

# So [ We ] Live

# Within Place, and without Space.

*Kurt Gregory Marsh, Jr.*

Part of Normans Land Peters Land,  
that place made abegge by Harry

## Topographisk Kort

Eylandis S. L<sup>AN</sup> udj America  
tilligemed de runden om liggen de Smaa, til Sels  
ubebugge<sup>re</sup> Kyster, somt nærmest liggen de Her<sup>o</sup>  
Søgade Paralune fra den ene til den anden  
Landet er indeholt udj S. Luarteres

A. *Aug Bay Quarter*  
 B. *Kaho Bay* -  
 C. *Riff Bay* -  
 D. *Coral Bay* -  
 E. *Oar Ende* -  
*Poli Keyde*  $17^{\circ}35'$

Mantle Stock of 10,000 Fox Paws - Haal

maalet op leen 1780  
P. P. Bokhoven

# So [ We ] Live

*Within Place, and Without Space.*

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Architecture Department

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Architecture in Architecture

at

Savannah College of Art and Design

Kurt Gregory Marsh Jr.

Savannah, GA

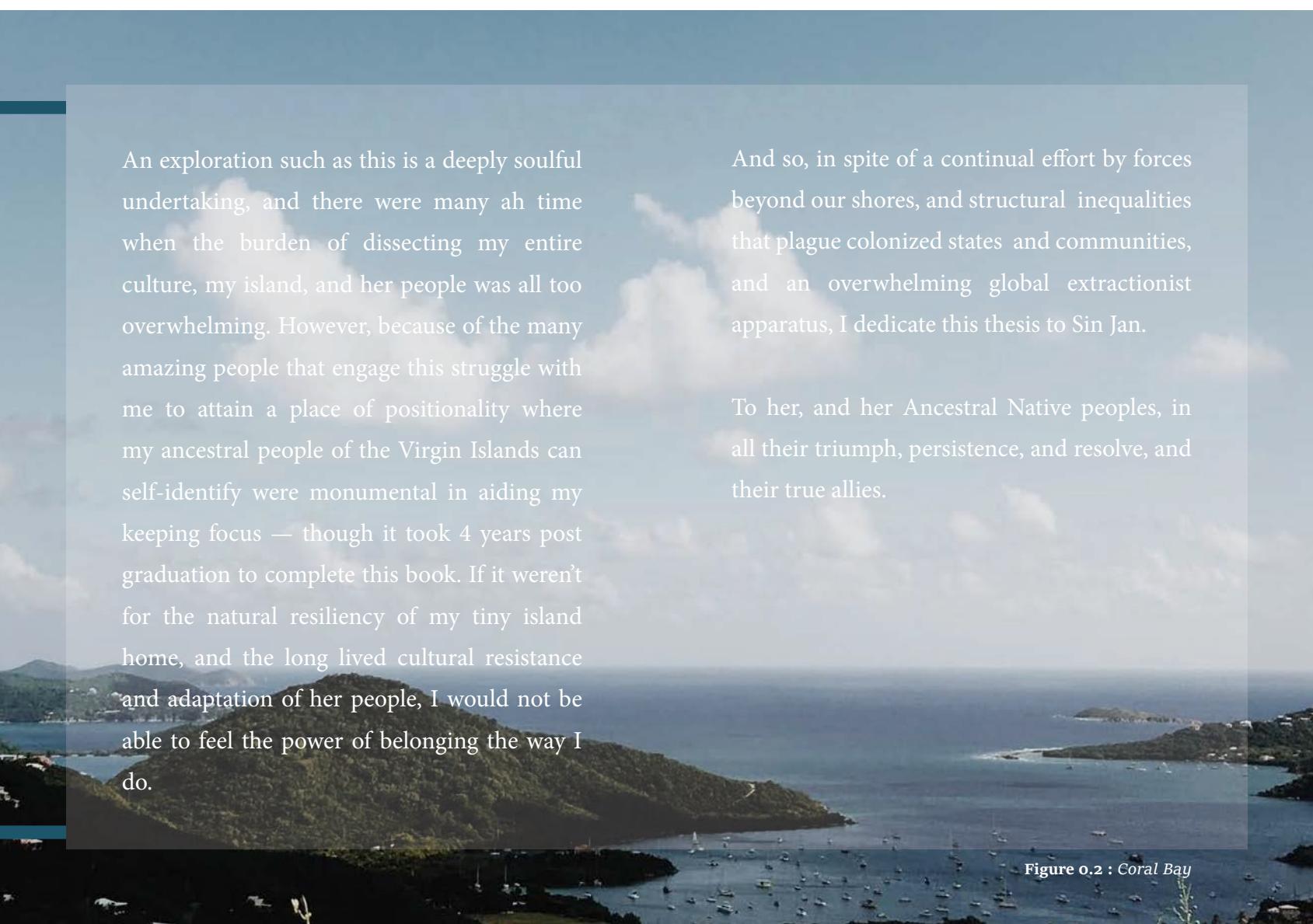
May 2021

Huy Ngo, Committee Chair

Julie Rogers Varland, Committee Member

Susan Falls, Committee Member

## [ To Sin Jan: ]



An exploration such as this is a deeply soulful undertaking, and there were many a time when the burden of dissecting my entire culture, my island, and her people was all too overwhelming. However, because of the many amazing people that engage this struggle with me to attain a place of positionality where my ancestral people of the Virgin Islands can self-identify were monumental in aiding my keeping focus — though it took 4 years post graduation to complete this book. If it weren't for the natural resiliency of my tiny island home, and the long lived cultural resistance and adaptation of her people, I would not be able to feel the power of belonging the way I do.

And so, in spite of a continual effort by forces beyond our shores, and structural inequalities that plague colonized states and communities, and an overwhelming global extractionist apparatus, I dedicate this thesis to Sin Jan.

To her, and her Ancestral Native peoples, in all their triumph, persistence, and resolve, and their true allies.

Figure 0.2 : Coral Bay

## [ To My Tribe: ]

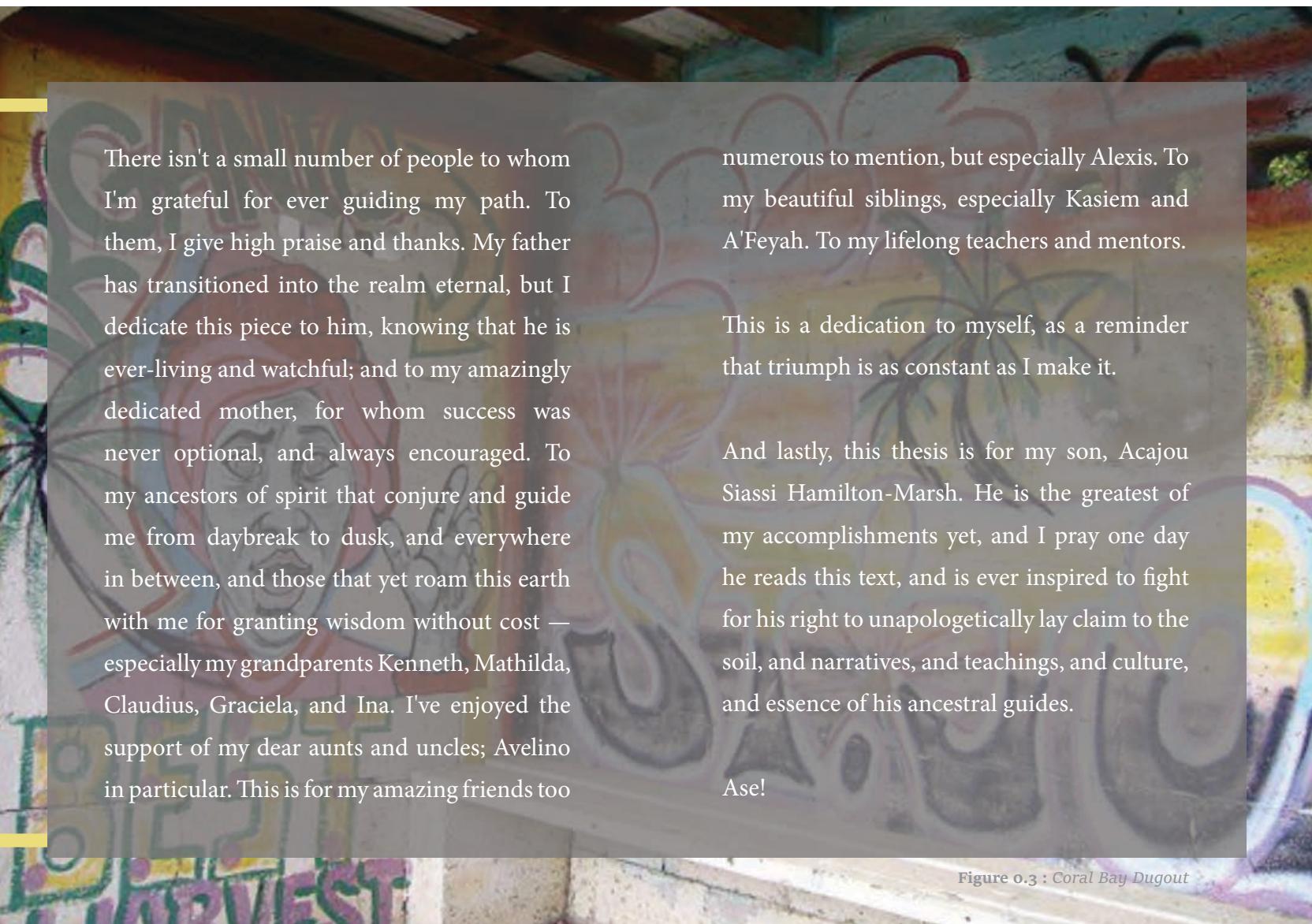
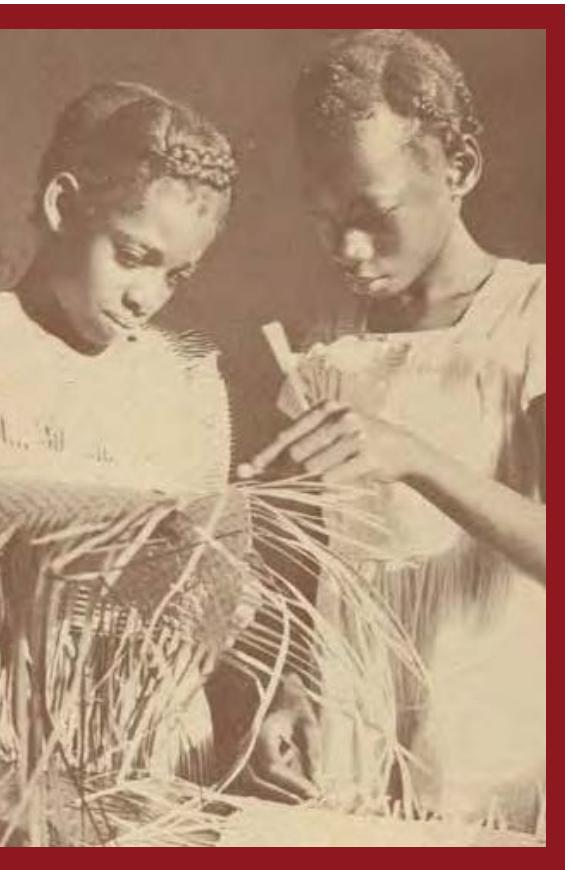


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## So [ We ] Live

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Kurt G. Marsh, Jr.  
May, 2021

### Keywords

Extractionist  
Dispossession  
Settler Colonialism  
Re-weaving  
Identity  
Cultural Adaptation

# Abstract

Colonialism has long been a challenging reality for small nations, especially island territories. The task of maintaining **identity** — the condition of being oneself — has become one of extreme adversity. In the Virgin Islands, a people who had barely attained freedom, and the opportunity to live beyond the shackles of slavery, have experienced recompense lost through "forced" visitation. Throughout our small territory's history — and especially after the American purchase in 1917 — we have experienced continuous cultural assimilation, appropriation, and erasure as we've suffered 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizenship under perpetual **settler colonial** rule. As the shores of our territory have opened up to all the world, and we continuously welcome immigrants, continental transplants, and the like, we have experienced immense generational rifts in cultural values and heritage transcendence,

instigated by physical and economic **dispossession**, and lack of political autonomy. Influences from around the globe as well as right on our white-sand shores have fostered the coined term, "brain-drain": the emigration of highly trained or intelligent people from a particular country. However a people whose space is continually the matter of consumption by a capitalist **extractionist** tourism and corporate welfare apparatus to survive and thrive; a space that is increasingly unfamiliar, and aggressively seized. The people of St. John — and all the Virgin Islands — are faced with a daunting decision about their future: fulfill the purpose of this generation, or betray it to quote Fanon. We must return to the soil, reclaim the narrative of our space, and foster new collective enterprise.

# 01

## On Culture

### Framework

Understanding the context of “culture”. How is it defined, studied, and why it is important to societies.



Figure 1.0 : Sugar Plantation and Slave Settlement, St. John, Virgin Islands

This thesis exploration analyzes and assesses the sociocultural, socioeconomic, and socio-political contexts of St. John, United States Virgin Islands, aiming to understand and illustrate how the colonial condition cumulatively effects the island's social construct. The research includes anecdotes as well as scholarly publications and research texts & studies that dive not only into the statistical evidence, but also the anthropological context of an issue of this nature. Though the larger context revolves around the reality of social deconstruction as a result of cultural assimilation and settler-colonialism — perpetuating the continual systemic displacement of the native people of the island territory at large — the more narrowed focus is on the immediate effect on St. John's ancestral native population, their positionality within St. John's current socio-economical, political, and climatic contexts, and furthermore, its future.

### Culture, Holistically

Dr. Tony Whitehead informs culture is a **"holistic"**

flexible and non-constant system of meaning that provides rules and routines that facilitate order, regularity, familiarity, and predictability. When we understand a certain culture, we begin to more properly interpret behaviors, events, occurrences, that communicate a people's reality. There are many interconnected and interrelated components of a culture system that give **identity** to a group in an otherwise disorganized world of people, things, behaviors and ideas. As the primary source of a people's knowledge of the world, culture provides no inherent hierarchy of knowledge, but instead applies local conceptions of the definition of knowledge, providing a more common sense of reality.

Through the shared phenomenon of culture, understanding of cultural patterns as ideal/real, and their implications on values, systems and communication are critical components of one's research. How the inter-subjectivity of a group is influenced by the preferred practices, social relationships, or ideas and sentiments of a community inform the meanings and interpretations provided by a cultural system, which



Figure 1.1 : Cruz Bay Dock

facilitate communication between those in that system, and miscommunications between members of different systems. All these attributes support the idea of culture being a historical production — **horizontally (within generations)**, and **vertically (inter-generationally)** — informed by tacit as well as explicit features.

**“** The establishment and continuation of cultural systems is born not only of horizontal and vertical connections, but also of **significant events** that spur production or reproduction of specific cultural patterns.

- Dr. Tony Whitehead

Lastly, culture is a functional product influenced by the environmental context within which it is functioning. These environmental factors are both **physical (taking years of generations to become apparent)** and **social (immediate and continuous due to expedience of social feedback)**.

### The CSP

In understanding culture, we turn to research methods that provide qualitative & quantitative results, as culture is a social science. Ethnography is one means by which we can begin to decipher the complexities of the human condition. Ethnography is an anthropological process that holistically studies cultural systems and the socio-cultural contexts, processes, and meanings within them. It is an interpretive, reflexive, and constructivist process that can rely very heavily on fieldwork — many times researchers spend time living within the context of the cultural system they're attempting to study.

**The Culture Systems Paradigm (CSP)** is one of the theoretical approaches to ethnographic studies, which allows us to place cultural, social, ecological, and psychological phenomena into general categories that are found in all human societies, but also showing that specific cultural systems contribute to differences in the expression of the concepts in these general categories.

“ We should never denigrate any other culture but rather help people to understand the relationship between their own culture and the dominant culture. When you understand another culture or language, it does not mean that you have to lose your own culture.

- Edward T. Hall

5 major theoretical ethnographic principals:

**1. Universal Human Cultural Categories:** suggests that there are certain categories of phenomena that are universally relevant to human communities, but that human communities differ in terms of how these universals are expressed

- Individual and normative behavioral patterns
- Individual and shared “idea” or “ideational” structures
- Significant social systems
- Expressive culture

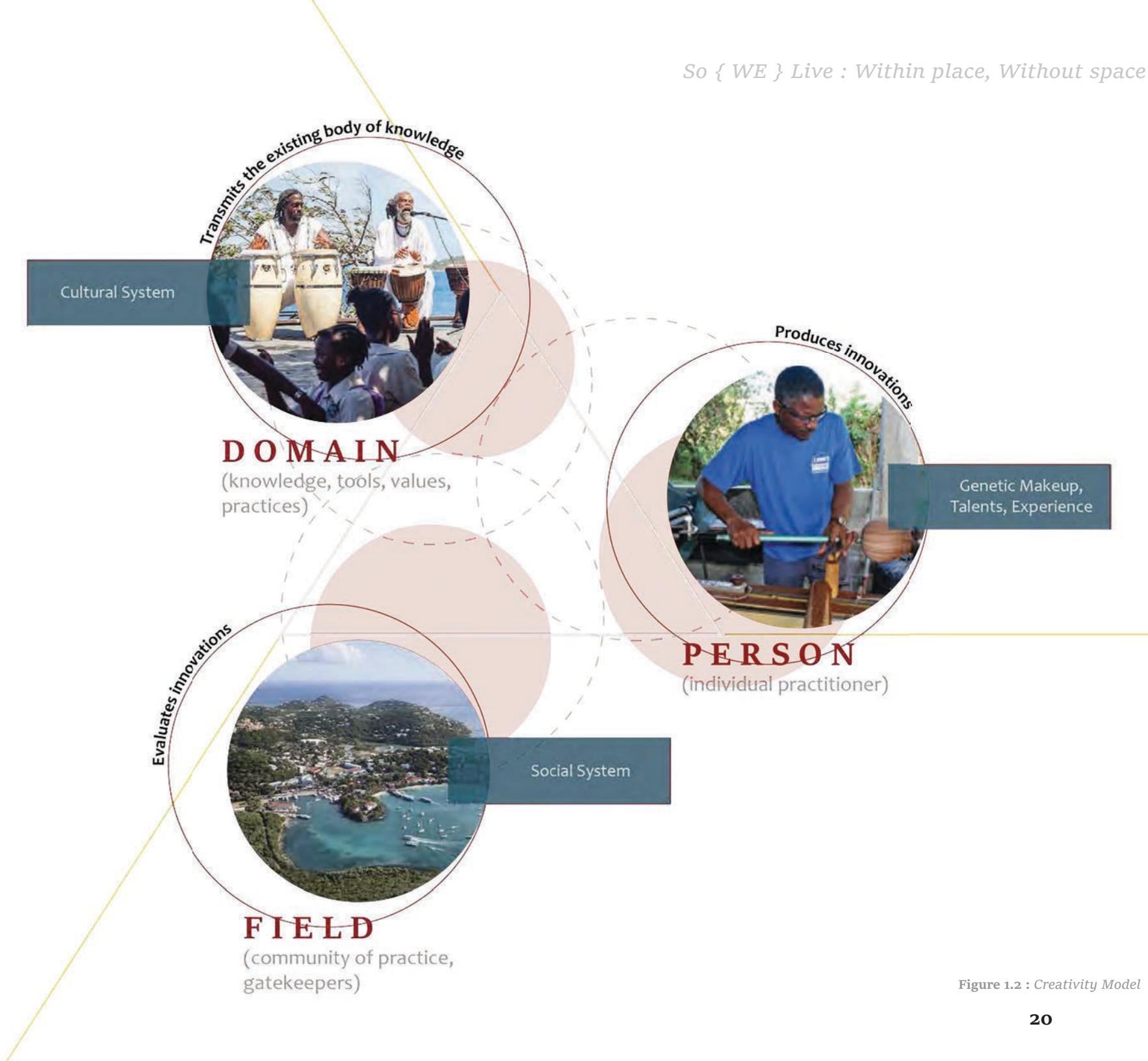
**2. Individual and Intergroup Variations in Expression:** while the categories of the CSP are universal as general categories, they are often expressed differently cross-culturally, and even across individuals within the same cultural or community group.

**3. Paradigmatic Flexibility:** holds that conceptual form-work that inform the study of cultural systems

must be flexible, and not rigid, because of the differences in behavioral and ideational expressions across human groups and individuals, as well as intra-individually.

**4. Interrelationship between Sociocultural Contexts, Processes, and Meaning Systems:** suggests that if we want to correctly understand why certain behaviors, including health risk and resiliency behaviors emerge and persist in human populations, then we must better understand the sociocultural contexts in which these behaviors occur, the sociocultural processes of these contexts, and the sociocultural meaning that these context and processes have for those who practice such behaviors.

**5. “Holism” in Meaning Systems:** social systems contribute to the expressions of certain ideations and behaviors, through the processes of socialization and social feedback to the individual to enculturate and practice the ideations and behaviors preferred by the group.



