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St. Croix's Booming Street Art Scene Aims to Boost Community Morale

Art / **Published On March 07, 2021 05:56 AM /**

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Artist Ibeliz Guadelupe covers a graffiti tag with a vibrant red hibiscus. By. FREDERIKSTED PUBLIC ART ON INSTAGRAM

ST. CROIX — Art organizations and local artists are intentionally adding street or public art across St. Croix to boost community morale. The booming art scene is most notable in Frederiksted town, St. Croix's western twin town that is historically known as Freedom City.

The mission behind Clean Sweep Frederiksted is to make Frederiksted a safe and clean community, as shared by its founder and executive director Virginia Clairmont. The installation of art in the town is to address how people were feeling about their community, she added. In an effort to combat the accumulation of rubbish, couches and stoves on the street side, Clean Sweep

offers a stipend to local artists to place various pieces in certain areas that draw the attention of passerby's but also encourage residents and businesses in the vicinity to take pride in their community by keeping it pristine. According to Ms. Clairmont, it's working.

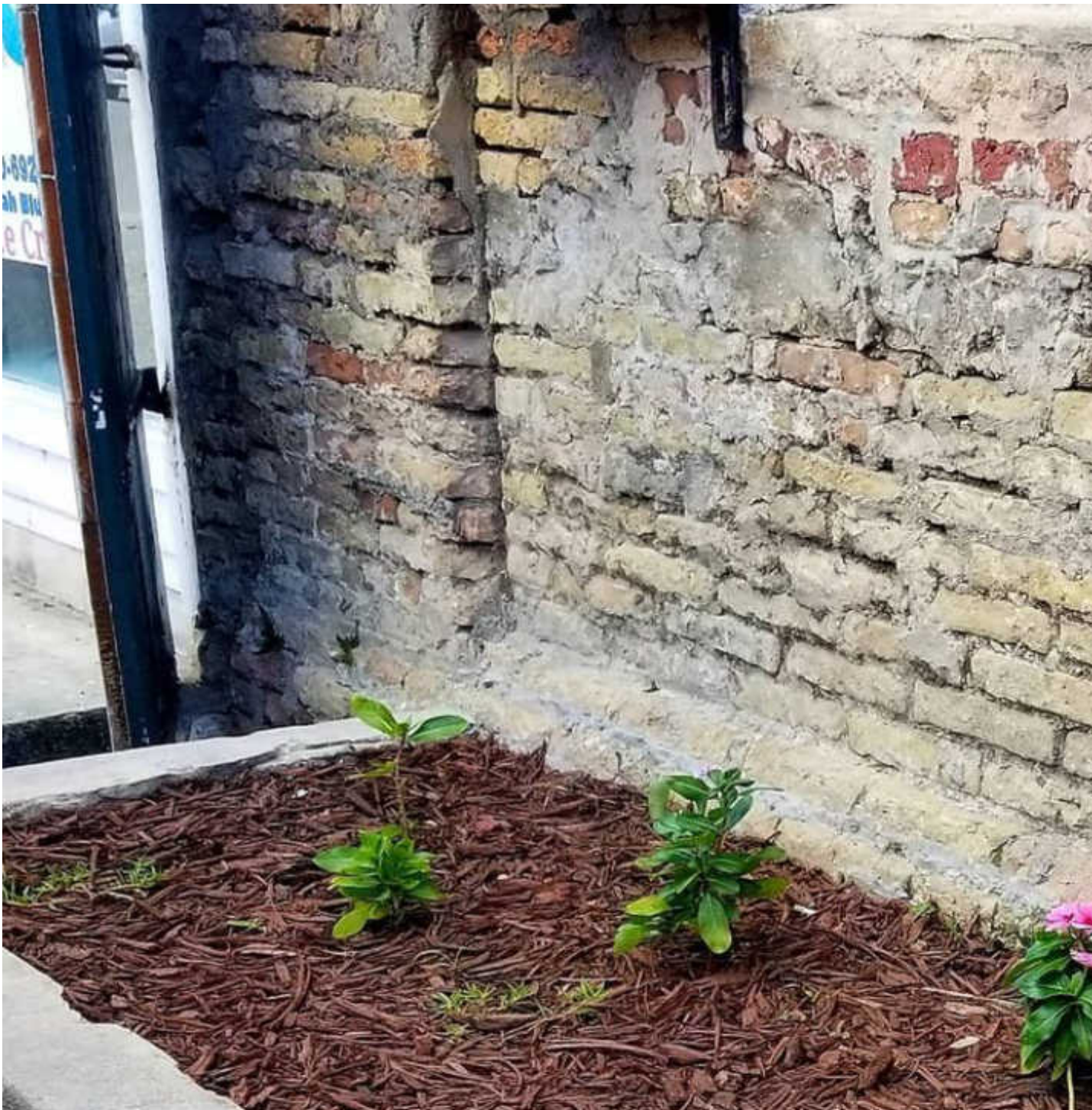
“Public art enhances everyone’s lives and makes people appreciate the environment the art is in or on,” stated Donna Boles, a 10-year resident of St. Croix and artist who creates tile mosaics from recycled tiles that are donated to her. Check out her mermaid and turtle along the Frederiksted Public Art Trail affixed to the Louie and Nacho’s Beach Bar/ Turtles Deli building.



