

CALL FOR ARTISTS

WHEN THE WALLS ANSWER

Fort Frederik Museum | Opening May 30, 2026

Conceived and curated by DLAM Chief Curator and VIAC advisory member Monica Marin, the exhibition brings together works by established and emerging Virgin Islands artists, including students, whose works engage architecture as a tangible enduring archive of identity and cultural memory. Presented during Cultural Preservation Month (May), the exhibition reflects on how the built environment carries the imprint of the people who shaped it, and how those stories continue to shape Virgin Islanders' identity.

Historic towns across the Virgin Islands serve as repositories of cultural knowledge, where social, political, and economic histories are embedded in streets, structures, and spatial design. From the architectural relics of the colonial era, to the vernacular homes emerging from Free Black communities in the Free Gut and Savan neighborhoods that proudly reflect resistance and reinvention post-emancipation, the built environment preserves the lived history of the Virgin Islands. Gerville René Larsen's discourse-shifting artwork and cultural preservation advocacy paved the way for us to look beyond the edifices of buildings to a more humanized perspective and deeper understanding of the people behind the places. He illuminated the African-Caribbean legacies embedded in the built environment.

Architectural elements such as gingerbread fretwork, wrought-iron lattice screens, steep-pitched hip roofs, row houses, verandahs, courtyards, and climate-responsive design reflect a creolized visual language rooted in West African iconography, building traditions and knowledge systems, reshaped through local knowledge, materials and environmental necessity.

This exhibition invites artists to explore architecture not only as a synthesis of form and function, but as cultural inheritance and as an expression of national identity. How can architecture and design reveal the cultural memory embedded in place? How do buildings speak to histories of resilience, multiculturalism and creative invention? In what ways do contemporary pressures such as climate change, development, gentrification, and generational land loss impact the preservation of these spaces, and their communities?

We seek 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 architectural 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 for preservation and self-determination.

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

Important Dates

- Artist Call Opens: Monday, April 13, 2026
- Proposal Submittal Deadline: Monday, May 11, 2026
- Artwork Drop-off: Monday, May 25, 2025
- Exhibition Opening: Saturday, May 30, 2026, at Fort Frederik Museum

Submission Requirements

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

Submit to: Monica Marin, DLAM Chief Curator at monica.marin@dpnr.vi.gov

Presented by The Virgin Islands Architecture Center (VIAC) | DPNR-Division of Libraries, Archives & Museums | State Historic Preservation Office | Historic Preservation Commission, and funded in part by the Virgin Islands Council on the Arts

