



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPNR & VIAC ISSUE CALL FOR ARTISTS FOR *WHEN THE WALLS ANSWER* AT FORT FREDERIK MUSEUM

The Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums (DLAM), the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), in partnership with The Virgin Islands Architecture Center for Built Heritage and Crafts (VIAC), announces a Call for Artists for *When the Walls Answer*, a juried exhibition at Fort Frederik Museum.

The exhibition honors the life and legacy of renowned Virgin Islands artist, scholar, and cultural preservation advocate Gerville René Larsen, and celebrates legendary Crucian artist El'Roy Simmonds for his lifelong contributions to the arts in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The exhibition will be presented at Fort Frederik Museum, a National Historic Landmark and site of profound historical significance where freedom was demanded and secured by Virgin Islands ancestors.

Conceived and curated by DLAM Chief Curator and VIAC Advisory Member Monica Marin, *When the Walls Answer* brings together works by established and emerging Virgin Islands artists, including students whose work engages architecture as a living archive of identity, memory, and cultural knowledge. Presented during Cultural Preservation Month (May), the exhibition explores how the built environment bears the imprint of the people who created it, and how those stories continue to shape Virgin Islands' identity today.

Gerville René Larsen's discourse-shifting artwork and advocacy encouraged a deeper, more humanized reading of architecture, illuminating the African-Caribbean legacies embedded in place. Architectural elements such as gingerbread fretwork, wrought-iron lattice screens, steep-pitched hip roofs, row houses, verandahs, courtyards, and climate-responsive design form a creolized visual language rooted in West African knowledge systems and reshaped through local materials, environmental adaptation, and cultural continuity.

Artists are invited to explore architecture not only as a synthesis of form and function, but as cultural inheritance and an expression of national identity. How does architecture reveal the cultural memory embedded in place? In what ways do buildings speak to histories of resilience, multiculturalism, and creative invention? How are contemporary forces—such as climate change,

development pressure, gentrification, and generational land loss—reshaping these spaces and the communities connected to them?

The exhibition seeks works that engage the architectural and cultural landscape of the Virgin Islands through research, storytelling, and material exploration. Submissions may interpret historically or architecturally significant sites, examine vernacular building traditions, or reflect on the evolving identity of our built environment. Artists are encouraged to consider how their work can reclaim narrative, challenge colonial frameworks, and imagine pathways toward preservation, equity, and self-determination.

All media are welcome, including painting, drawing, photography, mixed media, sculpture, installation, and woodworking.

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- **Call for Artists Opens:** Monday, April 13, 2026
 - **Proposal Submission Deadline:** Monday, May 11, 2026
 - **Artwork Drop-off:** Monday, May 25, 2026
 - **Exhibition Opening:** Saturday, May 30, 2026

Fort Frederik Museum

Submission Requirements

- Artist bio (maximum 250 words)
- Project statement (250–500 words) describing engagement with exhibition themes
- Images of proposed or completed work (include title, medium, and dimensions)

Submit materials to:

Monica Marin, Chief Curator, DLAM

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