

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Ed. Complex Students Enjoy Art Exchange Excursion To St. John

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ST. CROIX -- St. Croix Educational Complex High School (SCECHS) art students recently enjoyed the fruits of their creativity in a Virgin Islands Centennial-themed art exchange excursion to St. John, the Department of Education made known Friday.

In late April, twelve National Art Honor Society and SCEC Art Club students traveled with SCECHS Visual Arts educator Danica David, and four parent chaperones. Prior to the educational trip, the group fundraised by selling Virgin Islands Cultural Contributors Calendars. The calendar project is a collaborative effort devised in fall 2017 by Ms. David and fellow St. Croix Educational Complex Drama and Speech educator, Sayeeda Carter. Ms. David's students created artwork for the calendar, while Ms. Carter's students

interviewed and wrote biographies about the selected participants. The project is an interactive learning experience for SCECHS students and participants in the community who are actively contributing to Virgin Islands culture.

Several months before the calendar project began, Priscilla Hintz Rivera Knight and husband David Knight, Jr., owners of Baja El Sol Gallery on St. John, invited Ms. David and her art students to display artwork in the gallery's 100 Years Of...A Centennial Transfer Reflection Exhibition. The Knights are actively involved in developing the arts on St. John and St. Thomas.

The exhibition opened to the public on April 7, but the SCECHS delegation arrived later in the month. The students were in awe of the artistic representations found in the centennial transfer exhibit. "I was amazed at all the ways various artists interpreted the theme," said 9th grader Tyrone Reed. The Knights' vision for the show was for participating artists to emulate the nuances of U.S. Virgin Islanders' senses of identity and history after the transfer from Danish to American occupation.

Several SCECHS National Art Honor Society students along with Ms. David created acrylic, mixed media, or assemblage paintings. Student Shania Joseph created an acrylic painting of St. Croix's Fort Frederik with two moko jumbies dancing. Her art depicted the expressive cultural freedom that Virgin Islanders experience today. Student Aisha Roberts' mixed media painting included images of St. Croix Government House with the Danish, American and Virgin Islands flags juxtaposed in three equal parts behind the building. Her artwork showcased Virgin Islanders' substantial dependence on the government. Student Naeem Sealey's acrylic painting depicted a carnival masquerader with the Virgin Islands flag. Describing his creation, Naeem said, "My artwork is about the fun and playful side of Virgin Islands' culture today."

The acrylic paintings of students Bianca Alexis and Yolinette Velazquez reflected the harsh reality of slavery under Danish occupation and celebrates the freedom that Virgin Islanders experience today. Ms. David created an assemblage triptych series that depicted the resiliency of enslaved African who are the ancestors of many Virgin Islanders today. She incorporated images of the enslaved tightly positioned on a slave ship as the first layer on board panels. A smaller-sized linen canvas was then attached in the center of each panel. On the linen canvases, Ms. David portrayed the Danish flag, the American flag, and the Virgin Islands flag. Each flag incorporates touches of African fabric.

Other students that participated in the excursion created artwork for various art-related projects and exhibitions. Jahmoi Benjamin, Niesha Bennett, Ernie Bodley Jr., Sanay Hewitt, Sherville Huggings Jr., and Tyrone Reed created artwork for the 2018 VI Cultural Contributors Calendar Project. Zaquira Carti and Kyanna Torrens created artwork for the VI Congressional Art Award competition.

While visiting St. John, students spent two days participating in art-focused and historical education activities. They attended Kurt Marsh Jr.'s Industrial Art class at the Julius E. Sprauve School. Mr. Marsh, a second-generation artist and wood turner, demonstrated how to transform a mahogany slab into a bowl on a lathe. Zaquira Carti, a senior, said, "Mr. Marsh sparked my interest in industrial arts. I would love to learn more about it when I go to college." Mr. Marsh is the great-nephew of world-renowned artist and wood turner,

Avelino Samuel.

At St. John's Giffit Hill School, the group participated in other art education activities. They joined Ms. Rosemary Richards's art class where they learned to create Japanese-inspired Sumi-e paintings and how to create ceramic bowls using the hump clay sculpting technique. The students also toured the campus and visited the social studies, yearbook, culinary arts, and drama classrooms. The group also enjoyed a tour of the Cinnamon Bay Beach Virgin Islands National Park's archeological museum.

The Knights organized the various educational activities for the St. Croix students. This was the second invitation SCECHS received from the family. Last year, SCECHS students participated in the Caribbean Colour exhibition at Yacht Haven and for the past two years, SCECHS the National Art Honor Society and SCEC Art Club students have traveled and participated in art exchange activities within the Virgin Islands' territory.

"I really want to broaden students' artistic perspective by traveling to other amazing countries every year," Ms. David concluded.