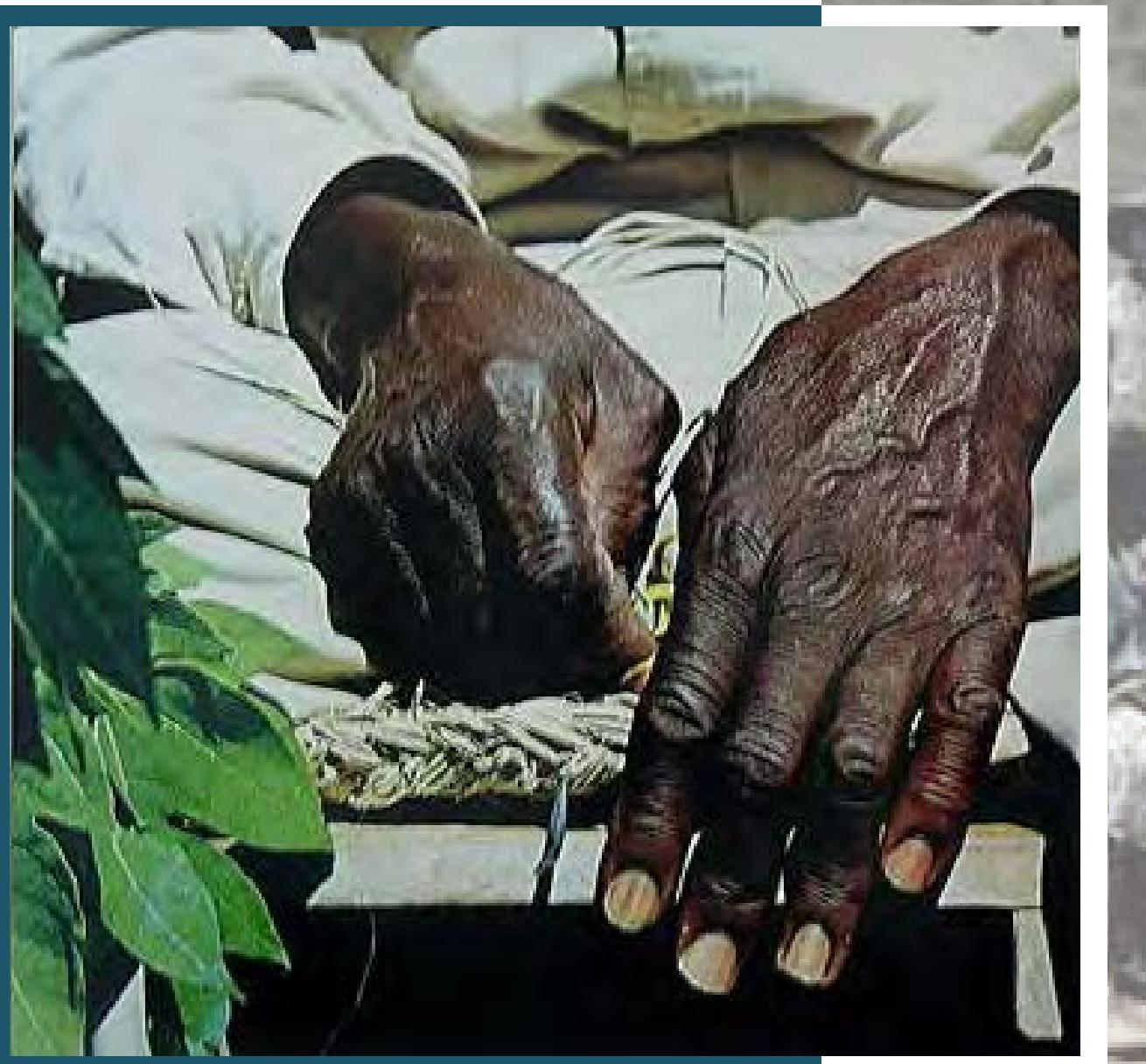


Figure 1.3: The Hands of Moses  
Figure 1.4: Tearing Basket Making

# 02



1491

1492

[ 1493 ]

1494

1495

Culture is complex, layered, and is subjective of its facilitators, and spectators. Through time and space — be it ancient or contemporary, “museum-ified” or living, maintaining classical traits or experiencing a renaissance — culture, really, is the people through which it is expressed. Without people performing, creating, educating, curating, culture cannot exist, much less transcend generations. Culture, then, is a sentient exercise of habit. Habits that succeeding generations are tasked with holding true to ancient longstanding traditions, creative reproduction, or re-inventing cultural models all together. Yet, culture isn’t formed just by happenstance. It is an interlaced tapestry of many individual elements like all-encompassing perspectives, economic means, ideas of self & identity (individually and collectively), ownership of space & place, ideas about class and rule, and so on.

Cultural development on St. John has had a double character, constantly oscillating between strategies of adaptation and strategies of resistance to the conditions of life presented to the population.



Figure 2.2 : Landing of Columbus

Because of the history of the territory’s experience as a colonial establishment, undergoing ownership by several colonial powers — 7 in the case of St. Croix — there stands a surmounting identity crisis. I digress, recapping a prior statement, as we trace this crisis to the beginnings of displacement of the native and ancestral people of St. John from a very early condition of dominance and extraction:

“The establishment and continuation of cultural systems is born not only of horizontal and vertical connections, but also of significant events that spur production or reproduction of specific cultural patterns.”

#### Columbus Arrives

Thus, we venture to the beginnings of the settlement of the territory, and St. John, first documented by one Christopher Columbus of Spain in 1493 on his second voyage to the New World. As he happened upon the islands, attempting to venture to the far east, he named them for St. Ursula and her 11,000

virgins, like many others in the region lauding their beauty and virtue.

#### What is an Apparatus?

Come now, the ensuing legacy of exploitation that has harrowed the people of the island since — both Indigenous and African; **the European Colonial Expansion Apparatus.**

A pursuit that Christopher Columbus, in a recent book, 1493: Uncovering the New World Columbus Created, clubbed the “discovery” as a Columbian exchange, that formed “a single new world from the collision of two old worlds — three, if one counts Africa as separate from Eurasia. Born in the sixteenth century from European desires to join the thriving Asian trade sphere, the economic system for exchange ended up transforming the globe into a single ecological system by the nineteenth century — almost instantly, in biological terms. The creation of this ecological system helped Europe seize, for several vital centuries, the political initiative, which in turn shaped the contours of today’s world-spanning economic system, in its intertwined, omnipresent,

barely comprehended splendor.

"The apparatus is precisely this: a set of strategies of the relations of forces supporting, and supported by, certain types of knowledge."

Agamben — in what is an apparatus — gives an enlightening account of the largely unnoticed sociological devices within which we function and are therefore objectified. These are the systems Foucault describes as the acting dominant strategic function, developed from a network between forces of knowledge and power, relatively. Europe's growing dominance of the global economy had positioned them to be able to control the flow of trade and people in the New World, and was an oppressive system of conversion, erasure, and eventual oppression of non-Euro peoples there.

### Indigenous Erasure

The free and very unassuming indigenous peoples of the Island of St. John resisted the Spanish missions

to such an extent that in 1519 the King of Spain had ordered the elimination of anti-crown combatants in the new territories as they continually thwarted European pursuits of their lands and people's labor. However, it wasn't only the King's order that the native Taino, Carib, and Arawak people succumbed to; they suffered the invasion of unfamiliar European disease as well. European explorations in 1525 documented a lesser existence of indigenous populations, and after a quiet period of 100 years, in 1625 it had been recorded that there were no longer indigenous tribes on the island.

### Denmark's Interest

The Danes — after having been on nearby St. Thomas since 1672 — moved to colonize the island of St. John in 1718. Denmark, like most European nations venturing into the new world, was after the riches they had been convinced existed there. To that end, the Danish West India Company established the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in the territory as the indigenous populations had largely died off, and there was a

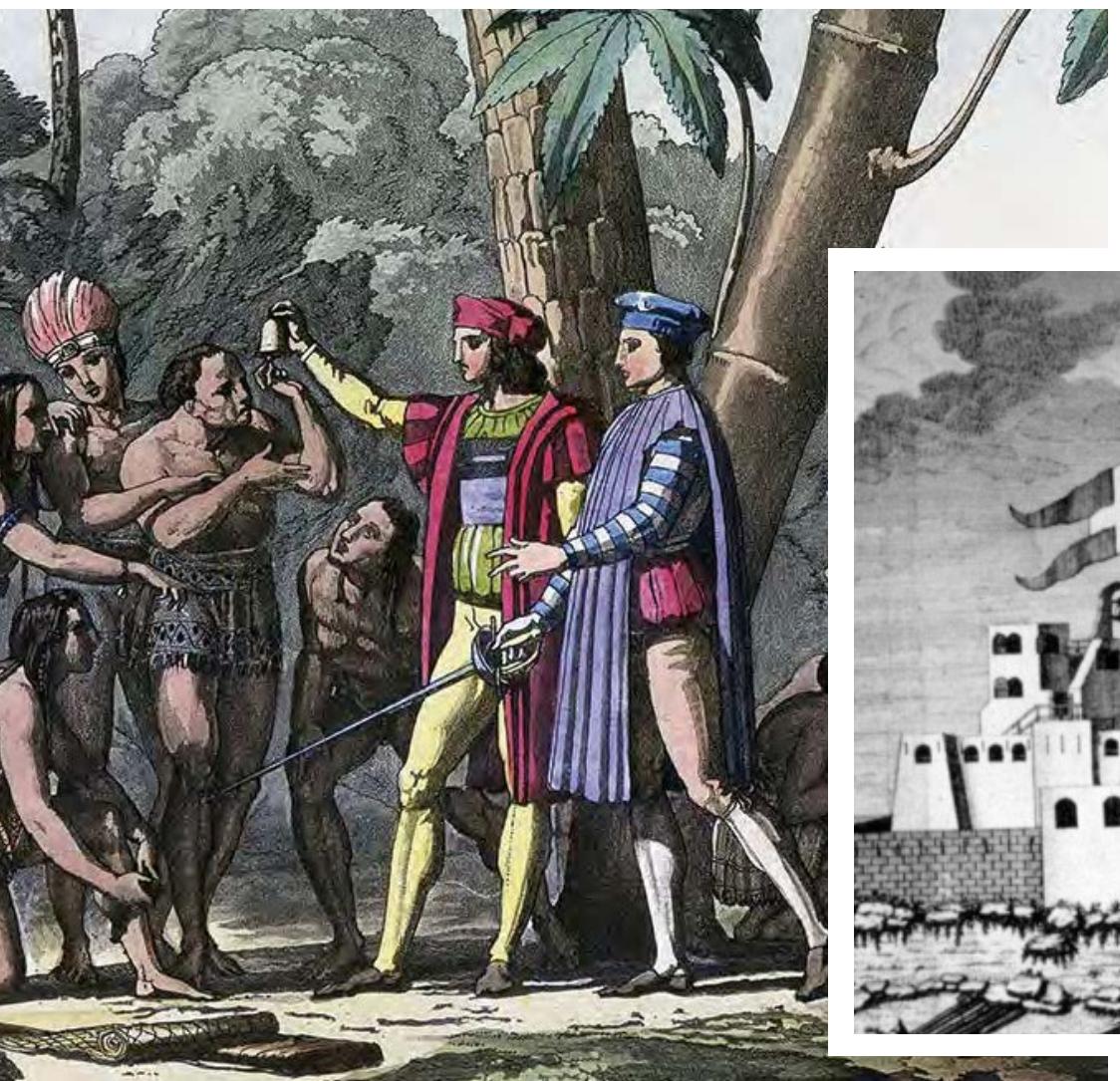


Figure 2.3 : Christopher Columbus Arriving in the New World

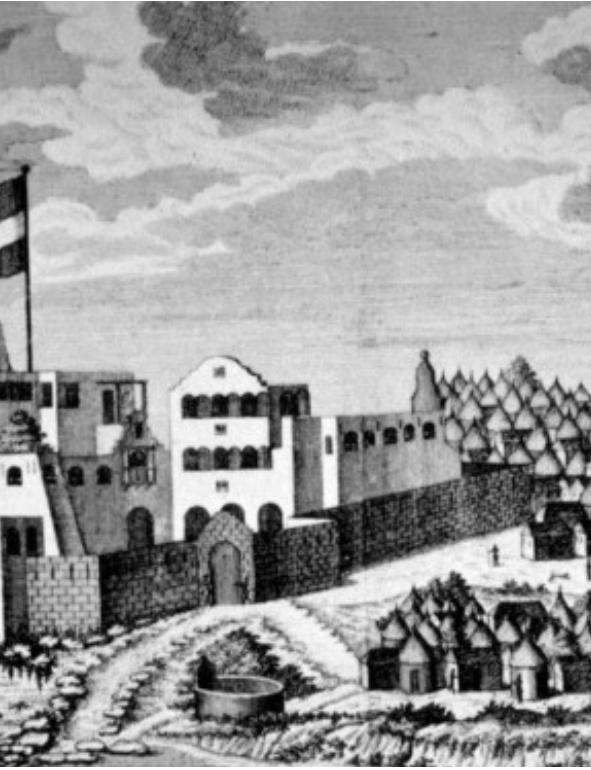


Figure 2.4 : Christiansborg Castle

1671

1672

[ 1673 ]

1674

1675

demand for labor if they were to cultivate tobacco, cotton, and eventually, predominantly, cane.

The voyage of the enslaved from the Gold Coast of the African continent to the New World is well documented, but this writing isn't to discuss the context of their journey, or even the slave trade at large. It is to discuss an attempt to strip the soul of a people from them, as they were uprooted from their native lands, and brought to a "New World" of pain, torture, and dehumanization. It is to discuss the Danish Colonial apparatus in the Virgin Islands, or St. John, and its lasting ramifications on the fragile **identity** of her current ancestral native people: the descendants of those children of the African diaspora, and in some cases, their combined heritage with the native Taino people who once occupied this soil. Here, we discuss extraction and displacement through the colonial exercise.

## [ co·lo·ni·al·ism ]

*Noun*

***The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.***

**Colonialism**, describes the context of parent nations occupying other countries to acquire property, influence, or economic prospective. **Settler Colonialism** further details the condition of colonialism, specifically as it relates to the Virgin Islands. It is, distinctly, the act of replacing an indigenous population with a settler population. The settlers are particularly invasive and, over time, develop their own identity and sovereignty. Settler colonialism is further understood detached to other forms of colonialism by its three main features.

1. Settler colonizers “come to stay”: intend to permanently occupy and assert sovereignty over indigenous lands.
2. Settler colonial invasion is a structure, not an event: persists in the ongoing elimination of indigenous populations, and the assertion of state sovereignty and judicial control over their lands.
3. Settler colonialism seeks its own end: trends towards the ending of colonial differences in the form of supreme and unchallenged settler state and people.

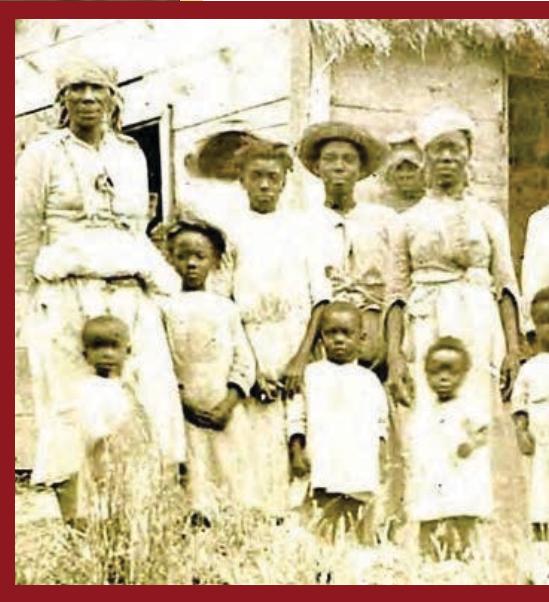


Figure 2.5: Buvirr Jeep  
Figure 2.11: Columbus Landing



[ Ty Reid ]  
"Oh, Dragon"

Figure 2.6 : Portrait of Ty

Oh Dragon, with scales that smell of Cedar  
I bow before you.

**Or I would.**

If not for the bindings I find about my hands,  
my feet, my neck.

Oh Dragon, with spine of oak and iron  
I beg for your mercy.

**Or I would.**

If I believed you shared my tongue or heart.  
Your servants do not.

Oh Dragon, with great white wings  
I wonder why you swim and choose not to fly.

**Or I would.**

The air in your belly is too heavy to ponder  
such things; too thick with the suffering of  
my brothers

Oh Dragon, master of the horizon and great  
sea,

I offer you a song and dance of praise each  
day.

**Or I would.**

But the ones that serve you allow it - no,  
demand it - but once a week.

Oh Dragon, whose blood runs black and thick

like tar,  
I hear your groans echoing well into the night;  
I will heal you and my son both - he is but  
three rows behind me.

**Or I would.**

But you have taken me far from my home,  
my herbs, my elders. Let me see to him. What  
does an ailing dragon need with two hundred  
men?

Oh Dragon, who swallows men and breaks  
them,  
I admit defeat. I will cast myself into the  
ocean when next the sun kisses my face.

**Or I would.**

But your servants grow weaker; they no  
longer laugh and sing as they go about their  
business on your back. Their faces grow  
evermore pale, and the ancestors have  
whispered to me and placed a dream in my  
belly.

Oh Dragon, whose heart is decked with tiny  
flames that dance behind glass,  
I will bury my son. He no longer answers my  
calls, nor do any others who share my tongue.

**Or I would.**

But I fear my strength will fail me before I

can. My spirit flags with each passing day, and  
the man whose arm is chained to mine has  
begun to rot.

Oh Dragon, who has taken my son from me,  
I will speak to your servants and ask them to  
see reason; it will be their last chance.

**Or I would.**

But I still hear the screams of our wives and  
sons and daughters that continued after they  
were dragged out of sight. Your men do not  
realize that we have learned your tongue.  
They are as foolish as you.

Oh Dragon, who has consumed my son and  
my heart with him,  
Your servants say we are nearing Cuba. I will  
kiss the Earth when I touch her next and  
savor  
the grass between my fingers...

**Or I would.**

But my brothers and I are of one accord.  
You and your men will never see land again.

Oh Dragon, littered with the bodies of the  
dead and dying, whose boards groan under  
growing flame,  
I will tell my ancestors of you.

**Or I would.**

But I will not meet my father and his father  
in the next life. I will not run and hurt on  
the plains eternal with them. For I will die far  
from home, far from our sacred lands, and  
our rites of life, of love, and of death. But so  
will you.

Oh Dragon, herald of Eshu himself, you  
mindless god of rage and hate, whose final  
journey ends today,  
I will offer death ties to your servants that  
we have killed.

**Or I would.**

If we had not thrown the mail overboard, as  
they did my son, and my brothers that did  
not live to see you burn.  
The fire we lit in your belly rages on, and we  
will die smiling, standing on your back.

Because we have overcome you.

Oh Dragon, that spirits me across the sea  
Rest eternal in her depths.  
With my brothers and me.

1731

1732

[ 1733 ]

1734

1735

The first plantation wasn't built on St John until 1694, beginning an extractive exercise that would last well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This apparatus was the sole economical and political structure of the island, and did not exist without it's share of resistance from the African people oppressed by it. Hyppolite argues that positivity (the apparatus) is an obstacle to the freedom of man, and that the freedoms and desires of the many are drowned out to the satisfaction of the few who — through knowledge and power — have greater effect. This is a subsequent reality of the conditions of ruling and subaltern classes within our societies. Yet, the will do survive and thrive has been one that has bolstered the oppressed people of these lands time and again in their continuous pursuits of freedom of being.

Since apparatus's produce their subjects, through subjectification, what then is the course of action that one could take to dismantle that apparatus? Though we know that attempting to profane the modern apparatus is problematic, as Agamben points out, we also know that this truth does not render opposition/

change unachievable. Many apparatuses exist as oppressive forces, and operate within the domain of a sometimes all-too-submissive government, yet we can separate ourselves from the subjectification of the apparatus, and intervene in its process.

#### Memory & Identity

When the plantation colony was established on St. John in 1718 there was a population of 20 Europeans to 16 African slaves, but by 1733 the numbers had grown to be some 1,087 African slaves to 208 European settlers supporting the cash crop plantation society. By now, the colony had gone through it's fair share of economic hardships related to natural disaster, and in 1733, the enslaved Akwamu people on St. John organized a revolt as they were determined to be free, to define their identity, and to exercise their right to self-Determination. Many of the African slaves are believed to have been African born, and of military leadership as many warring tribes traded their defeated enemies on the Gold Coast. Thus, in an act of remembrance of **self** and **identity**, 150

rebels organized by Katta, Klaus, and Prince—and a little known Queen Befu—seized control of the Fortsberg garrison, and then the entire island for six months. We know that these rebels were adept at guerrilla warfare and understood the terrain, so were able to repel Danish forces until a French regiment from Martinique came to their aid, and subsequently helped to reclaim the island.

“ The revolt of 1733 on St. John was a catalyst for the pursuit of freedom in the Virgin Islands by people of African Descent, and was the first successful revolt by enslaved people in the Western Hemisphere. ”

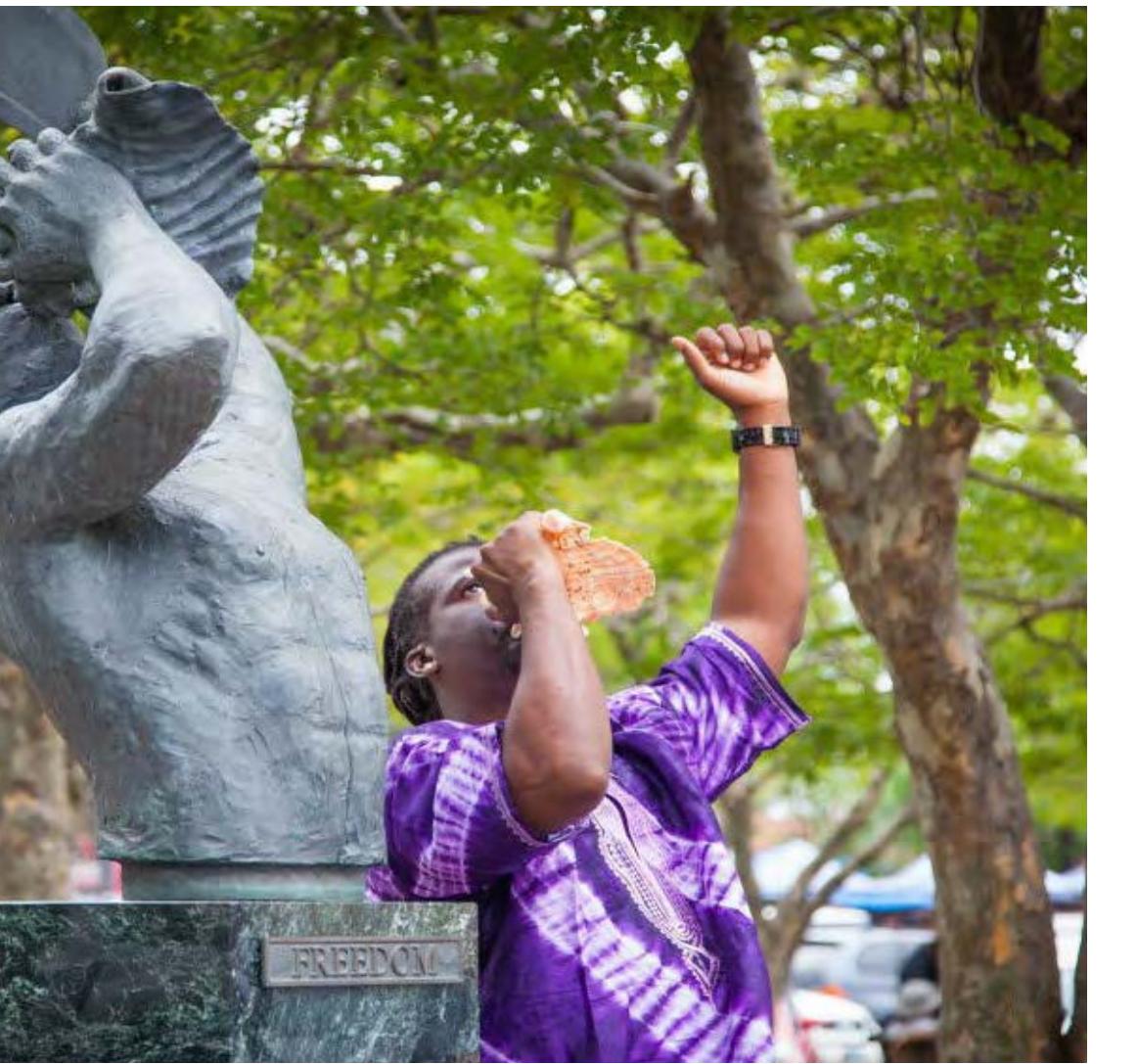


Figure 2.7 : Freedom

The 1733 insurrection would not be the only effort by the enslaved people of the Virgin Islands to self determine, and reclaim their lost identity and humanity. The plantation economy and the slave labor force had been declining well before the March 1792 law was passed abolishing the Danish slave trade in their West Indian Colony. Legal conditions were established to allow for slaves to essentially develop their own plantations within or around his master's plantation. This provided a false sense of freedom, though it gave the slaves opportunities to be self-sufficient and provide for themselves, on what they could describe as their own plots of land.

