poetry at the House of Culture in Benque Viejo del Carmen. The exhibition, Culture-Nature, provides the audience with a view of how culture and nature interact in 'intercultural' Arenal.

Maritza signs her paintings and gives her welcome speech at the opening



Some of the Caracoles at the opening.

The exhibition poster



A love story in 101 words

By Maritza Barrera

It was early in the morning and there was no sound of cars yet. Sasha was sat on one of the seats from the bus stop waiting for a nice taxi to come so she can leave forever. When suddenly she heard the gears of a car approaching. She asked for a drop and when she went inside it to sit on the back seat she was surprised and her mouth went wide open. She realized that Sam was not dead as her family told her. She couldn't speak for a while but her tears seemed to be of happiness.

Theatre and Creative Writing Workshops

Peter Cant, a Theatre graduate from Warwick University first heard of Caracol when he visited the *Living on the Borderline Exhibition* at Bargehouse in September 2007. In October 2007 he visited Arenal and gave a workshop on 'The Senses'. Between March and the middle of July 2008 he was in Arenal delivering workshops on theatre, creative writing and shadow puppetry. Peter hopes to return before the end of the year. These workshops were sponsored by The British High Commission, the Rose Bruford Memorial Fund & The Canada Fund. You can read about Peter's experiences with Caracol in Arenal on his Blog at: <http://pjolyonhcant.livejournal.com>

Claudia's son Claudio Padilla came to Arenal in July and shared some of the exercises he has taken at his Theatre School in Guatemala City. Claudio was impressed at how the *Caracoles* responded to the challenging activities.



Presenting Arenal's oral history

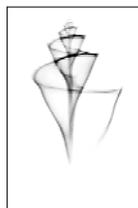


Behind the scenes at the puppet theatre



A puppet butterfly dreams

New Funding - Since the beginning of 2008 Caracol has received two significant grants. The Canada Fund works with communities in the border area between Belize and Guatemala and accepted a proposal by Caracol to develop the project in Arenal. The Canada Fund grant is being used to cover workshop expenses, building repairs, training, outreach and new equipment. The UK-based LINKS Charity have also given Caracol a significant grant in support of the training, exchange and outreach programme in Arenal. We take this opportunity to thank those at LINKS and Canada Fund for supporting Caracol's intercultural project in Arenal.



From the Caracol Trustees

The exhibition at Bargehouse in September of last year marked the end of the first 5 years of the Caracol Project. In the event it also marked an important turning point. As Claudia and Jon have mentioned, Caracol has since attracted significant funding from The Canada Fund and the Links Charity and also has been given sole use of the old Arenal Belize Primary School. Coming at this time these have been a tremendous boost to the launch of the second 5 year programme of activities.

The Trustees are proud to have been associated with Caracol since the very beginning and take this opportunity to congratulate Claudia, Jon and the *Caracoles* on their hard work, commitment and achievements.

Myra and Stuart have recently returned from an extended visit to Central America – including several visits to the project in Arenal. They were delighted to renew acquaintance with the *Caracoles*, many of whom they first met 4 years ago. They were also reminded of the difficulties faced by the young people – lack of resource, unmade roads, need to work in support of the family from an early age, tropical storms and so on. They watched and took part in Workshops and were impressed with the balance between serious hard work and good fun, the number of different and innovative activities, the manner in which the *Caracoles* support and constructively criticise each other and the overall warm and friendly atmosphere.

Thanks to the support of the many Friends of Caracol each of our fund-raising events in 2008 has been a great success - especially the 50's & 60's Evening and the Plant Sale. As a result we are well on the way to achieving our target for this year. Of course the grants received are a great help but we need to continue to raise funds by our traditional means – albeit perhaps at a slightly less frenetic level!

Contact Us:

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