

The Virgin Islands Consortium

At Starving Artists Day Event, A Chance For Extra Sales And Networking

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ST. CROIX -- The showers that caused the postponement of Starving Artists Day, scheduled for Sunday, November 29 at the Estate Whim Museum, probably worked to the benefit of organizers and the artists themselves, as the rainfall allowed more participants to sign up for what turned out to be a well-attended and spirited celebration of art yesterday.

In short, Starving Artists Day sees local business people with either hand-crafted or locally made products, coming together at one location to showcase their offerings. There was also no shortage of talent at the sprawling affair, with 80 vendors on hand with a myriad of items -- from handmade jewelry, bags and necklaces, to ointments, creams

and soaps, just to name a few -- proudly displayed at the estate as more than 2,300 residents descended on the location sampling and buying.

And one should not be fooled by the event's "Starving Artists" title; as the gathering has been for a long time used by major brands here, including Crucian Gold, to attract new business and exhibit popular as well as niche products.

Another not-so-starving artist, Dr. Karen C. Thurland, who's written multiple books documenting the territory's history, spoke with The Consortium about her presence at the event, making known that she loves attending because, aside from selling books, the networking proves to be extremely useful, and that people are usually astonished when she talks about the islands' history.

"From the time I was a teenager I wanted to write about history -- our history," she said. "I love to read, and I read about other places all the time and there was nothing about us. So I'm trying to fill that emptiness, especially to pass it on to future generations," Dr. Thurland added, praising yesterday's occurrence as a good place to help move that vision forward.

Dr. Thurland made known, among other things, that there used to be trains on St. Croix. She also revealed that the territory's government had its own rum -- all with images to back up her findings -- and that residents once utilized the [charcoal iron](#) to press clothes.

Elsewhere on the grounds of the estate, The Consortium spoke with a founder of Cultured, a company that produces a wide array of natural and organic products, who again made mention of the unique networking opportunities that Starving Artists Day fosters.

"I've walked around and talked about collaboration with another vendor here, and we're actually going to be working on something on Monday. So this was fertile ground to meet up with everybody else and kick up another gear," said Ramone Reid. Her company was founded on January 1, 2015, and has seen steady growth locally, on the mainland and in surrounding Caribbean islands, she said.

Yet, even with all the established companies that use Starving Artists Day as somewhat of an exhibit, there were many more who came hoping to make some sales and gain visibility.

Artists like Danielle Kearns-Robinson, whose work includes handmade bags, clothing and jewelry, said she recently decided to go full-time with her business, and sees the event as an outlet to help make her name ubiquitous.

"There are so many people here that are artists and don't have a platform to showcase their art, so it's a great time to do so," Ms. Kearns-Robinson, who also works part-time with Crucian Gold and teaches an art class to children at the National Parks Service, said.

According to Sonya Jacobs Dow, executive director of the St. Croix Landmark Society, which hosts the yearly event, Starving Artists Day started after Hurricane Hugo struck St. Croix in 1989, as a way of helping people whose homes and businesses had been

destroyed, to come together and find items that they could buy for their families.

The effort has grown immensely, morphing into something that artists as well as residents look forward to as part of the Christmas season here. And with its over 2,300 attendees just about halfway through (last year saw 2,100 in total), and 80 art vendors, Starving Artists Day was deemed a success by its organizers, and attendees like Senator Sammuel Sanes.

"I love participating in these kinds of events. We have so much talent here on St. Croix; what more could we asked for?" Mr. Sanes said. "It's just wonderful seeing all the crafts here and I'm looking forward to a safe and happy season."

Food vendors kept event-goers happy with an array of offerings, and bands and a deejay livened the occasion with fitting music.

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