**“**As far as the planters were concerned, the reproduction of slave labor was merely as matter of sufficient food production.

- Karen F. Olwig

Now the slaves had the opportunity bring themselves above the subjugation of the plantation society, and create a socioeconomic system that outlived it. They had become proficient hunter-gatherers in their new context, and were also heavily engaged as traders with slaves from the nearby British Island colonies. They were using materials gathered in the bush to make tools, Yet, even with the reality of the slaves being able to enjoy their freedom of cultivation, and the opportunity to develop their own means of daily reproduction and generational reproduction, they still were free.

#### For Freedom

There began to be continuous efforts of passive and active resistance to chattel slavery in the colony, and Denmark was feeling the pressure of following precedent set by the nearby French colonies as they had abolished their a slave trade and freed their enslaved African population. Some Africans were already engaging in the act of purchasing their own freedom, some became Marron's, and others

1846  
1847  
[ 1848 ]  
1849  
1850



Figure 2.8 : Fireburn The Screenplay

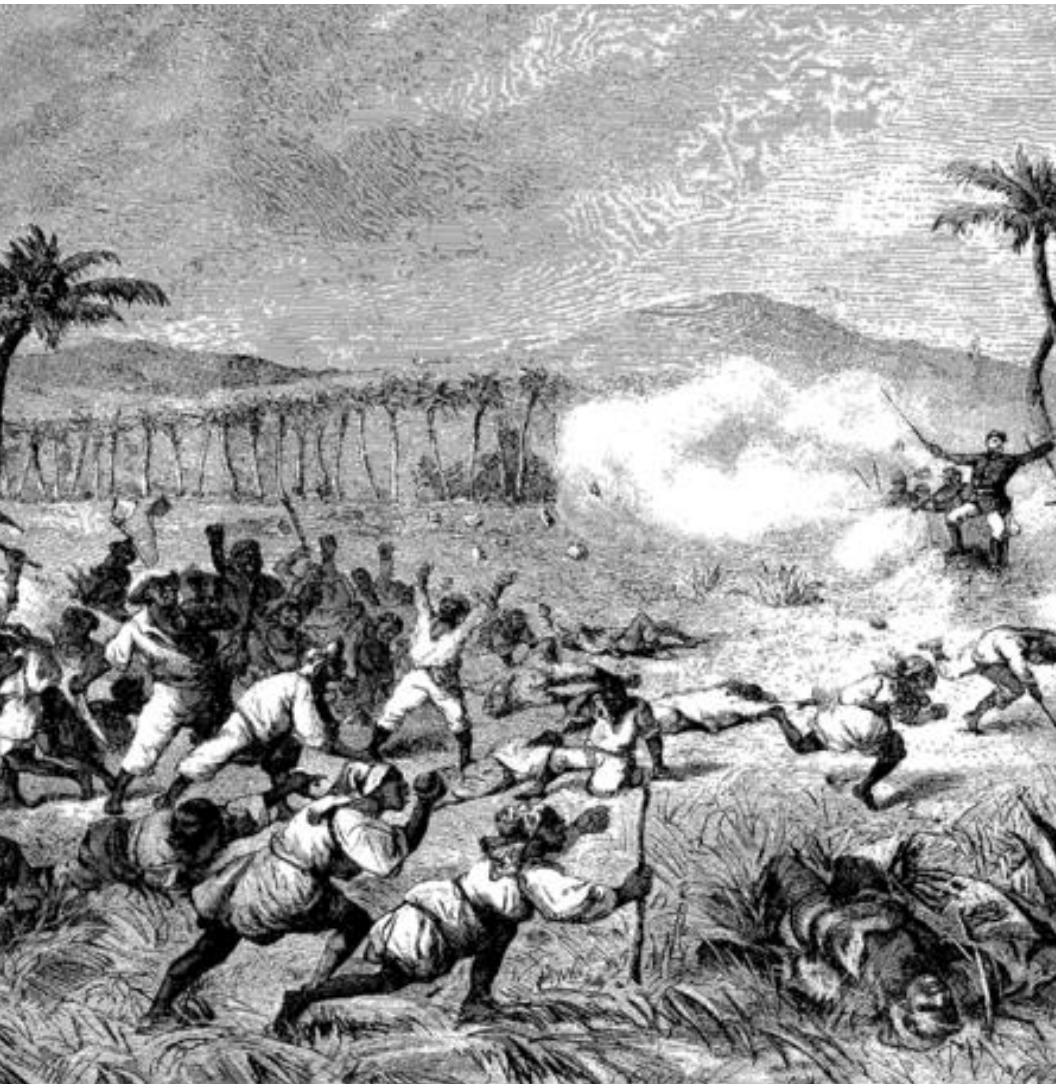


Figure 2.9 : From The Revolt on St. Croix

participated in petite maroonage, all in attempts to pressure the Danish Crown to grant freedom en masse. Frustrated by the 12 year transition period set forth in the Danish Royal Decree of July 28, 1847, slaves on St. Croix organized an insurrection against the Governor-General Peter Von Scholten.

On the morning of July 31, 1848, on St. Croix, and Crucian slaves assembled in numbers upwards of 8,000 to march on the capital. Von Scholten, afraid for his life and an ensuing rebellion, met the slaves rebels in the town and declared all slaves in the colony **free**. The people of the territory were now able to work and be paid for their work, live freely on the lands, independent of plantation owners or their overseers, and were tasked with clarifying their new culture around socioeconomic independence.

[ Mout' open, 'tory jump out! ]

So { WE } Live : Within place, Without space



“ The ancestral King's and Queen's of the Virgin Islands have always risen from the violence of the extractive settler colonial apparatus.

And, they have always prevailed.

Figure 2.0 : Freedom's Spirit Collage

# 03

## Space; a new colony.

*A people, displaced.*

What are the writ-large notions of space? Who has agency to claim space, and how? A look at the deterioration of deep cultural fabric.

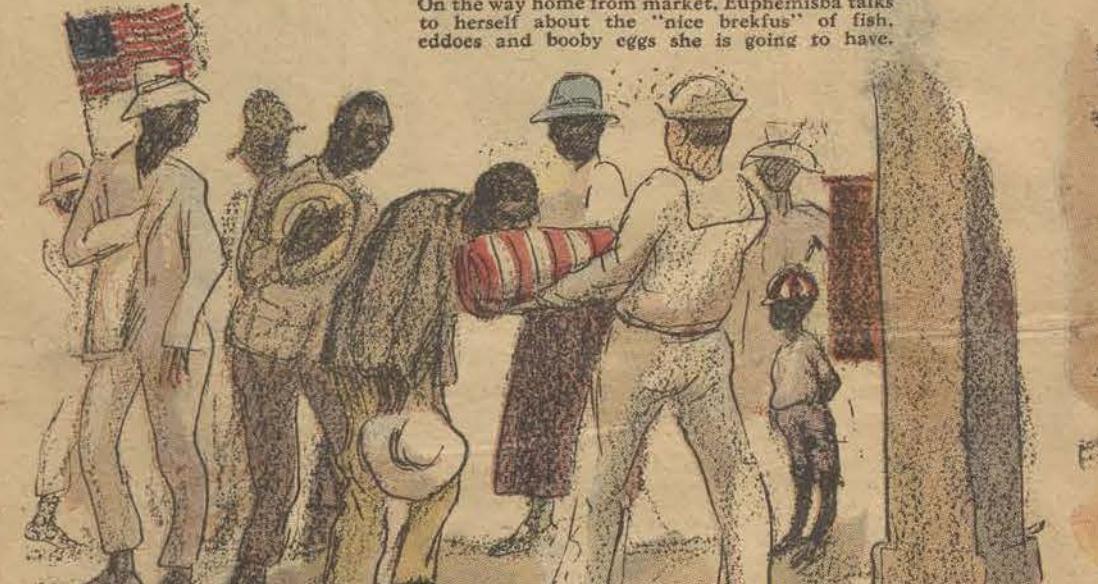
The cart on horseback.

A blinding, blistering sun makes riding undesirable.

except toward evening.



On the way home from market, Euphemisba talks to herself about the "nice brekfus" of fish, eddoes and booby eggs she is going to have.

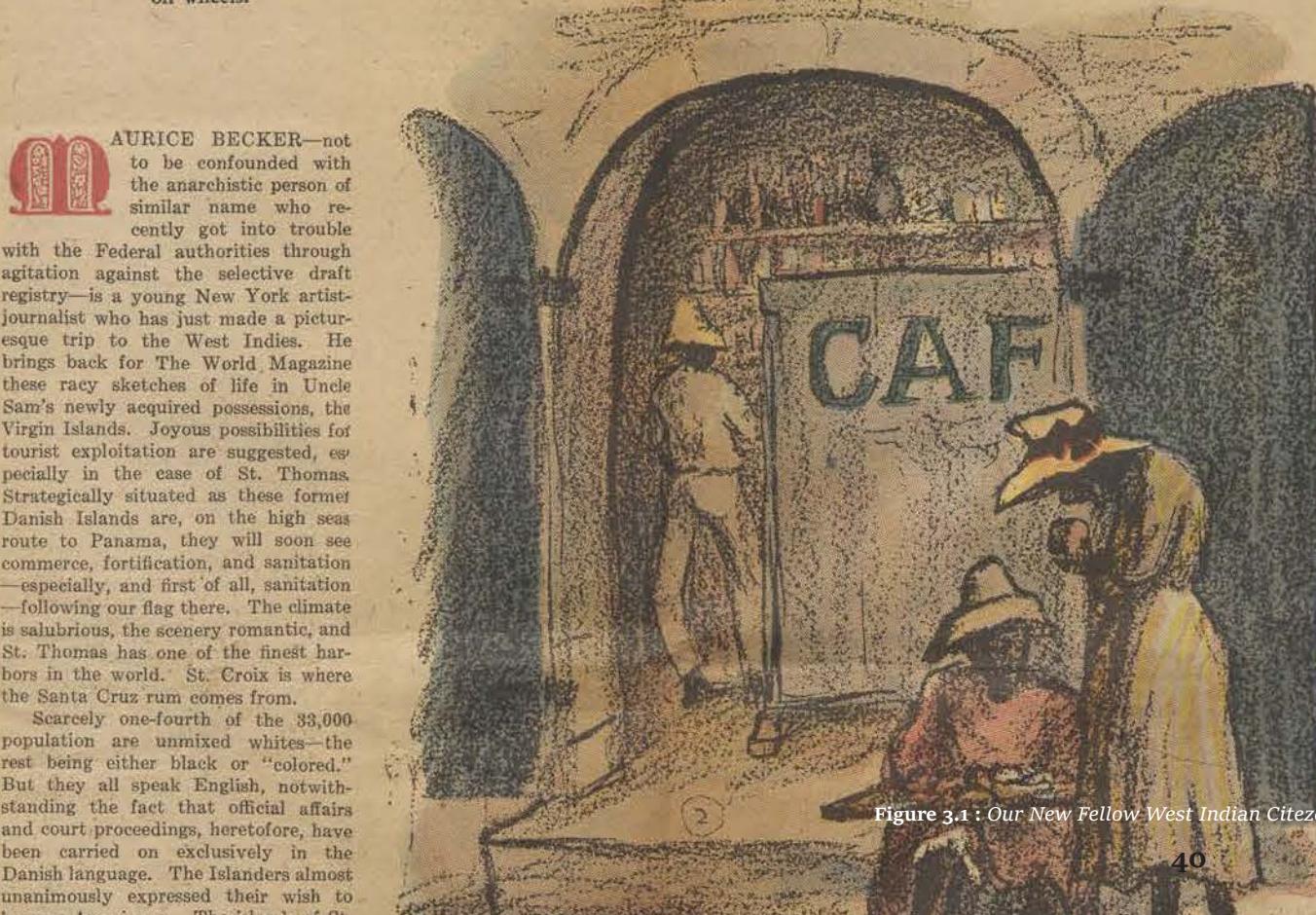


# Getting Acquainted With Our New West Indian Fellow Citizens

The Former Danish West Indies (St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix), Purchased From Denmark by the United States for \$25,000,000 and Re-named the American Virgin Islands, Have a Quaint but Orderly Population of About 33,000, Mostly Colored, Who Speak English and Welcome the Raising of the Star-Spangled Banner Over Their Historic, Buccaneer-Haunted Soil.



The hill roads of St. Thomas were never made for anything on wheels.



**M**AURICE BECKER—not to be confounded with the anarchistic person of similar name who recently got into trouble with the Federal authorities through agitation against the selective draft registry—is a young New York artist-journalist who has just made a picturesque trip to the West Indies. He brings back for *The World Magazine* these racy sketches of life in Uncle Sam's newly acquired possessions, the Virgin Islands. Joyous possibilities for tourist exploitation are suggested, especially in the case of St. Thomas. Strategically situated as these former Danish Islands are, on the high seas route to Panama, they will soon see commerce, fortification, and sanitation—especially, and first of all, sanitation—following our flag there. The climate is salubrious, the scenery romantic, and St. Thomas has one of the finest harbors in the world. St. Croix is where the Santa Cruz rum comes from.

2

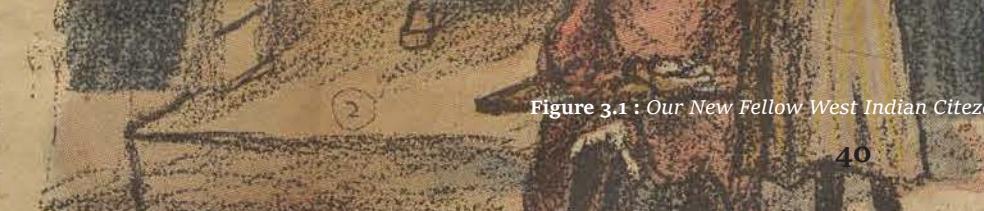
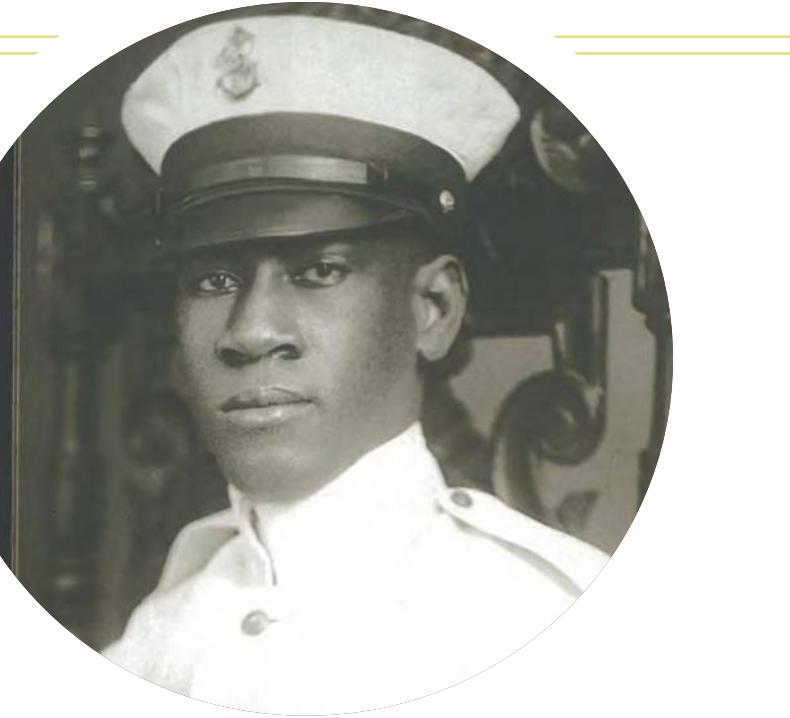


Figure 3.1: Our New Fellow West Indian Citizens



## [ Alton Adams ]

### "Virgin Islands March"

Written 1919, Adopted 1963

#### **A**ll hail the Virgin Islands.

Em'ralds of the sea,  
Where beaches bright with coral sand  
And trade winds bless our native land.  
All hail the Virgin Islands,  
Bathe in waters blue,  
We give our loyalty,  
Full to thee,  
And pledge allegiance forever true.

#### **T**o thee our Virgin Islands,

Loving voices raise  
A song in praise of brotherhood,  
Where right makes might to fight for good.  
To thee our Virgin Islands,  
Haven of the free,  
We sing our love to thee,  
Joyously,  
Our own fair islands of liberty.

#### **M**arch on oh Virgin Islands,

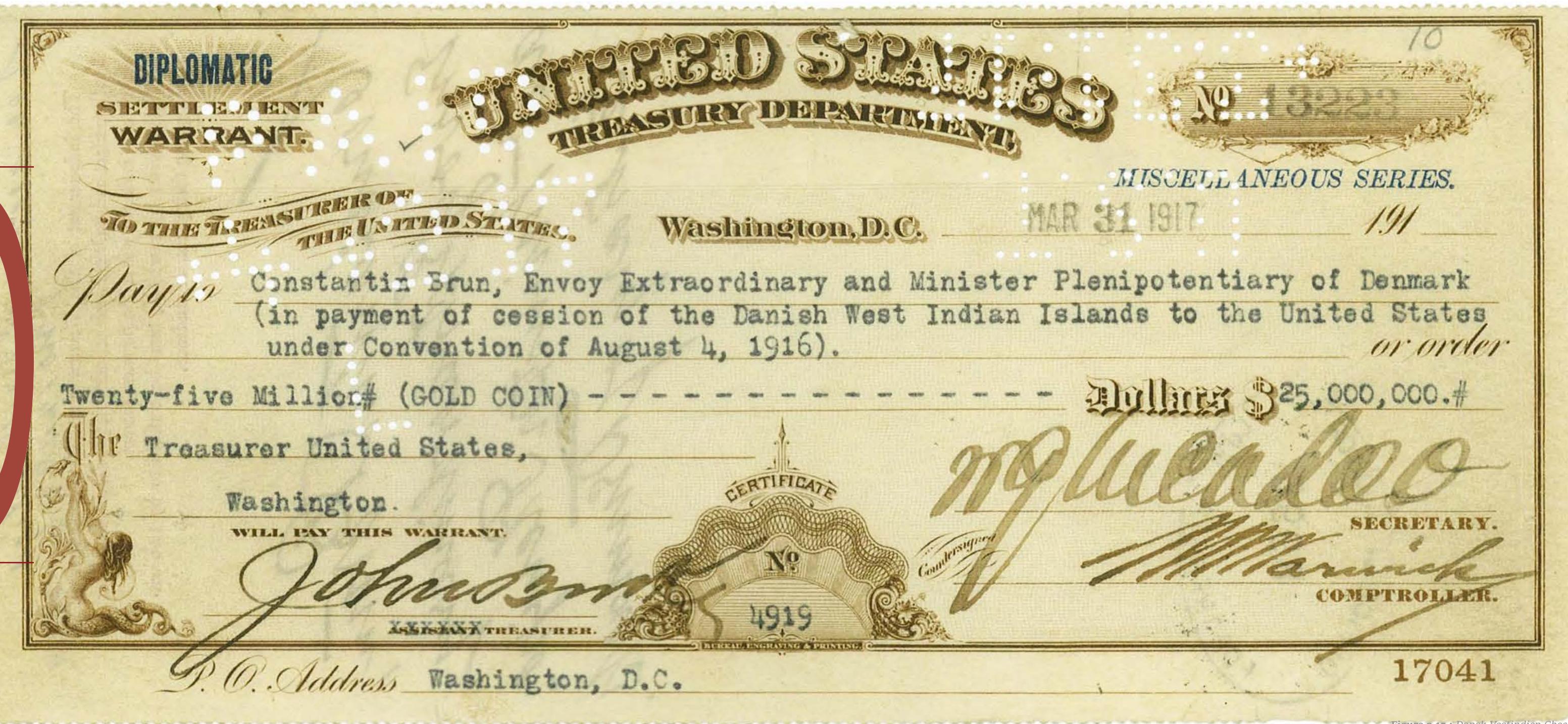
In the joyful throng,  
Uphold the right and right the wrong  
Where only peace and love belong.  
March on oh Virgin Islands,  
Democratic land.  
Together hand in hand,  
Take your stand,  
Forever soldiers in freedom's band.

#### **G**od bless our Virgin Islands,

Humbly now we pray,  
Where all mankind can join today  
In friendly warmth of work and play.  
God bless our Virgin Islands,  
Beautiful and tall.  
Beneath a sunny sky,  
Hilltops high  
Hold out a welcome for one and all.

Figure 3.2 : Memiors of Alton Adams, Sr.

**SOLD**



1915

1916

[ 1917 ]

1918

1919

Understanding the current state of the deterioration of the cultural, and therefore socio-cultural context of the Virgin Islands, and especially St. John, is to dive into the unfortunately degrading reality of the ensuing colonial context within which we live. This — though started and largely resultant of the Danish Colonial plantocracy — in its modern context, is compounded by the purchase of the territory by the government of **United States of America** from **Denmark**, in **1917**, for **25 million** in gold, and is a continued conversation about **identity**, but also one of **space**, and **choice** or the lack thereof.

I will refer to St. John, hitherto, as SinJan as pronounced in our Danish-colloquial tongue, and still used today by ancestral Sin Johnians as a significant exercise of identity and belonging.

