

The Virgin Islands Consortium

CFVI Receives \$450,000 Grant From ArtPlace America To Fund CHANT VI Project

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The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI) has been awarded a grant of \$450,000 from ArtPlace America National Creative Placemaking Fund in 2016 to fund Invisible Heritage: Identity Memory and Our Town a project of CHANT (Crucian Heritage and Nature Tourism, Inc.), CFVI has announced.

The ArtPlace America's Creative Placemaking Fund is a highly competitive national program that invests money in communities across the country in which artists, arts organizations, and arts and culture activity will help drive community development change, according to the release.

According to CHANT Executive Director Frandelle Gerard, CHANT's project is one of 29 projects chosen, from almost 1400 applications, to receive funding.

"We are so excited, not just for CHANT and our partners at Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts and the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI), but also for the town of Frederiksted which will be the subject of the project. This is also a workforce development project and will provide training and employment opportunities in traditional building arts for the young people of the town," Gerard said. CFVI President Dee Baecher-Brown added that it is an honor for the Community Foundation to support the work of CHANT and to be a partner in this wonderful community initiative."

"Creative Placemaking seeks the full and robust integration of arts, culture, and community-engaged design into the decisions that define the ebb and flow of community life. These grant recipients embody what this looks like at its most effective best," said Rip Rapson, president and CEO of The Kresge Foundation and Chair of the ArtPlace President's Council. "The sheer volume of applications for these grants suggests the growing updraft of creative placemaking efforts throughout the nation."

ArtPlace America's Creative Placemaking Fund makes awards to support projects in the sectors of agriculture and food; economic development; education and youth; environment and energy; health, housing; immigration; public safety; transportation; or workforce development.

Invisible Heritage: Identity Memory and Our Town is a collaborative project with CHANT the Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts and CFVI. The project focuses on the town of Frederiksted, VI, a small grid planned city on the western edge of the island of St. Croix, and is known as Freedom City by the town's 3,000 year-round residents. Local leaders have developed plans to drive economic investment in the region focusing on upgrades to aesthetics and public safety. CHANT sees these city plans as an opportunity to build a local workforce pipeline in advance of the millions of dollars of public investments planned for housing facade and community arcade improvements.

Currently, artisans are imported from other Caribbean islands and from various countries in Africa and Europe when preservation and rehabilitation of local historical structures are conducted. CHANT has identified a collective of local Master Artisans that will develop a local school to provide the education and certification necessary for locals to be eligible for the preservation investments planned in the years to come.

Monica Marin, Cultural Preservation & Restoration Coordinator of the Department of Public Works and Artist Advisory Chair of the CMCArts said, "We are grateful to our public and private sector partners for helping to develop the full scope of the project." The collaborators include Kendal Henry, Director, Percent for Art Program NYC Dept. of Cultural Affairs, Akua Jackson, Development Manager of CMCArts, Gerville Larsen, AIA and artist, Gustav James, Commissioner of VI Dept. of Public Works, Vegan Ellis, Master Artisan, LaVaughn Belle, Visual Artist and Myrl Hendricks, Principal, CTEC VI Dept. of Education.

Gerard stated that CHANT, CMCArts and advisor Kendal Henry see this grant as the initial investment to engage the community around the issue of revitalization and the power of art to transform culture.

“We are absolutely thrilled to be adding this dynamic set of projects to our portfolio this year,” says F. Javier Torres, Director of National Grantmaking. “The thoughtful and innovative strategies in this year’s projects are truly indicative of the vital role that artists and arts and culture organizations play in strengthening local policy, and the social, physical, and economic fabric of communities.”

The complete list of the 2016 projects for ArtPlace’s National Creative Placemaking Fund is [here](#).

For more information on the project and to provide additional necessary funding support contact Frandelle Gerard at fgerard@chantvi.org or 340-277-4834.

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