Ailene Yasmin Torres

The Reichhold Center for the Arts Gallery is pleased to present the powerful, provocative photography of Ailene Yasmin Torres. Ms. Torres was a reporter for the Virgin Islands Daily News, when she traveled to Haiti to report on the devastating earthquake. She compiled her exhibit based on her experience in Haiti.

Ms. Torres did not follow the traditional route into journalism. After school, she spent most of her 20s in her hometown of New York City figuring out how to contribute to society. Following the events of Sept. 11, 2001, Ms. Torres, who always considered herself a writer, realized she could make an impact in the world around her through reporting.

Her career has since been marked by investigative reporting that has spurred many accolades and national exposure. At the Birmingham Post-Herald her four-day series chronicling the history of the Ensley neighborhood, was featured as a topic on the local NPR station and recognized by the Birmingham Association of Black Journalists.

As a reporter for The Tennessean, she covered one of the paper’s biggest stories, traveling to Ajijic, Mexico, to report on the arrest of then-murder suspect, Perry March. Her stories resulted in several live appearances onGrete van Susteren, The Big Show and Catherine Crier Live.

In 2007, Ms. Torres traveled Europe for several months before settling in Prague, Czech Republic, where she worked as a freelance writer for several publications including an English-language newspaper, The Prague Post. She returned to the U.S. in January 2009.

In October 2009 Ms. Torres moved to St. Thomas to begin work at the Virgin Islands Daily News. In December, she completed a 16-page series on Haitians living in the USVI.

After the earthquake struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, Ms. Torres traveled to Port-au-Prince, notepad and camera in hand. She spent two weeks reporting in Haiti—often sleeping in a tent on the roof of L’Hôpital de la Communauté Haitienne.

With the aide of a Haitian translator and a driver, Ms. Torres made her way through the devastation, visiting neighborhoods, and orphanages, interviewing survivors of the earthquake and photographing events.

Sitting in the hospital hallway, with a very weak internet signal, Ms. Torres wrote and filed her stories back home to the Daily News on St. Thomas.

Her series of first-hand accounts ran in the VI Daily News, giving Virgin Islanders a vivid account of the work of USVI volunteers in Haiti.

Many of Ms. Torres’ photographs in the exhibit depict the structural damage of the earthquake, from buildings leaning precipitously surrounded by rubble and crumbling embra, to families basking with buckets in front of makeshift tents. Others reflect the attempt to resume a normal life in Haiti: school children drawing in coloring books, a childhood game of soccer, school girls hugging and smiling, and women selling fruits and vegetables in a makeshift market.

Torres says of the experience, “Overall I got to know for better and worse the people in a country that has been malign and misunderstood. I hope these photos show some of the Haitian heart and soul that I have some to admire, respect, and love.”

Ms. Torres Haiti exhibit will be on display in the Reichhold Gallery, until May 31, 2010. The Reichhold Gallery is open Monday – Friday 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. During a performance you may visit the gallery between 7 – 8 p.m. and at intermission.

Portraits of Haiti After the Earthquake