It is to have a conversation about the lack of opportunity to self-determine; the subservience of a race of people through colonial law, military rule and 2nd class citizenship; and the coordinated, and very

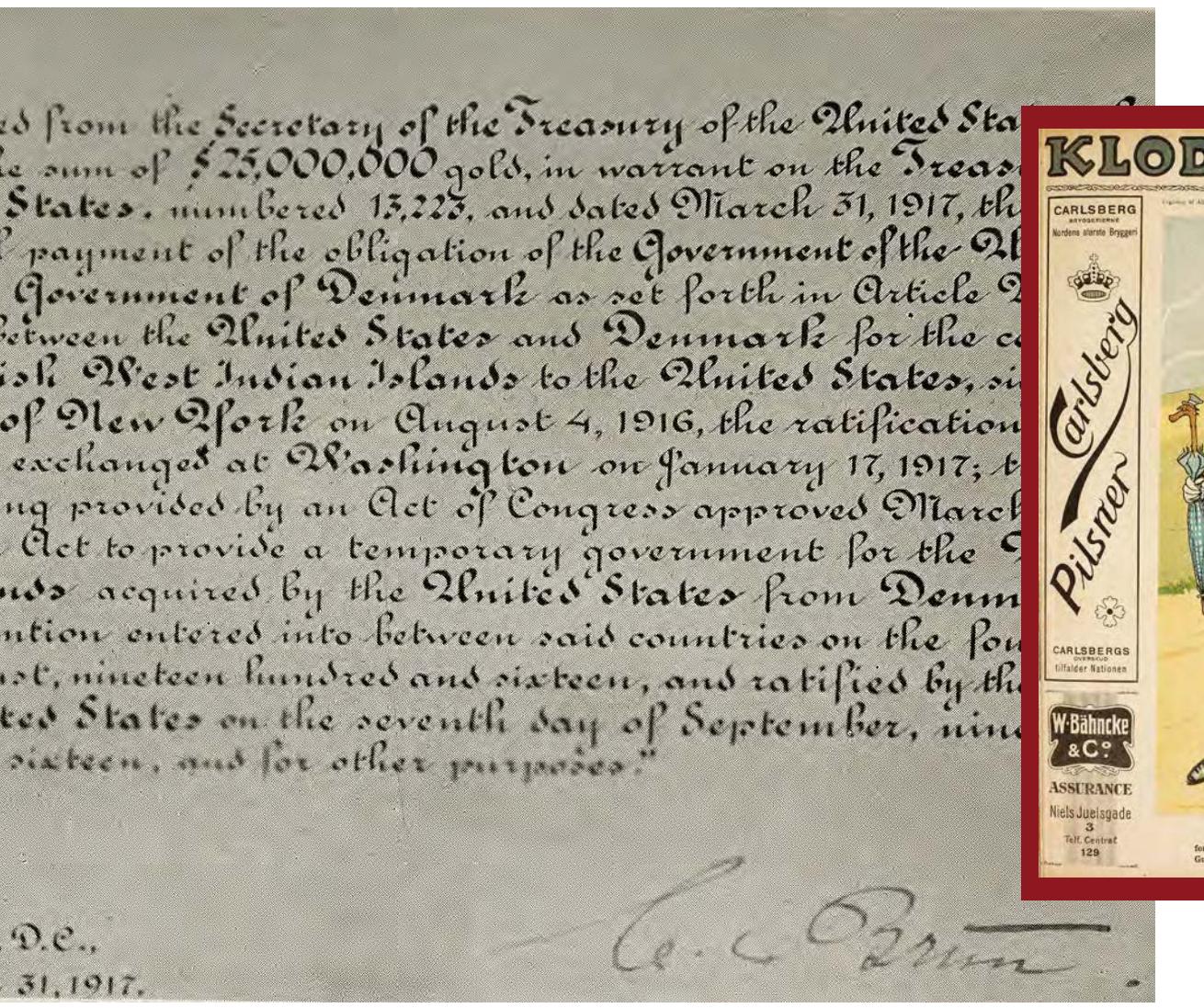


Figure 3.3 : \$25,000,000 receipt for the Treaty of the Danish West Indies



Figure 3.4 : Caricature in Klods-Hans

intensely aggressive mission to physically displace the ancestral native people of SinJan, starting with the establishment of the Virgin Islands National Park and the subsequent exacerbation of a rigid and **extractive** tourism economy.

It is important to note that the people of the territory were not granted an opportunity to participate in the discussion of the United States purchase of the territory, and as such, they were reminded of a not too distant past where they were treated as property, and that the conditions of their existence in this new world were still contingent upon the ruling classes of their society, which were not comprised of their kinfolk. The space that Virgin Islanders had been granted to pursue means of independent socioeconomic development for the past 69 years since **Emancipation** in 1848 was now facing the insertion of a new colonial power, and its unknown ramifications on the living; they had been able to cultivate largely through the absentee ownership and participation of the Danish Empire.

The base is the real existence of man, so it is essentially "how we live", while the superstructure is "why we live the way we do within that context".

### The Transfer

The United States perpetuated what had been an extractive and absentee relationship between the territory and its parent nation, because it had bought the islands for strategic military positioning during World War I, and was very little concerned with the conditions the territorial inhabitants were enduring. At this time, the ruling Naval administration had deemed that the predominantly black inhabitants of the islands were inept and incapable of making decisions of political influence. Thus, the people of the territory received conditional citizenship with the passage of the Organic Act of 1936 (revised in 1954), were under appointed military rule until they were first able to elect a governor in 1968, and subsequently elected their first non-voting Delegate to Congress in 1972.



Figure 3.5 : Transfer Day Ceremony



Figure 3.6 : Dannebrog



Figure 3.7 : Old Glory

Yet, even with the passage of the Organic Act of 1936, and the Revised Organic Act of 1954, citizenship is still not fully realized as a constitutional right to the people of the territory, and the United States is violating both the U.N. Charter and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by failing to grant Virgin Islanders their full rights. Thereby denying them an important pillar of **identity**; national belonging.

**“** Being a commonwealth or territory is permanent second-class status.

- United States Senator Chris Murphy  
(D – Connecticut)

## [ Timeline of Political Progress ]

During the first century of US Territorial political status (1917-2017), we made steady political strides toward self-government and self-governance. The following achievements show our progress:

- 1917-1921 ● Establishment of Police Courts
- 1927/1932 ● US Citizenship
- 1931 ● Civilian Government replaced Naval Rule
- 1936 ● Organic Act -sponsored by Rothschild Francis
- 1937 ● The first political party, The Progressive Guide
- 1937 ● First Municipal Councils/Legislative Assembly
- 1937 ● First Legislative Assembly Chairman Conrad Coneiro
- 1938 ● Women Elective Act
- 1939~1940 ● First Native Acting Governor—Morris deCastro
- 1934-1935, 1943-1945, and 1945-1950 ● First Native Government Secretary (Lt. Governor) Morris deCastro
- 1946 ● First African American Governor - William Hastie
- 1950 ● First Native Governor - Morris deCastro
- 1954 ● Revised Organic Act of
- 1959 ● Creation of Territorial Attorney General
- 1964-1965 ● First Constitution Convention
- 1965 ● Municipal Courts replaced Police Courts
- 1971-1972 ● Second Constitution Convention
- 1968 ● Elective Governor Act
- 1970 ● First elected Governor - Melvin Evans
- 1972 ● Delegate to Congress Ron de Lugo
- 1973 ● VI National Guard established and First Adjutant General Layle Gilbreath
- 1976 ● Territorial Courts replaced Municipal Courts
- 1977-1978 ● Third Constitution Convention
- 1980-1981 ● Fourth Constitution Convention
- 1980 ● First Political Status Commission - Chairman Earle B. Ottley
- 1982 ● Non-Binding Ballot Decision, Political Status precedes Constitution
- 1984 ● Superior Courts replaced Territorial Courts
- 1984-1988 ● Select Committee on Political Status Chair Senator Lorraine Berry
- 1991 ● Superior Courts expanded jurisdiction - Presiding Judge Verner Lodge
- 1988-1993 ● Second Political Status Commission - Co-Chairs Dr. Marilyn Ferguson and Senator Lorraine Berry
- 2004 ● Establishment of Territorial Supreme Court
- 2006 ● Investiture of founding Territorial Supreme Court Justices Rhys Edward Marston Carter and Ivie Swan
- 2007 ● Transfer of Appellate Cases from Third Circuit Court to Territorial Supreme Court
- 2009-2010 ● Fifth Constitution Convention
- 2016 ● Consolidation of Supreme Court Administration

Figure 3.8 : Timeline of Political Progress

1954

1955

[ 1956 ]

1957

1958

**“** "What Virgin Islanders know by these facts is that the land they inhabit — the land in which they were born, the land in which they and their ancestors have labored — is not theirs. This is a truth we know in the depths of our beings, and it is a truth that we spend our lifetimes attempting to forget.

You see, the price of the ownership of these rocks has long been paid in sweat, in actual unimagined blood, in an unwavering devotion to the eternal struggle carving out a space here for our bodies, for our spirits, for our histories."

- Richard Georges

#### The Virgin Islands National Park

Sin Johnians have suffered an even more unique context of sanctioned displacement under colonial rule as they are not granted the right to protect their lands under any legal authority beyond ownership, and they continually face the existence of the Virgin Islands National Park. With the shifts in global industry, and a newly established marketing of the Virgin Islands of the United States as "*America's Paradise*" came the birth of the tourism industry in the territory. Curious mainlanders had begun to visit and explore the territory — some of whom had massive wealth. Of these were Laurence Rockefeller and Frank Stick, whom jointly waged an effort against the possession and occupation of the land of Sin Jan by ancestral native Sin Johnians, seeking to condemn the island, save for a few estates. This would establish a "resort island" whereby some Sin Johnians would be granted residency on select estates, subsequently as employees on any of the plantation resort developments that would span

**“** We can no longer believe that we, the people of St. John, are considered of any importance ... and we no longer believe much of what we're told by Laurence Rockefeller. We believe that 750 Virgin Islanders do matter. We like tourists, but we will not sacrifice ourselves to make this a happy place for tourists.

- Mooie, 1958

the hills and valleys of this virgin island. Rockefeller and Stick were largely successful in acquiring some **5000 acres** of property, and in **1956** donated land to the Federal Government to establish the nation's 29<sup>th</sup> National Park.

Within the context of the establishment of the NPS on Sin Jan, Rockefeller had successfully developed the Caneel Bay Resort under his self-devised Retained Use Estate (RUE), which granted him the rights to operate the resort free of Federal oversight or management, as it is with typical concessions within



Figure 3.9 : Mooie

the National Park Service.

Resistance, Continued

This pursuit of the acquiring of Sin Jan was not without organized resistance. Theoval "Mooie" Moorehead — an elected senator from Sin Jan — returned to the island from his service in the military as he became aware of Rockefeller and Stick's campaign of displacement. His efforts went as far as the halls of congress as he sought to save Sin Jan from Sin Johnians from corporatist disenfranchisement, and against the almost successful Federally sanctioned condemnation without representation.

Overall, this exercise in usurpation had been thwarted, and with it the idea that Sin Jan would become a commodified victim of the "Orientalist" European ideology through the repressive ideological state apparatus that is the National Park Service, under the guise of conservation, and cultural heritage preservation "consciousness" materialized by the beliefs and efforts of these wealthy colonizers.

## [ Space, and a colony ]

### [ CULTURE SPACES ]

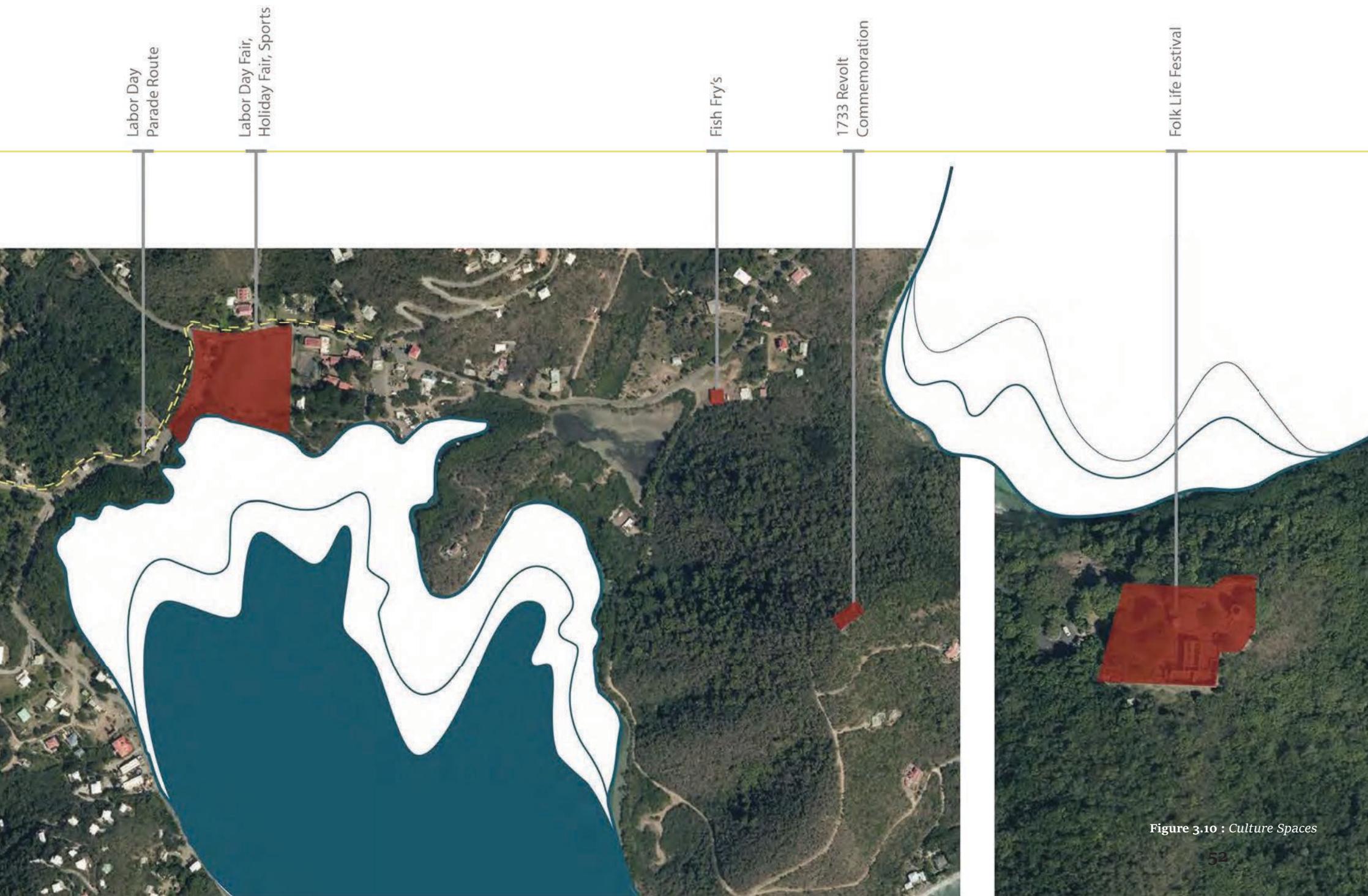


Figure 10 : Culture Spaces

[ 1780 - 2021 ]

“Architecture, the very model of precision and self-exalting intelligence, should not fear its union with what has been the lowest form of human manifestation, the ugly evidence of violence.

- Lebbeus Woods

#### Silent Monuments

As of 1780, there were some 25 active sugar producing factories on St. John. These, “Silent Monuments” stand in ruin, as a constant reminder of the struggle endured during the plantation era. As some of the ruins have become the assets of local families, it is also important to understand the paradox presented by this passing of hands through time. Descendants of the enslaved, now emancipated, are in control of some of the very symbols of their ancestral and modern oppression.

#### Maho Bay Quarter

#### East End Quarter

#### East End Quarter

#### Coral Bay Quarter

#### Cruz Bay Quarter

#### Reef Bay Quarter

Colonial Ruins

Private Lands

Historic Quarters

National Park



# 04

## So, we live!

*In search of identity.*

Cultural context of the United States Virgin Islands, and a continued search for identity: how do we live? What is it that makes the guardians of our cultural heritage nostalgic?



Figure 4.1: *St. John Cultural Landscape*

We can discern that people of the world: populations large and small, cities or whole countries, are identified through their practices of a particular culture system. It is how we differentiate between groups less in regards to geographic location, which is a critical component of any culture, but more specifically regarding their behavioral patterns (which are very much also attributed to location). Dr. Whitehead also discusses culture being the primary source of a people's knowledge of the world, and applies local conceptions to definitions of knowledge, giving a more common sense of reality. The **"Principle of Universal Human Cultural Categories"** suggests that there are certain categories of phenomena that are universally relevant to human communities, but that human communities differ in terms of how these universals are expressed (culture). This is our cultural systems being translated into, or celebrated as, behaviors, physical environments, social systems, and expressive culture.

In small nations whose cultural identities have been effectively re-imaged, and their cultural systems

equally as appropriated by the adverse effects of colonization, it is important to understand population shifts and the resulting effects on cultural exchange, as we consider fostering a resurgence of cultural significance and continuity.

#### New Locals

In the decade succeeding the establishment of the Virgin Islands National Park, and the Caneel Bay Resort on St. John, the population increased by a dramatic **86.9%** according to the US Census Bureau — the population of St. John spiked from **925** people in **1960** to **1,729** in **1970**. This can be attributed to a series of loose interpretations and favorable revisions of immigration law which reduced occupational restrictions and generally lax enforcement, prompting a wave of emigration both from neighboring Caribbean islands, as well as the US mainland. This reality was not an apparent threat to the cultural integrity of St. John in its beginnings, and especially from the Caribbean migrants who shared very similar diasporic traditions and mainly came to

1958  
1959  
[ 1960 - 1970 ]

1971  
1972



Figure 4.2 : Hippies in Cruz Bay

the island seeking greater economic prospects than on their home islands, but rather slowly became apparent as the American settlers began to explore their new territory as a home, and as a new enterprise.

**“**One man's imagined community is another man's political prison.

Appadurai

Arjun Appadurai — in *Modernity at Large* — makes a compelling argument critiquing the context of the vast network that is our global economy, and how it must continue to be diverse. He focuses largely on migration, diaspora, and the movements of people and capital around the world. To frame the argument, he discusses concepts of imagined worlds that exist within and about this global economy: *Ethnoscapes* (people who move between nations, such as tourists, immigrants, exiles, guest-workers, and refugees), *Technoscapes* (technology, often linked to multinational corporations), *Financials* (global capital, currency

60

markets, stock exchanges), *Mediascapes* (electronic and new media), and *Ideoscapes* (official state ideologies and counter-ideologies), accurately asserting that the central problem in today's global interactions is the tension between **cultural homogenization** and **cultural heterogenization**.

Looking at the reality of colonial subjects, whatever the colonial power, inserting itself into this indigenous setting, encourages cultural assimilation as they enforce their motherland practices on native populations. Now, there is the reality that modernity is deemed a good thing as it often means cleaner, quicker, and more efficient. Yet, the cultural values of a society are what determines — through the course of time & practice — the validity of these sorts of claims. To look at the world through a narrow, global cultural perspective, removes the uniqueness of a people, and of a place. Though a necessity to connect across cultures, and across barriers, it is also quite important — sacred even — that we maintain these cultural boundaries to the extent that we maintain our bounty of world cultures. Cultural

homogenization removes the richness of a people, and limits traveling to a desire of sights, rather than cultural enrichment through engagement of people.

#### Cultural Reproduction

The reproduction of culture is important as it is the act of carrying old time traditions forward into a new societal context. Realities change, and so do people and places. We must decide whether to fall behind and **reject** the idea of a global cultural view, clinging to ancient traditions; give way to these traditions and **adopt** those of a new reality; **or adapt** and **evolve** our cultures that we maintain the values that they carry while keeping up with the ever evolving reality of modernization and global connectivity.

**Enculturation** — the gradual acquisition of the characteristics and norms of a culture or group by a person, another culture, etc. — has emerged as families are more disconnected due to the reality of younger members moving, traveling the world, and adopting things from their experiences abroad.



Figure 4.3 : Herman Prince

Appadurai charges that we must understand that the very models of cultural shape have to alter, and they must be understood as overlapping fractals. In an increasingly global context, it is easy for heterogeneous cultural systems to be affected by homogeneous global forces, and reproduction either as an adaptation of or reaction to these forces, must occur.

On St. John, conceiving cultural resistance in the current colonial context is ever challenging. Jessica Samuel — a PhD student at Boston University — charges:

"There's a difficult predicament as an island paradise. ... How do you live and thrive in a place that is constantly being consumed by strangers? ... We're a nature island with a park, and that it's wildly difficult to navigate the concerns and intentions of various coalitions and alliances within St. John, including native/ancestral people; those who come who have an investment in the island; and those who come for commercial development who couldn't give a damn

about the islands."

Still — amidst cultural assimilation through settler colonialism, cultural appropriation through a mainland extractivist corporate apparatus, and enculturation resulting of generational flight from St. John, and loss of space through sanctioned federal displacement and the National Park Service — the ancestral native people have maintained their cultural practices, as they are resilient, and unwavering. Unable to aggressively challenge the status quo on the island as most of the extractors maintain resources and influence beyond the shores of this virgin, these **creative natives** yet thrive in their making of music, art, craft, dance, and industry — even if collectively on smaller scales and not overtly public.

**“** We didn't have a lot, but we're blessed.

— Sir Johnians Eiders



## [ Richard Schrader, Sr. ]

"The Madras that binds all Ah'we"

*I sing of the madras that ties you to me  
I sing of the madras that binds all ah'we*

The madras  
Rich and vibrant  
Like our history  
  
Flamboyant colors  
Like native trees  
Peaceful blues like our Caribbean Sea

Luscious greens remind us of our fertile  
terrain  
Glorious reds like the blood of our  
ancestors  
Pumping through our veins.

Horizontal and vertical patterns of our  
Virgin Islands' family tree  
Behold!  
The Virgin Islands' cultural tapestry  
In the madras that ties you to me  
The madras that binds all ah'we

*I sing of*

Barren lands  
Plantation hands  
Sweated brow  
Mule's plow  
Tilling soil  
Baby on hip  
Metal shackles  
Massa's whips  
Sugar, cotton, and precious coal  
Auction blocks  
Babies sold  
  
*I sing of*  
Slavery  
Mutiny  
Revolt  
Insurrection  
  
Uprising  
Rebellion  
Fire-burn  
Emancipation  
  
*I sing of the madras that ties you to me*

*I sing of the madras that binds all ah'we*  
  
*I sing*  
Clear de Road!  
From Freedom City  
in West End  
Marching down  
Mary to Bassin  
Over the sea  
To Charlotte Amalie  
Through the Cay  
Towards Cruz Bay  
Across the sand  
To Water Island  
  
*I sing to*  
Watergut and Waterfront  
Mon Bijou and Tutu  
Agnes Fancy and Judith's Fancy  
Fredenhoy and Fredensborg  
Concordia and Calquohoun  
Bethlehem and Bovoni  
Hospital Ground and Parade Ground

Anna's Rest and Annaberg  
Cinnamon Bay and Strawberry Hill  
Rustenberg and Rustop Twist  
LaVallee and Mafolie  
  
*I sing of the madras that ties you to me  
I sing of the madras that binds all ah'we*  
  
*I sing of*  
Slavery times  
Our blacks and blues  
Cariso  
Spreading news  
  
Dance! Ms. Clara'  
Bamboula  
Dance! Quadrille  
Ladies forward!  
  