Artist Donna Boles created a beautiful tile mosaic of a quaint mermaid and turtle swimming along. (Credit: Frederiksted Public Art on Instagram)

“My motivation is my culture,” said Waldemar Brodhurst, wire sculpture artist. He learned how to manipulate wire from the age of 14 while residing in Vieques and further developed his craft by using other recycled materials. Most of his sculptures feature women in honor of his late mother who was always joyous and smiling, he said.

He recounted stories of growing up in West, as Frederiksted is called, while creating lighted mini houses from seashells found along the beach with his uncle and watching his grandmother make dolls with scrap clothing. “It wasn’t easy growing up in West,” Mr. Brodhurst said. In an interview with the Consortium, he reflected on the crime that is currently riddling the territory and how he wishes he had the available resources to go into communities with high crime rates to bring art projects to the youths. On the self-guided public art trail, residents can find several wire sculptures and planters by Mr. Brodhurst as well as art poles and masks by his daughter Yanilsa Brodhurst.



Art using recycled materials by Waldemar Brodhurst. (Credit: Frederiksted Public Art on Instagram)

During the latter part of February, Hakim Callwood of Tour de Mural completed three murals along the trail, to include the bright yellow, blue, and white 'Frederiksted' mural that drivers and pedestrians now pass as they enter the town on Fisher Street. Mr. Callwood is a millennial with roots in St. Thomas but resides in Columbus, Ohio. His organization goes state-to-state to paint murals and takes followers on a virtual mural tour via Google maps.



Muralist Hakim Callwood brightens Fisher Street Frederiksted. (Credit: Frederiksted Public Art on Instagram)

Public art has always been a part of Virgin Islands culture, and it's not just Frederiksted being adorned. Lucien Downes's murals can be viewed at venues like Mutiny Vodka in Estate Sion Farm, Nikki's Wings N Things across from Plaza East, and El Sol Bar and Restaurant in Estate Peter's Rest. In 2016, he completed a mural on Company Street, Christiansted to depict the players of Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights and Bradley Christian, a local culture bearer. Mr. Downes is also known for the New Blood exhibits featuring seasoned and emerging artists

together as a platform for emerging artists to show their work alongside top artists on St. Croix, according to a release.

New Blood 4 “The Rebirth” opens April 10th and runs through May 31st at Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts. For more information on his projects, visit [The Artist: Lucien Downes](#) on Facebook, [@lucien_art](#) on Instagram, or his website at www.luciendownesart.com.

As a flashback to the early 1980’s, Elroy Simmonds created a mural entitled ‘Pieces of Time’ that once covered the east wall of the former Scotiabank building (now Christiansted Credit Union) that featured various time periods in Virgin Islands history. That art piece was still fully visible and reasonably faded with time behind the big tree up until hurricane Maria, relayed his daughter Khnuma Simmonds, owner of My Girlfriend’s Closet just right across the street from the mural.

These artists are a testament to the positive impact art has on the territory, so it’s important that the community supports their passion through exposing young people to art, buying art, and art appreciation initiatives, said Ms. Clairmont, the Clean Sweep Frederiksted founder executive director. “I’m hoping that placing art in a public sphere raises the level of support for all artists and art institutions in the Virgin Islands, not just in Frederiksted,” she expressed.

To get involved in the community beautification movement with Clean Sweep Frederiksted, email info@cleansweepfrederiksted.org. To see the pieces along the trail, visit [@frederikstedpublicart](#) on Instagram, and get familiar with the following artists along the trail:

- Donna Boles

IG: [@themoreilovedogs](#)

- Waldemar Brodhurst

FB: [Waldemar Brodhurst](#)

- Hakim Callwood

IG: [@hakimsartnstuff](#)

www.hakimsartnstuff.com or www.tourdemural.com