

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Ring In The New Year With 'Elements Of Culture' Art Show

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Cynthia Graham **January 01, 2015**



A new year brings with it new opportunities to enjoy the best of Virgin Islands arts and culture. And tonight on St. Croix, residents can ring in 2015 with a new show from photographer David Berg and painter Lucien Downes at the Walsh Metal Works Gallery in Peter's Rest beginning at 5 p.m.

The show, titled "Elements of Culture: Fire, Earth, Water," is a part of the island-wide Art Thursdays initiative, and combines the different mediums and unique styles of the two artists under the common theme of celebrating their shared Crucian heritage, according to a press release issued about the event.

When asked why they chose Jan. 1 to open the show, Downes said, "To ride the Carnival wave and bring the New Year in with a creative splash."

Berg concurs.

"Both of us have very strong philosophies of our heritage that are expressed through our art," Berg said. "We chose to work on the pieces for this show together in honor of keeping our true elements of culture alive for this year's Crucian Carnival season."

Although this is their first collaborative effort, it is not the first time the artists have exhibited under the same roof. In 2011, they both participated in the Good Hope Fine Arts Show on St. Croix and became fond of each others' work.

Berg was born in Puerto Rico, but raised in St. Croix. From his childhood, he had long held the desire to create art. He only discovered photography when he was encouraged to pick up a camera to fill his days after suffering a serious injury.

Soon, Berg said, photography became his tool for artistic expression. He later honed his skill at the Center for Digital Imaging and Arts at Boston University, where he gained certification in photography.

A [self-taught artist](#), Downes' paintings can be found in the home of the late Maya Angelou and in other private collections across the globe. He uses a variety of materials including resin, acrylic, fibers, raw pigment, plexiglass and miscellaneous objects to create his pieces.

The native-born Crucian said this eclectic media mix demonstrates freedom of thought and expression, and combines "spiritual and worldly elements that function independently at times or merge to encompass a whole."

Of the show, Downes said, "Our pieces will be presented in a contemporary format that exemplify cutting-edge techniques."

Downes' work have been exhibited in countless shows throughout the Caribbean and on the U.S. mainland.

The artists say that while the exhibit will primarily highlight the natural elements of fire, earth and water, they are hoping to bring new perspective to cultural themes, as well.

"I feel there are painful fundamental parts of our culture that have become standardized as jovial selling points for entertainment," Berg said. "I hope with my work people will be able to see them in a different way."

Like Downes, Berg wishes for attendees to see the beauty of Virgin Islands culture in the exhibit, but he also wants visitors to "see that culture is able to evolve and grow with each year."

"Elements of Culture: Fire, Earth, Water" will be on exhibit Jan. 1 - 24 (except on parade days) at the Walsh Metal Works Gallery located at 6214 Peter's Rest. The exhibit is free and open to the public.

For more information, call (340) 332-2504.

Image Credit: "Elemental: Mother Earth" by Lucien Downes

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