*I sing of*  
Jouvert morning  
The calypso beat  
Quelbe rhythms

Figure 4.4 : Portrait Richard Schrader

Stanley so sweet  
Movements, Bradley, Derby and Dimitri  
Archie, Jamsie, Edgie and Imagi  
Mungo Niles and Halliday  
Ohaldo Williams and Prince Galloway  
  
Blinky and the Roadmasters  
Milo and the Kings  
Mokojumbies and Majorettes  
Rising Stars and Rigidims  
  
April Bacchanal!  
Fourth of July Festival!  
Christmas time Carnival!

*I sing of the madras that ties you to me*  
*I sing of the madras that binds all ah'we*

*I sing because of*  
  
Buddhoe  
Mary  
Agnes and Matilda  
  
Jackson

65

Jarvis  
Hendricks and Coziah  
  
Richards  
Jurgen  
Heyliger and Evans  
  
Sixto  
Bramble  
Dorsch and Gordon  
  
Kriger  
Nelthrop  
Sprauve and Hastie  
  
James  
Emmanuel  
Lockhardt and Paiewonsky  
  
Melchoir  
Harrigan  
Adams and Alexander  
  
Griffith  
Rivera

Thomas and Schneider  
  
*I sing because of*  
  
Hamilton  
Moorehead  
Grigg and Merwin  
  
Anduze  
Brodhurst  
Francis and King  
  
Kean  
Santos  
Baa and Luis  
  
Todman  
Blyden  
Williams and Farrelly  
  
Rothschild  
Davis  
Thurland and De Castro  
  
Armstrong

Ottley  
Bough and Turnbull  
  
*I sing of the madras that ties you to me*  
*I sing of the madras that binds all ah'we*  
  
Senior citizens  
And de children dem  
  
Sundays at Magen's Bay  
Races on Christmas Second Day  
The goose and the ferry  
Virgin Island's Lottery  
  
Dominoes and queen show's  
Old sugar mills  
And Estate Whim  
  
Bougainvillea's and the hibiscus  
Tan-tan trees and our Ginger Thomas  
  
Freedom City's sons  
Dove and Wayne James  
Our keepers of the flame

*Sing of Yesterday*  
*A song of history*  
  
*Sing of today*  
*A song for 2003*  
  
*Sing of Tomorrow*  
*A song of promise and possibility*  
  
*Let us sing!*

Native daughters Arona and Leona  
Our legislature  
And Agriculture  
  
Kidney mangoes  
And arroz con pollo  
  
The Daily News and the Avis  
Pay bus and Cruise Ships  
Softball games and little league  
Lemon grass and bush tea  
  
*Let us sing!*

Of the madras that *links* our emeralds of the sea  
  
The madras that *weaves* our ancestry  
  
The madras that *ties* you to me  
  
The madras that *binds* all ah'we

66



## [ Music, Dance, and Storytelling ]

### PERFORMANCE

Traditional music in the Virgin Islands was/is used to praise, boast, tease, and tell stories, among other things. Here, the call and response — native to Africans — was maintained as a means to communicate through song, but other forms of music were also invented. Cariso, for example is known in other Caribbean islands, but has received its own characteristic traits in the Virgin Islands territory. Some of the most significant songs in early American settlement days referenced historical events throughout the territory's history, like the **1878 Fire Burn** lead by Queen Mary, which was for the increased wages and improved working conditions for the free colored people of the territory:

“Queen Mary – ‘tis where you goin go burn  
 Queen Mary – ‘tis where you goin go burn  
 Don’t ask me nothing t’all  
 Just fetch the math and oil  
 Bassin jailhouse, ‘tis where ah goin go burn.”

The song demonstrates the call & response tradition of African folk music, and illustrates Queen Mary’s

activity as she seeks to incite a demonstration on behalf of her fellow laborers. The Scratch Band, like many other facets of Virgin Islands culture was born of a lack of resources, but also of creative prowess. They are called “scratch” bands because of the instruments used for percussion. Most of them are made from “scratch”, either by recycled materials, or grown. For example, one man might be blowing through a car muffler pipe, while another is raking a hair pick along the side of a carved squash!

**Quelbe** — the music performed by scratch bands — is folk music, created as a form of storytelling by the African slave settlers of the Virgin Islands. It is a method by which the locals, then slaves, communicated historical events and everyday life conditions through the generations. It became crucial form of communication between the inhabitants of the three US Virgin Islands throughout their history, and even now.

**Quadrille** dancing is native to the Virgin Islands, and was introduced in the 19th century by the European

planters. The dance leader, or “Floor Master”, made sure that the dancing group held their figure, and followed the correct step sequencing. Quadrille blended some of European line dancing with a bit of Bamboula to be accepted for performances before the plantation masters. It is now more commonly practiced than **Bamboula** dancing, which is actually a more pan-African spiritual dance tradition.

**Storytelling** and oral tradition traveled on the tongues of the slaves through the middle passage across the Atlantic Ocean right here to our island, has survived and thrived through all expectations, and is one of the first teaching tools still used today for many purposes. These stories came directly from the Ashanti people of Ghana and are embedded in the culture of the Virgin Islands. The three genres of folktales in the US Virgin Islands are the Bru Nansi, The Jumbi Stories and Legends. They may be placed under taxonomic classification of gnomic-narrative since most of the stories offer a pithy or aphorism that advises or guides.



Figure 4.5 : Allegra Christopher performs with Echo People

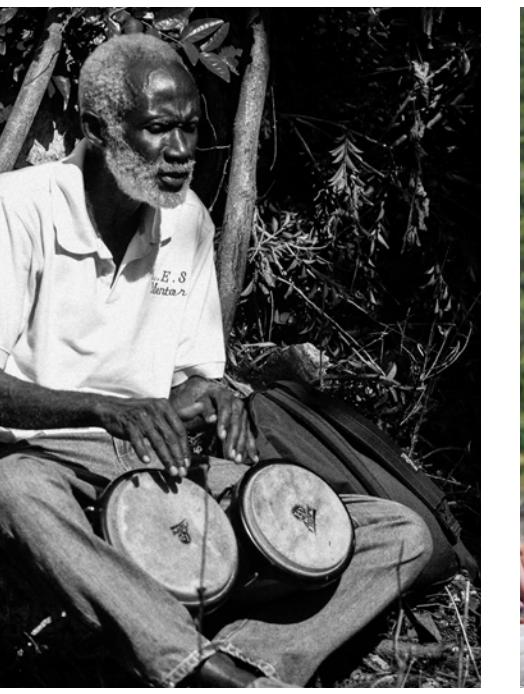


Figure 4.7 : Untitled



Figure 4.8 : Storyteller, Yohancé Henley



Figure 4.6 : Untitled



Figure 4.9 : Movement Band

One might expect the soothing sounds of **steel pan**, irie **Reggae** music, **Calypso** or **Quelbe** tunes, or even see emotive **Bamboula** dancing performed across the island, but instead, visitors and locals alike are met with Country, Indy, and even Rock music as they engage performances here.

Performance by Sin Johnians is now relegated to curated events, often for tourism based businesses or functions, and don't happen frequently enough nor publicly enough for the ancestral native population of the island to be attached to their own cultural lively arts. This "acting" has created a chasm between elder islanders who know and love their cultural heritage intimately, and young islanders who long to connect to that substantive cultural experience.

How displacing, to be on your "**own**" soil, and moving through your "**own**" community, and not see yourself in the spaces that come alive?

## [ PERFORMANCE ]

& the Extractive Tourism Aparatus

### *A lost Narrative: A*



Figure 4.37 : Johanna Weekes plays with the Addelita Cancryn Jr. High School drumline  
 Figure 4.38 : Extractive Performance Spread



The pre-Columbian inhabitants of the territory lived a live heavily based on their ability to craft everyday items, and even after European settlement, these truths still were evident as slaves maintained these skills as imperative. Many art items started as practical crafts that assisted with work, and everyday tasks. The calabash bowl was created by locals as a means to have dishes to eat from, that they otherwise wouldn't have. Since the introduction of manufactured tableware to the territory during colonization, traditional items like the calabash bowl became all but obsolete as needed objects.

All around the world we see early cultures using tree branches, or straws as tools for sweeping. In the Virgin Islands, however, there was a more creative application to this practical household item. The brooms here were made by weaving the native Teyer Palm fronds tightly together around a centrally located stick. This method created a more effective broom, and lasts quite some time. Another woven, and much more popular treasure, is the "melon, or market basket. Made from the hoop vine, collected

## [ Arts & Crafts ]

### CREATION

in the dark of the moon, so as to be free of worms and termites. The baskets serve a multitude of purposes but are increasingly less accessible due to lack of continuation of knowledge of the craft, and access to the vine forests because of change in land ownership. Most items now, like the palm broom, and the calabash bowl, in these modern times have been treated as works of art. Folks habitually purchase them as a means of owning a piece of Virgin Islands cultural heritage.

The spirit of craft lives on in the soul of Virgin Islands people, and they continue to be "makers" of the highest caliber. Many traditional artisan skills are maintained by people of a certain generation, privately, but there are also vocational courses in schools where young people in the territory are afforded opportunities to learn these trades and crafts as well. Festivals occur frequently throughout the territory where these artisans have the opportunity to engage the greater public through demonstration, and exposition.

“ Local handcraft carries the genes of cultural heritage.

- Unknown

Many artists/artisan in the territory are worldly in their recognition of their talents. Some of the most worldly and renowned among these include Avelino Samuel (world renowned wood-turner), Shansi Miller (expressionist painter), La Vaughn Belle (mixed media artist), Karen Samuel (expressionist painter, and fashion designer). There are rising artists as well making their way onto stages and into significant spaces throughout the art world in the form of graphic content, media exploration, contemporary woodwork, fashion, painting, and even sculpture and jewelry-making.



Figure 4.10 : Woodworker Avelino Samuel



Figure 4.11 : Annaberg Expo

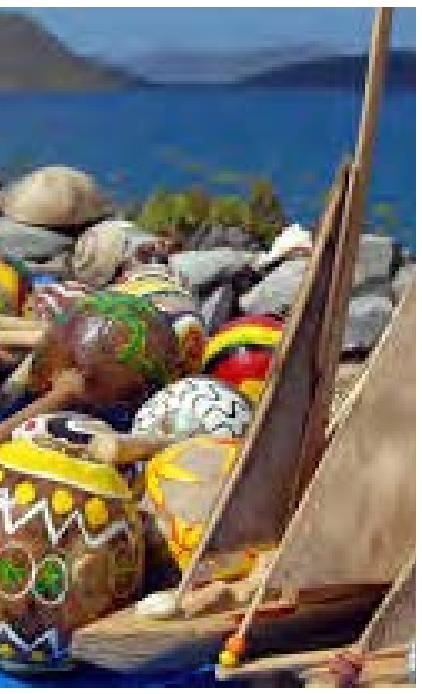


Figure 4.12 : Local Crafts

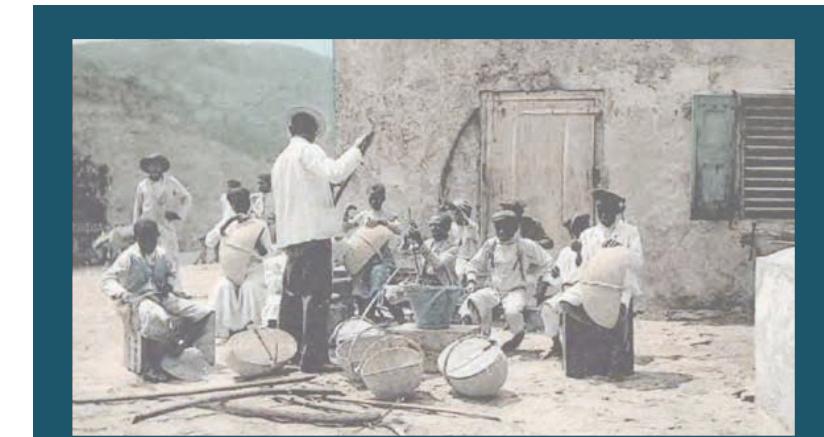


Figure 4.14 : Teaching Basket Making



Figure 4.13 : Charles "Do Good" Jackson cuts sugar cane

Crafts-people on Sin Jan have experienced displacement in some ways that go beyond the desire or will to create. Because of the nature of tourism in the Virgin Islands, The Virgin Islands National Park, and global access to this "American" soil, Sin Johnian makers suffer lack of access to spaces that facilitate their traditional crafting, but beyond that, spaces that appreciate it.

The basket weaver now has to obtain permits to access National Park lands to collect the hoop vine that is used in basket weaving. Now, once such a necessary craft, has become a museum talking piece, but Sin Jan is without a museum to display its mastery. And so, the craft although maintained in the soul of *Jan Public*, is unknown to our visitors and new locals.

The value that was once exalted onto the Sin Johnian crafts-person is now lost to the commercial endeavors of transplants and non-locals who have the capital and marketing to reach an audience that seeks beauty, not placeness.

## [ CREATION ]

& the Extractive Tourism Aparatus

### *A lost Narrative: B*



Figure 4.39 : Basket Making  
Figure 4.40 : Extractive Craft Spread



## [ Food & Drink ]

### NOURISHMENT

One of the most significant expressions of Virgin Islands culture is through the creation of food. The food ingredients are a unique mixture of European, African, and Central/South American influences as many of them were brought from these regions during colonization. Europeans learned about the local fruits and vegetables from the indigenous Indians, and later shared the knowledge with the slaves brought to the plantations. The dishes vary immensely, and stem from European settlers, African slaves, and Asian and Indian indentured servants. Older women in the community are usually the best cooks, and have a unique memory catalog of recipes, typically cooking by memory and taste.

Food and drinks are such an integral part of the culture that there are very regular celebrations of food throughout the year to include the Carnival Food Fairs, Agricultural Food Fairs, the annual Taste of the Islands, Fish Fry's, etc., which take place on each of the three islands. Some of the traditional methods of cooking involve baking outside using a stone oven, or cooking over a coal pot. These

methods have narrowly survived colonization and are barely practiced today. But the practices are still active in the Virgin Islands community. Food culture in the territory is an experience beyond the savory complexities of the meal. It is also overwhelmingly an experience of all of the senses. It isn't a foreign site to happen upon a group of ancestral native men down by the waterfront skinning a freshly hunted goat or deer, a group of men "crabbing" in the dead of night after a heavy rainfall, a family by the roadside gathering fruit, or even a coal pot or tree-stone fire blazing away while a matriarch tends to her family meal.

Virgin Islanders have become skilled experts in cultivating fruit crops to make juices, jams, stews, chutneys, candy, tarts, cakes, and then some. Some of these fruits include mango, coconut, sorrel, soursop, passion fruit, and guavaberry. Many of these even become the base for special demijohns of liqueur that only come out during the holidays and on special occasion. Some young Virgin Islanders have also been exploring old customs of rum distilling.

#### “ Sorrel Drink

##### Ingredients

1oz. dried sorrel  
3 slices of fresh ginger (1 inch thick)  
1 tablespoon cloves  
1 piece dried orange peel  
sugar – 10 cups boiling water  
A few grains of rice  
Optional Ingredient – 1/4 cup rum

##### Directions

Put water and ginger slices in a large saucepan. Cover and boil well for 3 minutes. Place sorrel, cloves and orange peel in a jar with boiling ginger-water mixture. Allow mixture to sit for 24 hours. Strain the mixture and sweeten to taste. Add rum if desired. Pour liquid into glass bottle adding a few grains of rice to each bottle. The grains of rice are said to help quicken fermentation. Leave bottles of sorrel un-chilled for a minimum of 24 hours before serving.



Figure 4.14 : Untitled



Figure 4.16 : Beef Pate



Figure 4.17 : Doris Jadan



Figure 4.15 : Making Johnny Cake



Figure 4.18 : Coal Pot Cooking

Food culture is known to be one of the most calcified of cultural heritage traditions. Many indigenous cultures globally gather around meals to celebrate a cadre of things, but most importantly, heritage foods are known to be soulful acts of communion. It is unfortunate then, that on Sin Jan, the culinary experiences that are presented at-large are not Sin Johnian, and are in many cases, barely Caribbean.

The tourism industry has created a context for the better part of the past 30 years that dictates that visitors to the island don't want *crab & rice*, or *goat wata*, *gooseberry stew*, *conch in butter-sauce*, *kallaloo*, *red grout*, *soursop*, *sugar apple*, *gauvaberry tart*, or *fraco's*.

Instead, restaurants offer lite pan-Caribbean dishes, and cater to a visiting/transient crowd, and so when tourism seasons fluctuate, many of them lay off workers because their food and service don't cater to natives in such a way that attracts them to their establishment en masse.

## [ NOURISHMENT ]

& the Extractive Tourism Aparatus

### *A lost Narrative: C*



Figure 4.41 : Conch and Butter Sauce with Peas Rice  
 Figure 4.42 : Extractive Culinary Spread



Cultural resources are critical components of any cultural system as they are the traditional means by which that society survives. The Arts Council has recognized that culture and cultural industries act as a source of creative input that adds value and/or supports other industries. Cultural industry once was one of the most significant pillars of social inclusion and citizenship in the territory, as with most places. Once the traditional, cultural resources are sustainably, and successfully exploited, there are many possibilities to bolster the economic status of a community/city/nation.

With the manifestation of tourism as the main industry, and accounting for **60%** of the Virgin Islands GDP and about half of total civilian employment, the territory is subject to the fluctuation of choosy visitors deciding to visit the territory or not. The local economy suffers from this reality, as businesses tend to cater not the local spenders, but the visitors. Industries not born of a place have a much harder time surviving in a foreign context. This example is most easily shown using the closing of the HOVENSA

## [ Industry ]

### ECONOMICS

Oil Refinery on the big island of St. Croix. The closure of the plant is attributed to the oil market irregularities worldwide, and the effects of the Great Recession of 2008. Yet, an argument can be made that if it was an industry born of Virgin Islands culture, it would not be subject to these external influences. Some Virgin Islanders are becoming more and more versatile as they engage creative industries for the sake of establishing greater cultural presence and dominance in our local economy, as well as producing a cultural product that meets the world.

Some of these methods include the packaging and mass production of baked goods like tarts and cakes; bottling juices, stews, and chutney; creative graphic content for merchandise to be seen and worn globally; producing music with sounds and lyrics inspired by our heritage; creating platforms for storytelling and oral tradition engagement beyond the territory; establishing virtual tours of some of our most treasured built and natural spaces; participation in global trade shows, gallery exhibits, art campaigns, etc; and so many more instances. Virgin Islanders are

“ When we talk about the value of arts and culture, we should always start with the intrinsic – how arts and culture illuminate our inner lives and enrich our emotional world. This is what we cherish.

- Unknown

taking control of the narrative of a tourism industry that favors space, but not place. How do we begin to rank the merit of arts and culture elements of our socioeconomic fabric? Well, it is no argument that the arts add an immeasurable quality to the lives of the people within any particular cultural system, as well as the extra-cultural participants of that system. Arts and culture are not to be assessed as measurable value, per se, but as experiential ones.



Figure 4.19 : Modern Madras



Figure 4.21 : Untitled



Figure 4.22 : Untitled



Figure 4.20 : Untitled



Figure 4.23 : Untitled

Sin Johnians, and Virgin Islanders at-large have been generationally engaged in businesses of utility/service. On Sin Jan, due to the lack of government services, and our separation from St. Thomas — the capital island — Sin Johnians have been forced to be self-reliant, generationally. Again, I remind you of the aggression of the tourism industry on island, and its subsequent ramifications on the livelihoods of otherwise self-sufficient ancestral natives.

Tourism has encouraged the "bastardization" of Sin Jan's icons: **petroglyphs, Historic names, peoples narrative's, lands & legacy**. Her image has been reduced to the beauty of her rolling emerald hills and valleys, the varying blues of her seas, the strange romanticizing of her plantation ruins, and the ability to place the silhouette of her outline in the sea on items "for sale". None of the boat charters, bars, restaurants, villas, news outlets, bookstores, hotels, excursions, largely showcased artists, majority of musicians provide an authentic Sin Johnian experience, and are largely not owned by them.

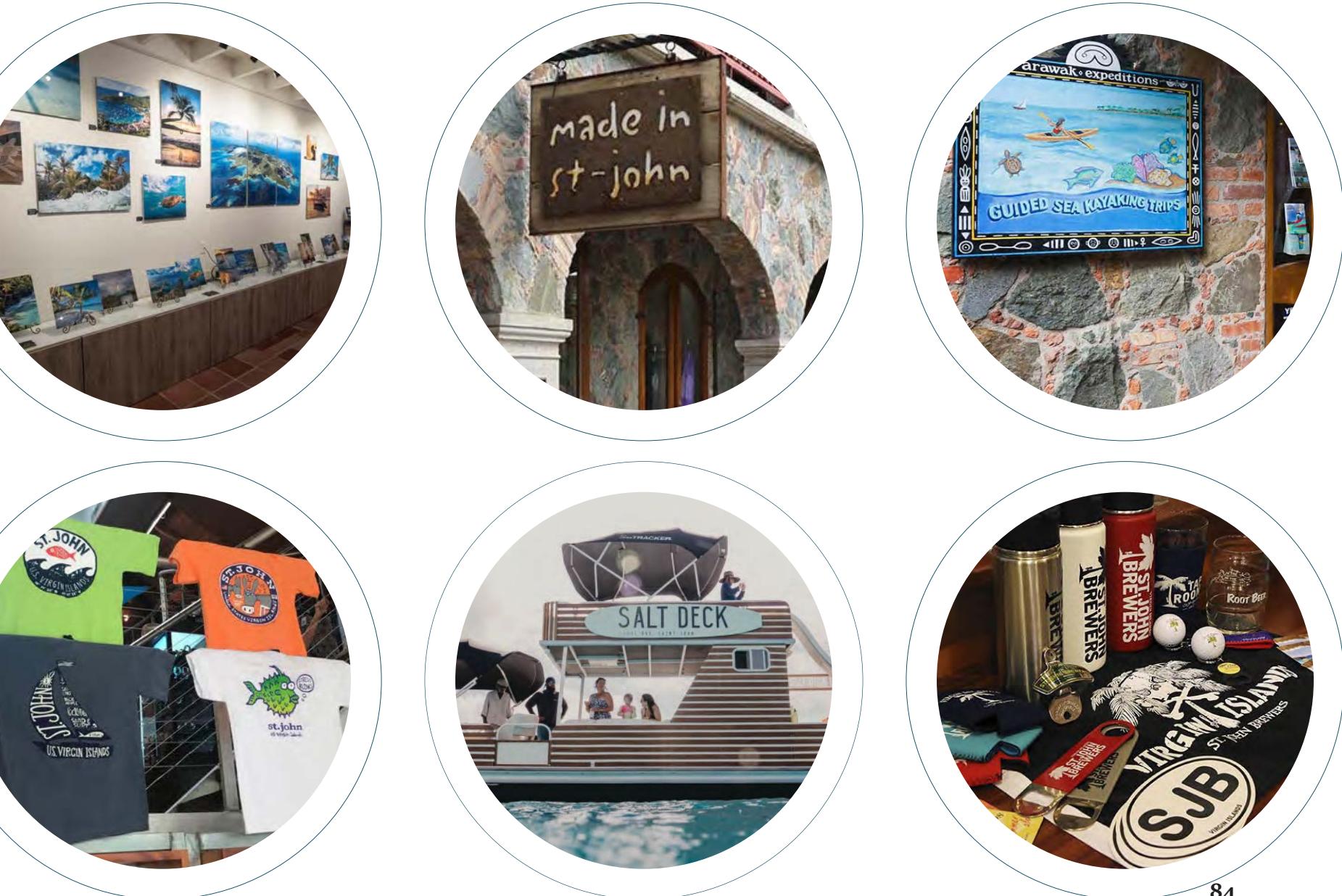
## [ ECONOMICS ]

& the Extractive Tourism Aparatus

*A lost Narrative: D*



Figure 4.43 : Grand Vic  
Figure 4.44 : Extractive Industry Spread



Architecture has long been the grand gesture of any culture through the bellows of time, as the built environment is a fulcrum on which a population fluctuates: it represents the progression, or sometimes regression of a society as it advances through the ages. This is represented through the amazing skill and labor of the great temples of old (Ziggurats in Egypt, Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Kukulkan in Chichen Itza, and the Parthenon in Athens) which tell us of how some ancient civilizations functioned politically, socially, and economically. Our built environments are effectively the most apparent symbols of our cultural systems, as they are physical manifestations of them.

