

Decorative Touches

Mary and Joseph

My most treasured pieces of Jamaican art are Mary and Joseph, perhaps partly because acquiring them took every ounce of my newly acquired Jamaican patience and partly because I've promised their former owner never to take them out of the country. I discovered them at Gallery Joe James in Rio Bueno, en route to Ocho Rios — not in the gallery proper but on a small stage that was part of the restaurant at the back. These two wooden statues stood facing each other as if in intimate conversation, so demure and childlike yet with so much wisdom in their gazes. Joe James himself — a tall, charming, and patrician Jamaican who weighs each word carefully before pronouncing it in his deep voice — happened to be in the shop that day. We had a lovely conversation, until he made it clear he had no intention of selling Mary and Joseph. I visited Joe (and Mary and Joseph) every time I drove to Ocho Rios, developing a warm relationship and exchanging views on Jamaican history and politics, topics about which Joe is both knowledgeable and opinionated. Out of the blue, one year later, I got a call saying, "I've decided to sell but not yet. When I do, you will have them." Another six months passed before Joe determined it was time. Mary and Joseph arrived escorted by Joe and his extended family and were installed in the perfect place at Greatview: each against a Pavilion pillar and gazing at one another as they had in Joe's restaurant. Now Joe comes from time to time to visit them. The promise I made to Joe means I will have to stay in Jamaica forever. How could I bear to part with them?



After waiting patiently for years, I finally welcomed Mary and Joseph to Greatview, posing them for this photo by the pool before placing them by the Pavilion pillars.