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## UVI Has its African Art Collection on Display at Fort Christian Museum

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ST. THOMAS — The University of the Virgin Islands Reichhold Center for the Arts has installed an exhibit of African masks from the university's African Art Collection at the Fort Christian Museum on St. Thomas. UVI launched the exhibit on Feb. 14 as part of the celebration of the university's 60th Anniversary. It will remain open to the public until March 31.

According to the release, the historic art collection was originally on display at the Reichhold Center for the Arts until Hurricanes Irma and Maria caused severe damage to the facility, partially exposing the exhibit. With support from the National Endowment of the Humanities and the aid of conservators from the [Smithsonian Institution](#) and [A.M. Art Conservation](#), Reichhold was able to restore several critically damaged pieces that are now on display.

“We are ecstatic to collaborate with Fort Christian and Museum Curator Monica Prosper on this exhibit. It breathes new life into the collection” said Denise Humphrey, director of the Reichhold Center for the Arts.

UVI said the exhibit contains Bundu helmets from the Sande society of Sierra Leone and Liberia. Also included are two “Maiden Spirit” masks from Nigeria. The Bundu helmets are initiation masks worn by young girls during rituals that induct them into womanhood, whereas the Maiden Spirit masks are worn by male dancers who perform for agricultural rituals during the dry season or at funerals of prominent figures in their society. These masks are intended to represent the spirit of a female ancestor and the ideals of beauty. There will be a few pieces added to the exhibit from the Robert and Donna DeJongh Collection later this month. Included will be African headdresses from the Democratic Republic of Congo collected by the DeJongh family.

“The collaboration between the University's Reichhold Center and the Fort Christian Museum is the first of many activities we will launch in celebration of UVI's 60th Anniversary,” said Mitchell Neaves, vice president for Institutional Advancement. “We encourage our residents and visitors to the Territory to visit the exhibit in the next few weeks to see the unique, curated art collections we have in the Virgin Islands.”

The Fort Christian Museum is open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Admittance is five dollars for locals and \$10 for visitors.

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