After the plantation era in Sin Jan, the newly freed slaves began to settle areas outside of the plantations. Small communities began to form around the islands, and the settlers established their own sense of place. They had found some semblance of recompense, and were living peacefully amongst themselves, celebrating the "village". Many of these freed people were residing in what is the true indigenous

## [ Architecture ]

### BUILT ENVIRONMENT

architecture of the island: wattle and daub huts. Guy H. Benjamin, in his book *"Me and My Beloved Virgin"*, talks about his youth in the East End settlement on Sin Jan, and the beautiful community ties they expressed. Neighbors strolled unobstructed from yard to yard, shouting greetings and complimenting each other. Children safely played together in the fields, and groves, and all parents looked out for all children. They fed each other, mourned each other, disciplined each other, taught each other, and held each other up.

The most presumed vernacular architectural pieces still visible in the Virgin Islands are the plantation ruins of establishments built during the initial colonization period. Beautifully kept sugar mill towers, estate houses, boiler rooms, dams, and other supporting structures line the hills and valleys of the three islands, documenting an important phase in the settlement of the territory. Now, these ramparts stand, and in some cases fall as silent monuments to a dark time past.

Many of the Danish colonial era structures of the once dominant plantocracy are now owned by the descendants of slaves, or the local government, and in some ways influenced the birth of what started to become a new Virgin Islands vernacular architecture during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. New structures of this influence include details displaying a mingling of traditional West Indian and twentieth-century American architectural design and building practices — a Neo-Vernacular typology. Most buildings constructed or renovated during that time were either had major stone masonry influences from the practices carried through the plantation era, had beautifully adorned "gingerbread" trimmings on their wooden fascia, maintained a masonry base with a wood studded upper floor, and had large doors and windows adorned with beautifully crafted Caribbean shutters. Depending upon the skills, financial resources, and design sensibilities of the individual owners, the buildings constructed or updated during this era reflected a merging of traditional Colonial West Indian and mid-twentieth-century American-modern architectural design and building practices.



Figure 4.24 : Fort Christian

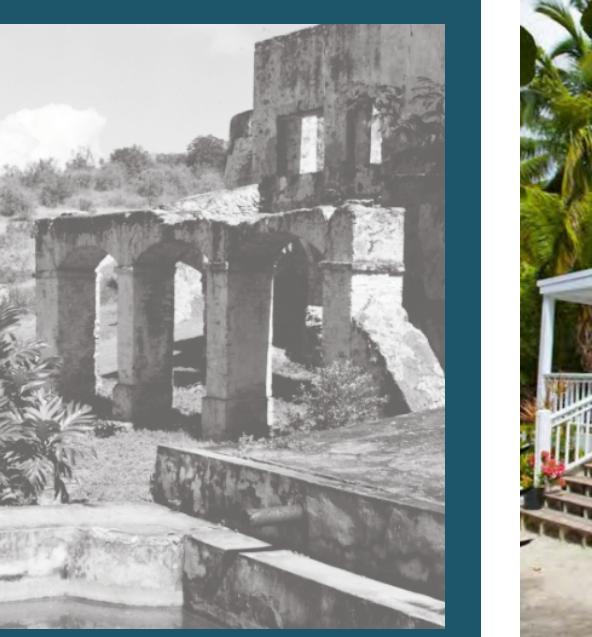


Figure 2.6 : Caneel Bay Plantation, Sugar Factory



Figure 4.26 : Beach Cottage



Figure 25 : Cruz Bay Harbor



Figure 4.27 : Nazareth Lutheran Church

Although architecture traditionally was the means by which Virgin Islanders were able to shelter and protect themselves, house their religious practices, keep their livestock, etc — their day to day living — the tourism industry boom in the 1970's created a context whereby persons outside of the territory, and especially from the US mainland migrated to the territory in droves and sought to purchase lands for economic development.

As a result, much of the virgin lands in the islands over the past 30 years have been compromised to capitalism, and Sin Johnians have been forced — by way of the existence of the Virgin Islands National Park occupying 2/3's of the island's developable lands, increased tax rates due to adjoining Federal lands, and a disenfranchising probate process — to sell their ancestral lands in many instances, just to keep portions. Now, architecture largely serves the absentee villa ownership economy, and there are shortages in housing stock, affordable commercial space, and affordable lands for those on island without inheritance.

## [ BUILT ENVIRONMENT ]

& the Extractive Tourism Aparatus

*A lost Narrative: E*



Figure 4.45 : Sprauve Cottage  
Figure 4.46 : Extractive Architecture Spread





Figure 4.28 : Carnival in Cruz Bay



Figure 4.29 : Fort Christiana



Figure 4.30 : Virgin Islands Plate



Figure 4.31 : The Hill Mural



Figure 4.32 : Henry Powell with old goose neck iron



Figure 4.33 : Street Mural



Figure 4.34 : Heritage Dancers



Figure 4.35 : Caribbean

# 05

## Precedents

### Culture Houses

Architectural design that pays homage to the cultural traditions of a "place", as well as celebrating access to "space", and speak life into memory.



Figure 5.1 : Greathouse, Wim Plantation, St. Croix

Rejecting the typical notion of a *cultural pavilion* as an object in a plaza, the China Pavilion is instead conceived as a field of spaces; a cloud hovering over a “Land of Hope”. The Pavilion is experienced as a series of public programs located beneath a floating roof, the unique design of which creates an iconic image for the project and a unique presence within the Expo grounds.

The project embodies this through its undulating roof form, derived by merging the profile of a city skyline on the building’s north side with the profile of a landscape on the south side, expressing the idea that “hope” can be realized when city and nature exist in harmony.

Conceived as a timber structure that references the “raised-beam” system found in traditional Chinese architecture, the Pavilion roof is covered in shingled panels that reference traditional pottery roof construction, but are reinterpreted as large bamboo leaves that enhance the roof profile while shading the public spaces below.

The Pavilion’s full exhibition and cultural offerings are experienced as a sequence of spaces, beginning with an exterior waiting area in the landscape, leading to a themed exhibition space with interactive installations and cultural offerings from different Chinese provinces. After this, visitors are guided up a gently sloped public stair to a panoramic viewing platform above the multimedia installation, after which they are guided into a multimedia space featuring a short film focusing on family reunions during China’s annual Spring Festival. This sequence concludes with visitors stepping outside the building onto a platform above the bamboo roof that enjoys expansive views of the Expo grounds.



## [CHINA PAVILLION ]

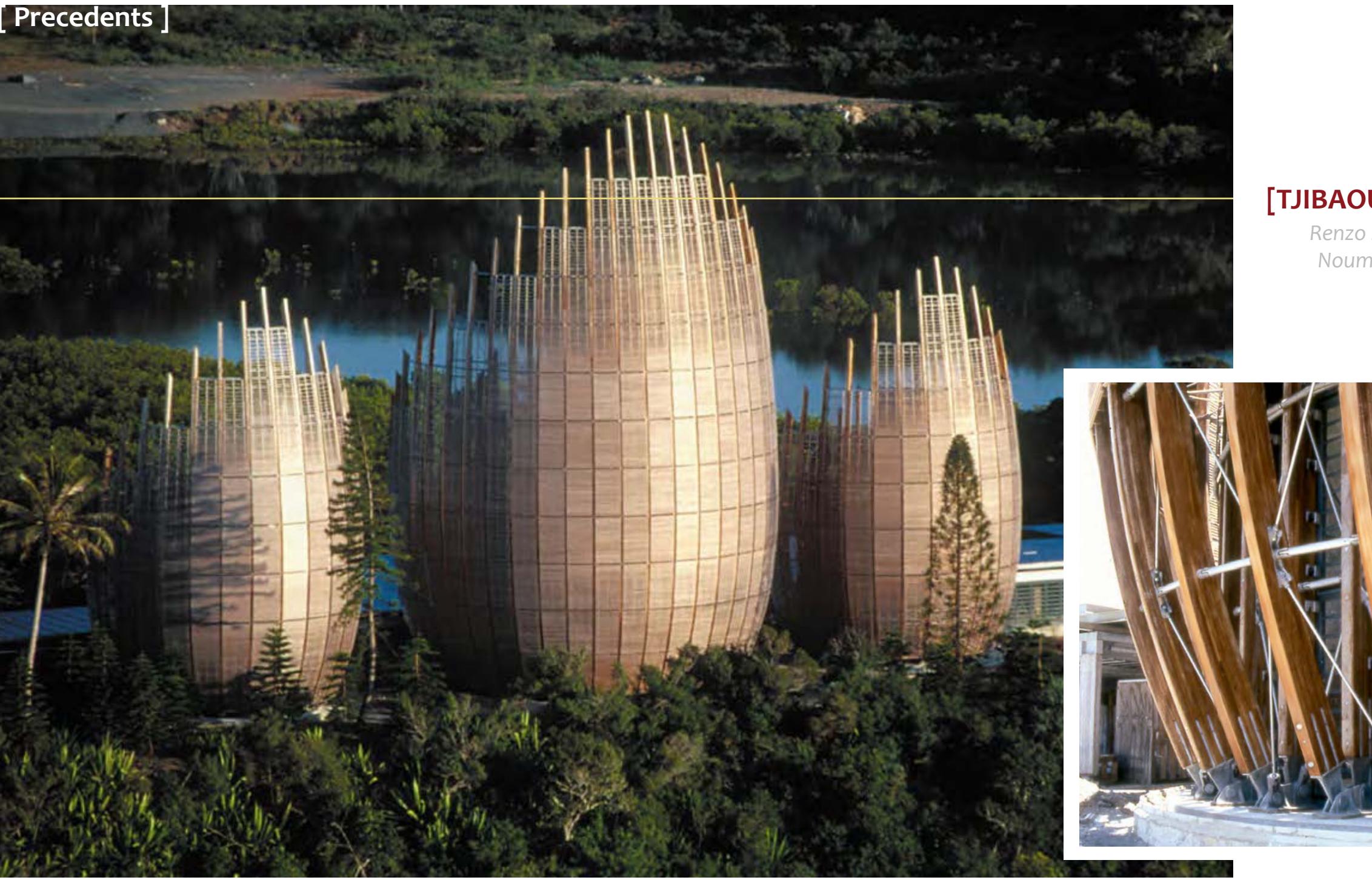
Tsinghua University + Studio Link-Arc  
Milano Expo, Italy, 2015



Figure 5.2 : China Pavillion Study  
Figure 5.3 : China Pavillion Interior



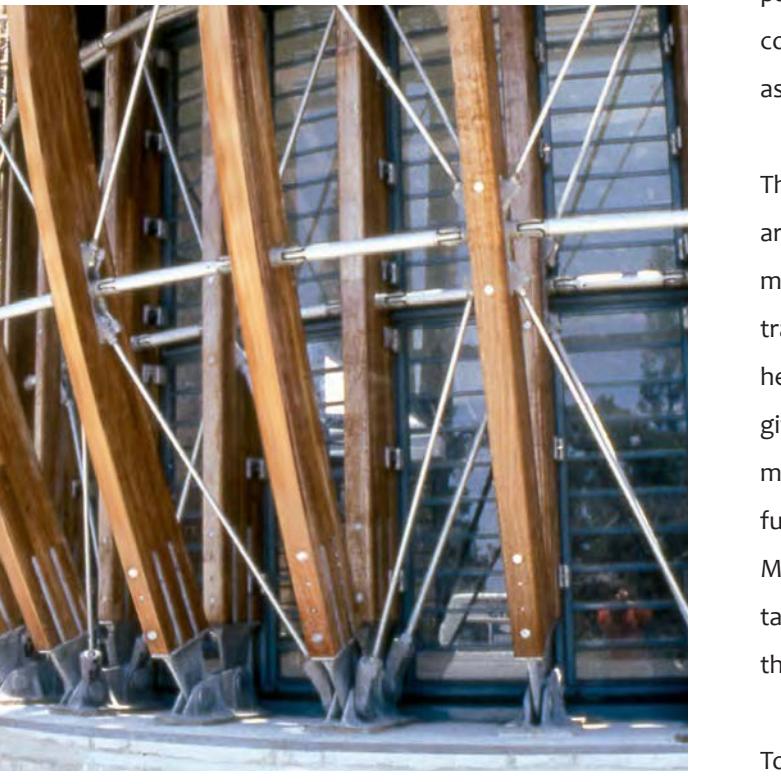
Figure 5.4 : China Pavillion Perspective



*The Center Perspective*

## CULTURAL CENTER ]

## no Building Workshop , New Caledonia, 1998



## 5.6 : Tjibaou Culture Center Detail 5.7 : Tjibaou Culture Center Diagram

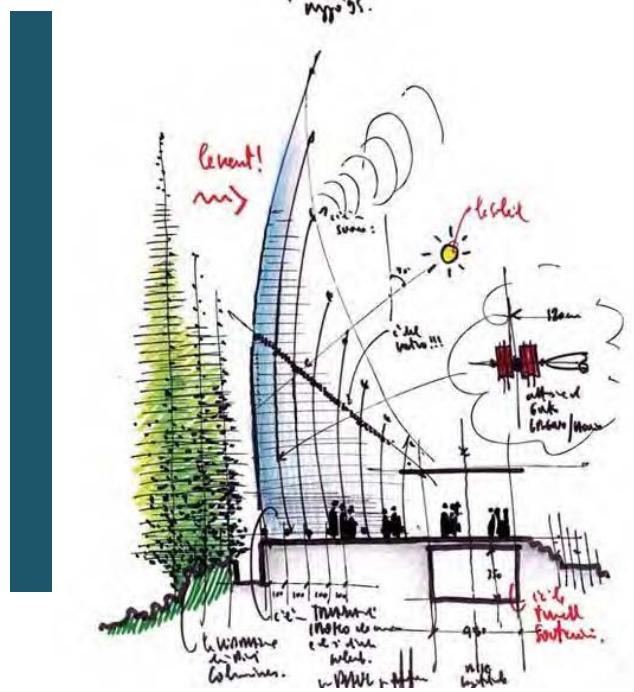
The building seeks to enhance the archaeological and linguistic heritage of the *Kanak*; to promote contemporary forms of expression of the *Kanak* culture, particularly in the artisanal areas, audiovisual and artistic; to promote cultural exchanges particularly in the South Pacific region; and define research programs. It is a place of ideas, assertion and a meeting place for cultural creativity.

This is the result of taking into account the Kanak architectural forms and their transfiguration in modern architecture. The "boxes" inspired by traditional Kanak architecture are of different heights and surfaces, whose unfinished look gives a reminder that Kanak culture is always in the making. The boxes combine the techniques of modern architecture, such as glulam, with traditional materials made of rot-proof iroko wood, over time the boxes will take on the color of the trunks of coconut trees and be part of the shores of New Caledonia.

to reflect the impermanence of the traditional architecture, the overall monumental and lightw

sculptural form of the center gives a less significant permanent existence.

The huts are organized into three **villages**, each with a “great hut” in the center, and contain different program elements: administrative, studios, exhibitions.



The definition of memory is essential when we talk about a memorial: it is a monument of the remembrance of people and events and at the same time it represents a universal message directed to the collective consciousness; **spaces that don't allow you to forget.**

The aim of this project is to give to Bologna a recognizable monument as a unique and a new reference for the historical center. A landmark that will highlight the skyline of the city and allow people to evoke the memory of the past in the remembrance of those who have suffered horrible events. This way, the structure of the wooden bunks in the concentration camps comes to life in an urban setting. Passers-by can experience the memorial by walking through the narrow and cold passage between the two equal and symmetrical elements. There, their thoughts become disoriented and merged with the memory of a mass extermination.

Being a massive structure, it distinguishes itself from its urban environment, attracting attention of the

passers-by. It is made up of two parallelepiped blocks of 10\*10 m. placed next to each other. Opening its space for visitors, the memorial transforms itself from being just a sculptural object into a liveable space for interaction with people and history, where everyone can isolate one's self from everyday life and immerse into memory.

The cells evoke the degrading concentration in one place for the victims, the denial of a respectable living and the suffering of the absent opportunities of choices. The visitors have a feeling of oppression, claustrophobic and anguish accentuated by the drastic reduction of the passage size. They wonder in the middle of the synaesthetic path to continue further reflection or leave all of a sudden to detach from this place of memory.

## [BOLOGNA SHOAH MEMORIAL]

SET Architects  
Bologna, Italy, 2016

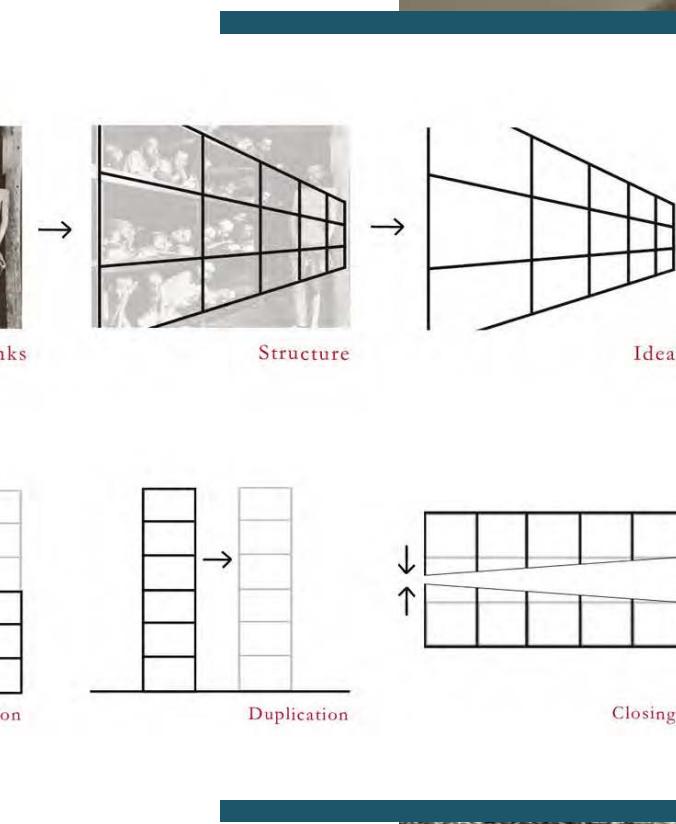


Figure 5.8 : Bologna Shoah Memorial Diagrams



Figure 5.9 : Bologna Shoah Memorial Perspective



105



Figure 5.0 : View of Marabarca  
Figure 5.1 : Steel Band at Croom's House

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# 06

## On deh' flat

*Siting the catalyst.*

In and of site. Considering where to develop this architectural catalyst, and the significance of location.

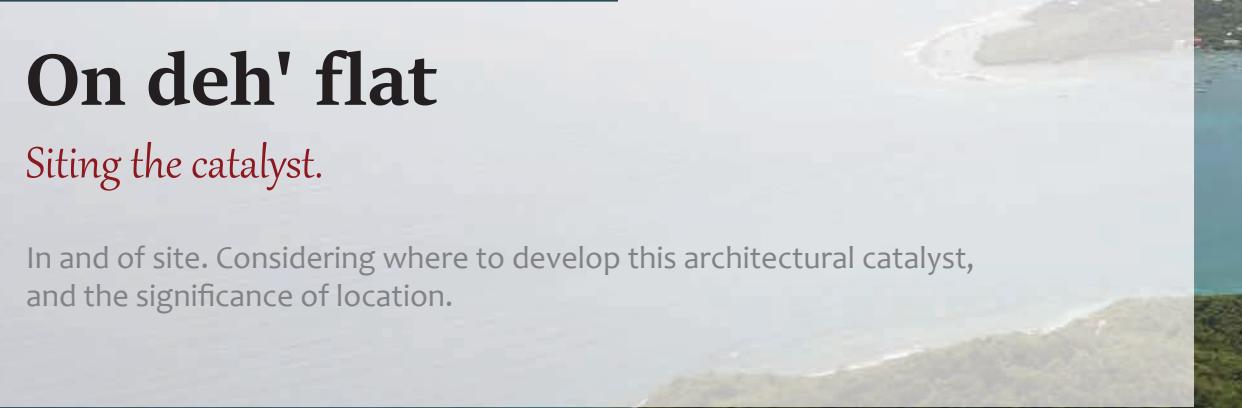
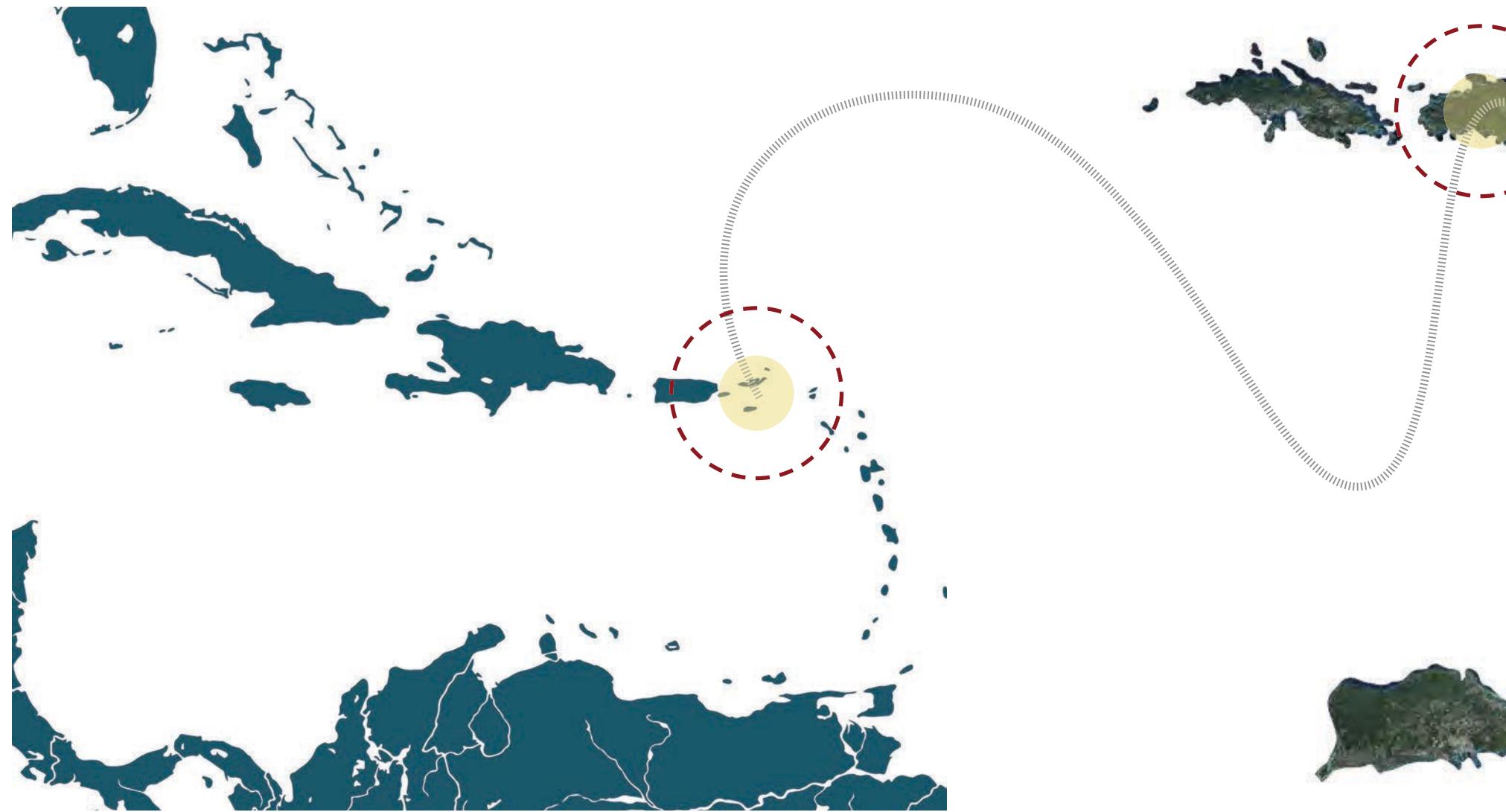


Figure 6.1: Cora Bay, Aeria

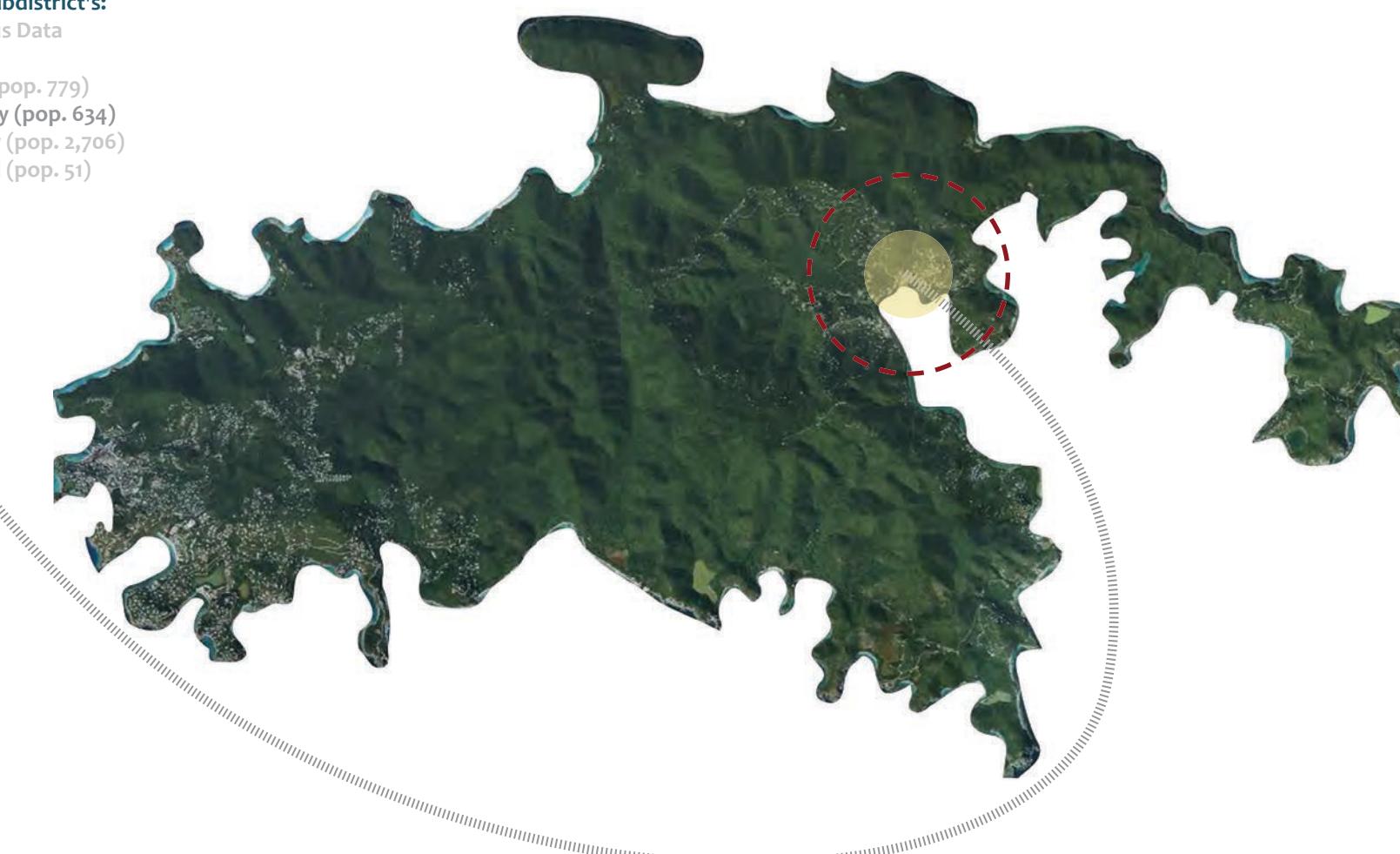


## [ ST. JOHN, VI-US ]

 $18.33^{\circ} \text{N}, 64.72^{\circ} \text{W}$ 

St. John Subdistrict's:  
2010 Census Data

1. Central (pop. 779)
2. Coral Bay (pop. 634)
3. Cruz Bay (pop. 2,706)
4. East End (pop. 51)



Site plays a critical role in the success or failure of any architectural project, especially those that seek to serve masses of people as cultural institutions. Siting a work of social architecture must take into account the socio-political, socio-economical, and sociocultural value of the space it intends to occupy, and the subsequent positive and/or negative ramifications on the people it people most immediately affects. After careful contextual analysis of cultural spaces on Sin Jan—or the lack thereof—I discovered that there was an important space where Sin Johnians were able to serendipitously engage in a variety of social and cultural activity under threat of a proposed commercial development. And so, this project, and the selection of this site, became a **resistive** measure against the ever present capitalist extractionist relationship to space on the island.

### Coral Bay Ball-field

The area at the heart of the Coral Bay community on Sin Jan is referred to by all who know it from a history of relatively constant activity as "**deh' flat**". It

is a 3.5 acre field that has found itself at the center of mass cultural and recreational activity by the people of the town for generations. Here, again, we see the highlighted reality of Sin Johnians unable to protect space from interests beyond our shores, and in the name of commercialized development that does not contribute to the social or cultural fabric of the town of Coral Bay, or Sin Jan at-large.

The proposed development — presented in 2014 — was for an **89** room hotel & resort and a **92** slip marina, and does not attempt to facilitate the continuation of any of the significant cultural activity that currently engages the space. This is shown by the total occupation of the area commonly known "triangle" to the western edge of the site, as well as the total occupation of the main flatland of the field, likewise occupying the full span of the waterfront.

### Sense of Place

For a cultural building to really contribute to a city, it must be part of a social ecosystem, not simply a place

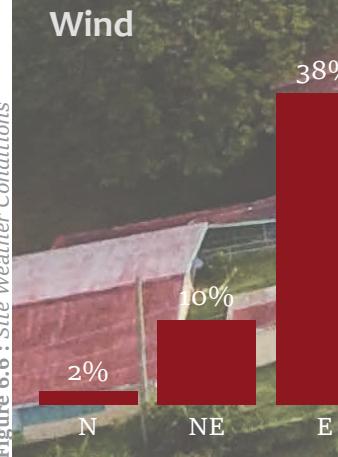


Figure 6.3 : Sirius Resort & Marina Site Plan  
Figure 6.4 : Emmaus Aerial N

for tourists to visit. A cultural hub must be connected into a preexisting cultural vibrancy, supported by decent infrastructure and a community that actually lives there. The most successful cultural projects are local and not seeded, where the talent lies around the corner and activates the spaces all year with collaborative and community projects. The artists are not brought in on a bus from the suburbs to perform occasionally in front of a seasonal audience of tourists.

Many of the deep Sin Johnian cultural heritage activities take place in the vicinity of a home, bay, or yard. This site is particularly appropriate as the setting for this cultural incubator for these very reasons: it facilitates the expansive yard where intergenerational and cross-cultural connectivity may occur, has shoreline access for the continuation of maritime tradition allowing the teaching of environmental stewardship that typically takes place in Sin Jan homes, and it creates opportunity for the continued cultivation of connections between flora, fauna and people.

Volume 6, No. 6 : June 2006 : Measuring Contributions



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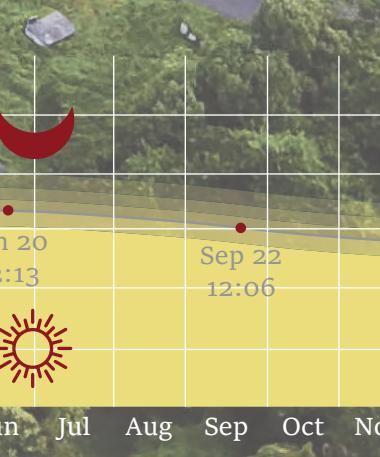
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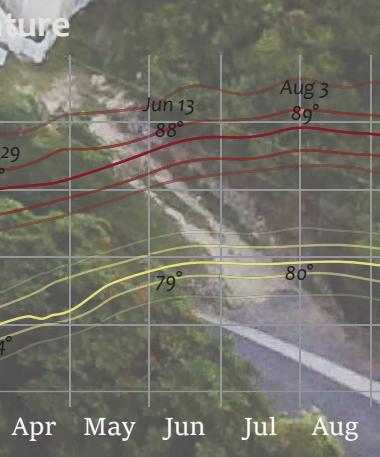
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[ On deh' flat ]



## *So { WE } Live : Within place, Without space*

## [ Circulation ]

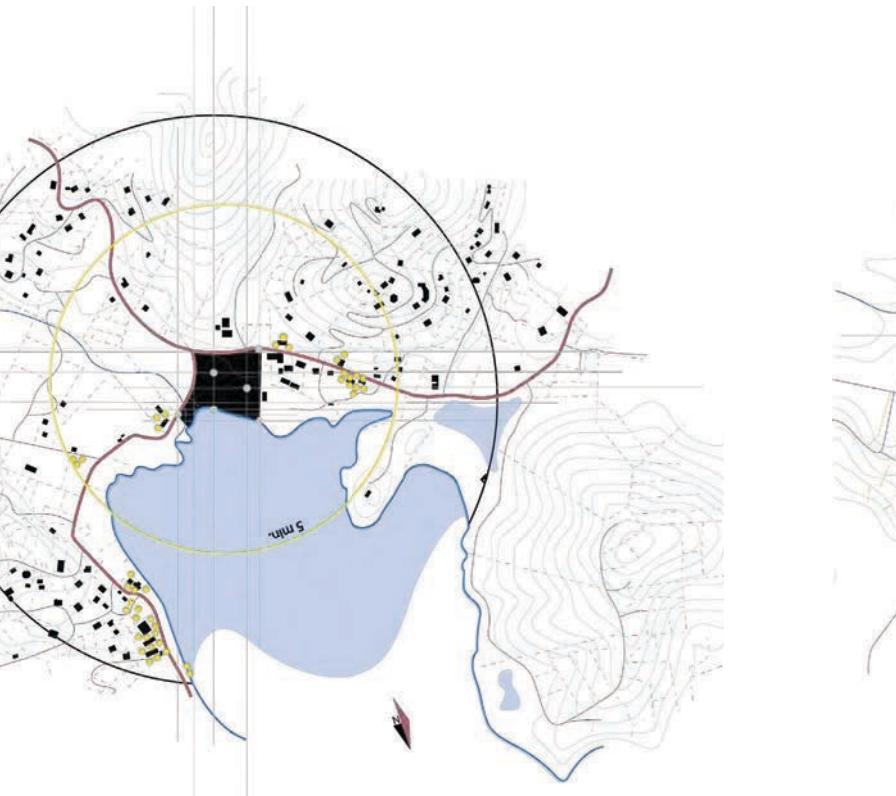
Site Access



There is one main road — **Centerline road (RT 10)** — that connects both major St. John towns of Cruz bay and Coral Bay. Public transportation runs along this route, and there is conveniently a bus stop adjacent to the site. Most businesses & neighborhoods are within a 5-10 minute walking radius of the site

## [ Public Density ]

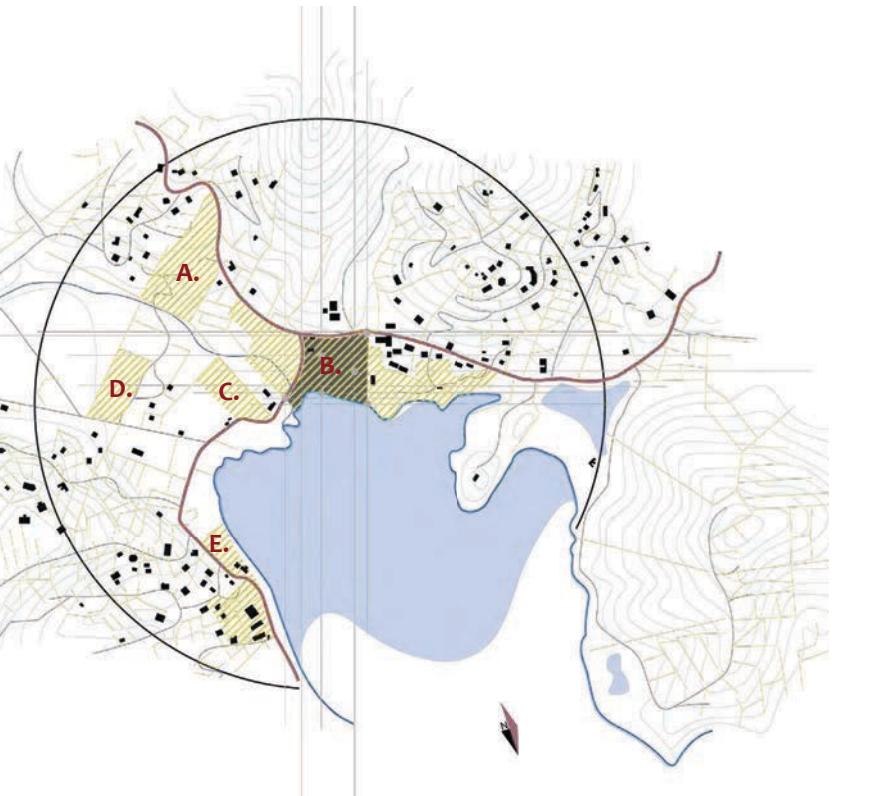
Gathering Nodes



The Coral Bay area is rural, consisting mainly of houses, condos, apartments, and villas. There are several restaurants, 2 grocery stores, a historic church cemetery, an elementary school, and other small businesses where people gather, dispersed around this harbor area of the small town.

## [ Future Spaces ]

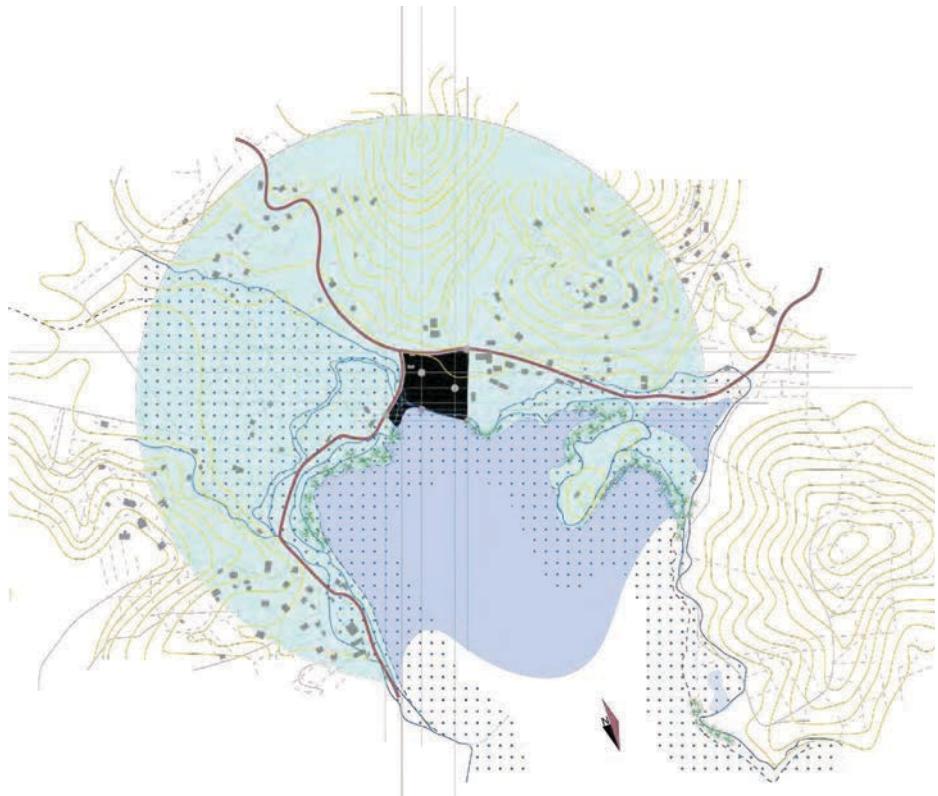
Proposed Development



As the main town of Cruz Bay on the western side of Sin Jan continues to become densely crowded and overdeveloped. Proposals for future development include: **A. Utility substation, B. Hotel & marina, C. Animal Care Center, D. Catholic church, E. Mega marina**

## [ Natural Features ]

Topo/Flood/Vegetation



The site is mostly flat in grade and its immediate surroundings include features such as trees & shrubbery, mangrove habitats with crabs, shark, fish, native birds, etc.; Coral reef sites; and regular traversing of land mammals such as goats, sheep, and donkeys..

## [ Views ]

Visual Markers

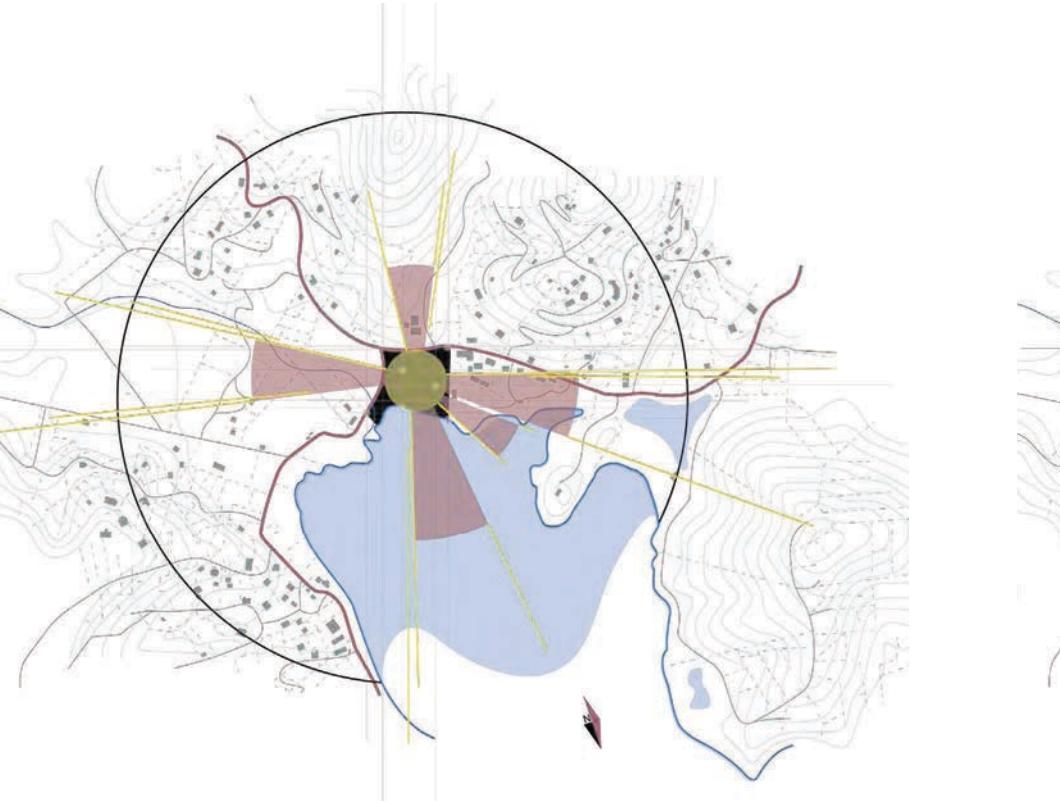
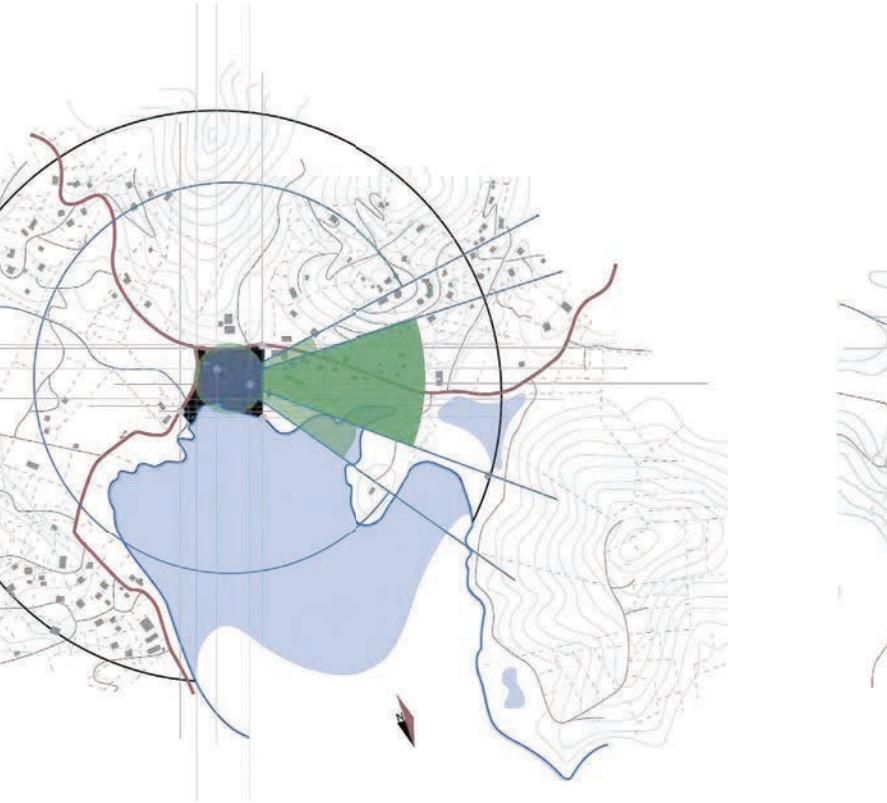
N - Emmaus Moravian Church  
W - Carolina Historic Mill and Ruins  
S - Coral Harbor  
E - Fortsberg Historic Garrison Ruins

Figure 6.8 : Site Analysis Spread 2

## [ Trade-winds ]

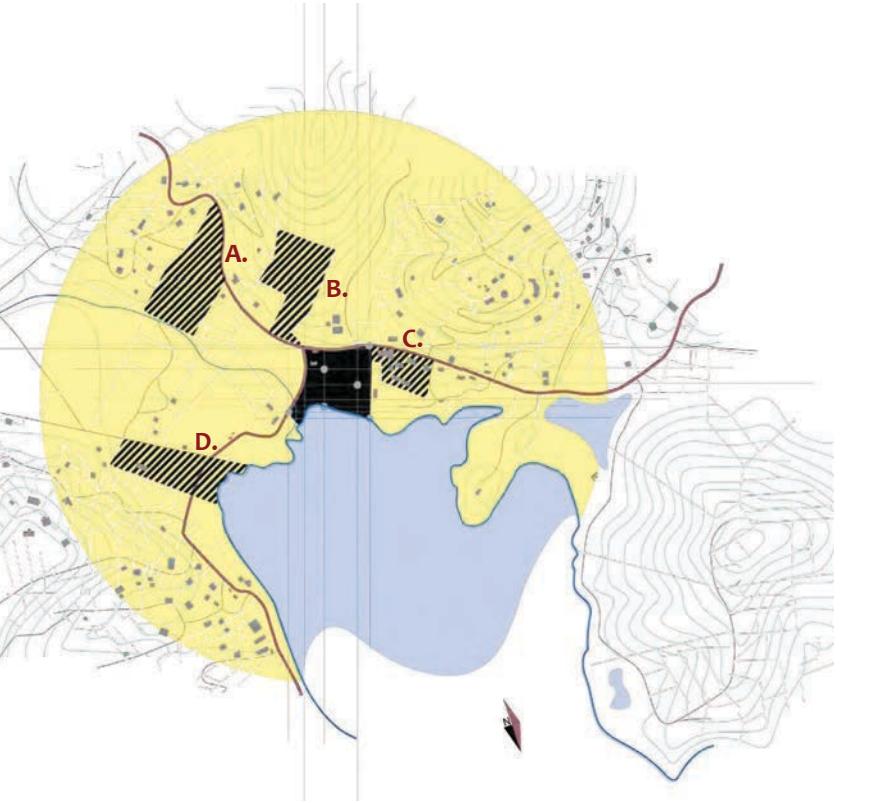
Prevailing Breezes



Prevailing Trade-winds most consistently blow from the East and South-east, and are the very winds that carried European Colonizers to the Caribbean and "New World", as well as the Africans that traded in the here, in the region, before them.

## [ Public Spaces ]

Access



The only publicly owned lands in the Coral Bay are listed here and are all occupied spaces; emphasizing the need to maintain free public spaces. Shoreline access is protected by VI law up to the high-water line, allowing for beach public access via sea, regardless of land-side ownership.

## [ Figure/Ground ]

Developed vs. Undeveloped



Coral Bay, being mostly rural and consisting of large tracts of estate lands privately owned by several ancestral Simeonian families, is largely undeveloped — as shown here. Green, open space, is abundant and coveted.



Figure 6.9: Looking into Coral Bay  
Figure 6.10: Enmasus Aerial NW

# 07

## Club

*Reclaiming Space*

Recompense lost, restored through space for a living culture.



Figure 7.1: Elaine L. Sprague Library



## [ Alexis A. Roberts ]

"So, We Live"

Figure 7.2 : Portrait of Alexis

**S**o we live. Not only to recall the times of old. We cannot find ourselves trapped there. Cultures worth feeling were never meant to remain ... still. In the absence of borders they shift, they grow, they breathe and we must adjust. Like the greater things in this world, we believe they too are living. Though there are times when we must still ask ourselves if they are well? Awakened now, we ask not for preservation in service of mere inventory. Our stories are much better built so that we may consider them anyway. We wish to make peace with the past so that we might move toward a more informed future. We seek seasoning. We call for the space to *make*, to *dine*, to *show off*; to *be*. We have already opened the boxes they kept us in and willingly exposed ourselves to the sun. What happens now is up to us but, it is inescapable.

This is no museum wanderer's playground. Though

they too, are welcome here. The fables of history no longer bind us. They are not our reality or our future. We acknowledge them as they were but together we anticipate the coming of the sunrise. Many have walked these shores before us. There is evidence in the marks they've made. We see remnants of them in their children. It is our hope not to lose them but nor do we wish to be them. We continue to run out of time and uncharted waters must be explored. The unknown is actually home and the youth hold the keys to our survival. They also have the power to end us. It is a duality we choose to embrace in the hope that they will choose differently than we have. There is promise within these lands, our people, in the potentials of choice. And So We Live. We welcome you to this place children of the mountain. 'We here. We woke! We shake up! We joke! And deh talk don't stop until we choose to let it!' We may yet rise to greet the moon, the past and tomorrow — as one.

**“** To be Human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: To be Human is to have and to know your place.

- Edward Relph

Communication deals very much with messages, and the perceptions, readings and meanings of those messages. Stuart Hall, in "Encoding, decoding", discusses the complex structures of dominance through which messages are recognized. He asserts that communication occurs in four stages: production, circulation, use, and reproduction. In these cycles, visual signs and contextual references intersect with cultural codes and ideological dimensions; to a fault in the case of Sin Jan's marketing as a part of the "America's Paradise" trio. The tourism marketing strategy has been such that the beauty of the physical landscape is advertised and even sold as a commodity, with total neglect for the local cultural context, dismissing any regards for a native existence beyond tourism, ignoring any

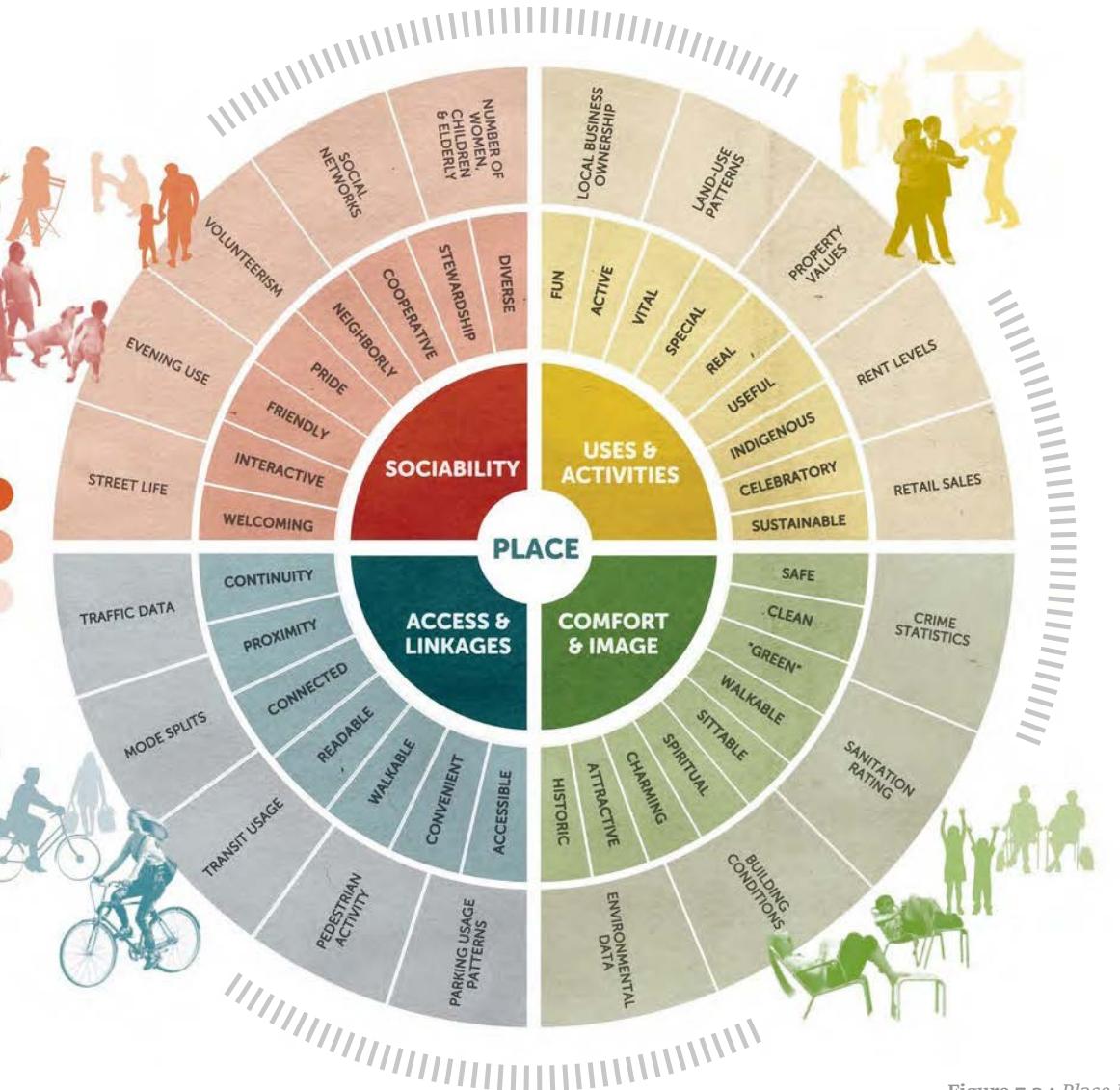


Figure 7.3 : Place Diagram

sense of pride among the local populous to focus on white sand shores, fine dining at non-native owned restaurants, sightseeing in romanticized plantation ruins, non-native-friendly hotels, etc. What this does is it creates, through meaning and association, a visual language through which foreigners are enticed and want to indulge paradise, but for whom?

What exists here is the selective perception of long systemically distorted communication well beyond the tourism product, encompassing — especially — the aggressive extractionist context within which Sin Johnians live, now; a context of off-island interests conveying signs and images of easily accessible and achievable economic gain from a systemically dependant tourism economy.

This context has resulted in an overwhelming feeling of displacement by the ancestral native population, such that Sin Johnians largely do not occupy public spaces or any beyond their own homes, or those of friends, family, and acquaintances. The island has become overrun by business interests beyond her

shores concerned solely with financial gains, and a visiting population the same, concerned largely with the island, and not her inhabitants. Our 'new locals' through their activism also practice displacement as they express themselves in such a way that discards the innate sustainable and environmentally conscious practices of ancestral native tradition — remnants of the colonial project, no less. Non-Sin Johnians are incredibly in love with the island, but other people.

This fails to acknowledge that an authentic Sin Jan experience cannot exist without Sin Johnians. A culture cannot exist without a people to live and practice and participate in its continuation and reproduction. A culture cannot exist without space.

**SIN JOHNIAN'S  
DESERVE SPACE, and  
EQUITY!**

“ Club was communal organization around individual and collective needs. When one seeks to build a house, all able men of the "village" come to assist, and the women prepared meals and nourishment. This givishness is reciprocated throughout the village, until all are provided for.

- Sin Jan/African Tradition

What has been most effectively communicated throughout this exercise is the need for space where the ancestral native people of Sin Jan, and the Virgin Islands at-large may continue to practice their *living* culture. A place where this deep cultural heritage — the identity of the people of the Virgin Isles — can live beyond spectacle. A place where it can continue to grow organically as it has for generations. A place where it can continue to evolve in such a way that it resists exploitation, instills morals and values, perpetuates an intrinsic creative entrepreneurial spirit, and adapts to a continually shifting global economy. A place where even in the face of colonial dominance, Federal displacement, and cultural assimilation & appropriation, Sin Johnians are free to practice their soul-deep traditions of being; openly, unrestricted, and without fatigue.

### Club

Thus, the intent, here, is to create a deep cultural hub; to rebuild the cultural thought associated with the *“Club”*. A space that serves as an incubator for



Figure 7.4 : Guidance

the organic and serendipitous intergenerational interactions of the ancestral people of Sin Jan, her visitors, and her migrant locals. Culture Center, museum, art gallery, music studio, farm, park, play-space, market, classroom, workshop, and "ting like dat".

So, we know that architecture and place-making has a role here. How can architecture help to tell the narrative of such things? Cultural Centers are perhaps the most obviously attempt at this, with museums and art centers similarly. But simply archiving a culture through the museum context is not enough, nor is the insertion of culture into a culture center, or cultural arts space. Rather, the architecture should be born directly of that culture which it is meant to represent. A celebration of the culture aiming to be represented/housed/preserved in the architectural work, should very easily be understood as such an important piece of context to the people it is meant to serve.

And so a cultural “incubator” where the culture lives,

“ Architecture can't force people to connect, it can only point the crossing points, remove barriers, and make the meeting places useful and attractive.

— Denise Scott Brown

thrives, and has the possibility to spill out and bleed back into the fabric of society is the aim. From this space, a celebration of cultural tradition and thought can be achieved through the creation of program elements such as pavilions, galleries, and museums; community kitchens, markets, community gardens, and food pantries; community classrooms, maker spaces, and entrepreneurial hubs.

Here, cultural industry can regain grounds and become a model by which the local economy can grow and re-acclimatize through an architecture that activates the optimistic energy of the youth, and links it to the crucial wisdom of the elderly, in an attempt to reclaim a dying cultural identity, fostering creative cultural continuation & greater societal cohesion.

# [ PLACE ] - *making*



[ NOURISH ]



[ PERFORM ]



[ CREATE ]

Weaving the disconnected groups of Sin Johnians — trans-generationally, as well as trans-nationality — is the aim of this architectural catalyst. Thus, this architecture must be born of tradition, of physicality of space associated with those traditions, and of a holistic and relative body of thought.

#### Sin Jan Market Basket

**Basket weaving** is a widely practiced craft throughout the world, and especially in indigenous cultures. On Sin Jan, the market basket tradition is credited to a combination of ancient African crafting that followed the slaves to the New World, and the Indigenous Taino peoples that occupied this land before European conquest. This now celebrated icon of Sin Jan craftsmanship was once a necessary tool in every day life used to carry fish and produce, coal, fabric, even infants. This tradition was once a mandatory class in schools, and now is barely practiced by two individuals on island. The Sin Jan Market Basket's construction, it's heritage, and it's iconography,

serve as the foundation for the development of this physical architectural exercise; this attempt to re-weave, but also cradle, and carry.

The site — an open field — is re-purposed as a catalyst for cultural activity to take place not only once a year, as it is now in most instances, but year round instead. The Architecture will create an interconnected “**community**” through a well-articulated “**yard**” space, within which the program “**nodes**” will populate. Thus we facilitate opportunities for generations of Sin Johnians to engage where otherwise difficult, spaces for our visitors to learn and have authentic cultural experiences besides the performative ones that currently exist at-large, and space for sharing of knowledge and understanding such that our migrant “**new locals**” can develop a profound respect for that which exists within and about this space they seek to occupy.

Here, in this space, we're woven into a vast multi-national, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic community canvas that respects, honors, and promotes the

[ CONNECT ]  
[ STITCH ]  
**[ WEAVE ]**  
[ INTERSECT ]  
[ CANE ]



Figure 7.6 : St. John Market Basket

#### Deep Cultural Activity



Figure 7.5 : Place-Making Culture Collage Spread 1

“ The community represents the deep layer of the society, the spirituality, their intrinsic values while architecture is in a permanent interdependency with the community. Today the community architecture is flexible, permeable, open to communication. Architecture and community define each other, potentiating, reviving, integrating their own qualities, in this globalization process while preserving their individual uniqueness. ”

- Michael Zanfir Cigrescu

ancestral native experience, and all associated truths. Here, in this space, one may begin to wonder what happens when Sin Johnians move to occupy occupied space; as we begin to reclaim narratives in “**lost**” space? What does **resistance** and **response** now, begin to look like?

# 08

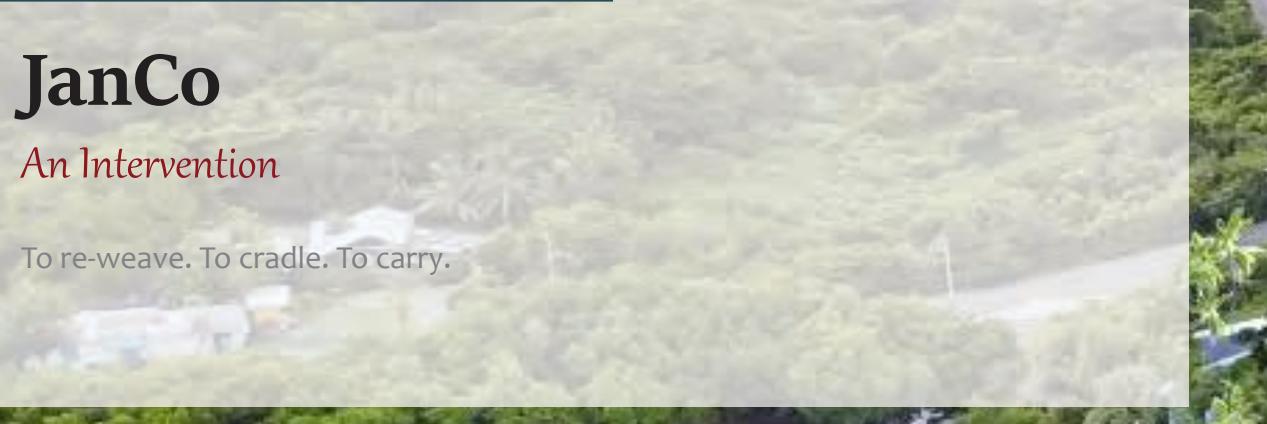
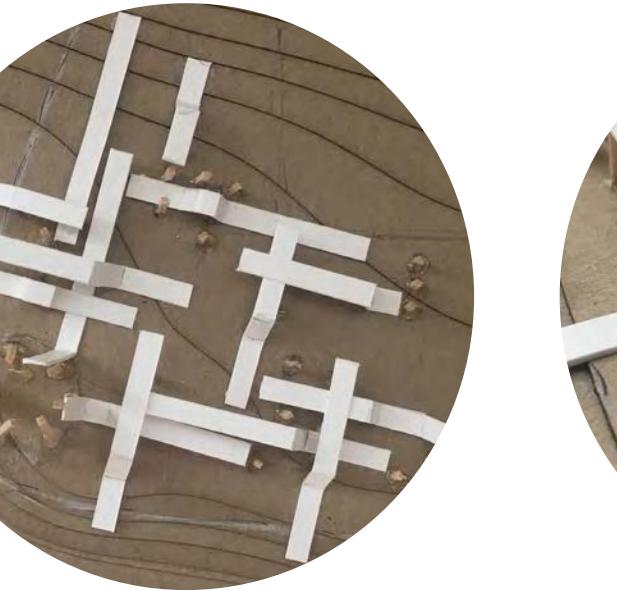
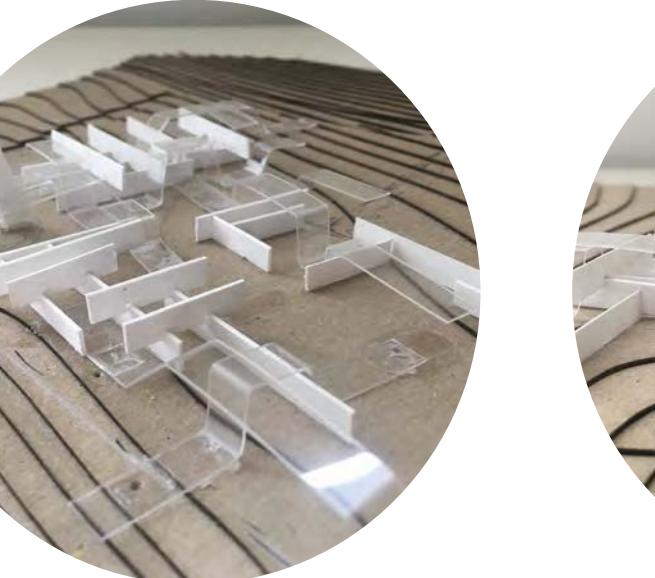


Figure 8.1 JanCo Perspective

[ CONNECT ]  
[ USE ]  
**[ SPACE ]**  
[ COMFORT ]  
[ ACCESS ]



[ CANE ]



[ WEAVE ]



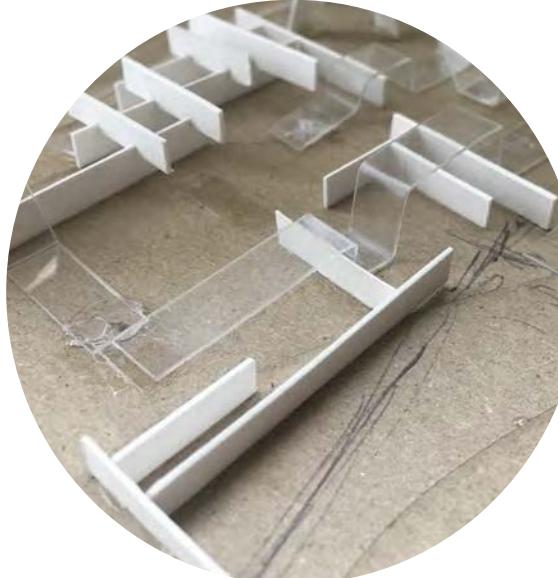
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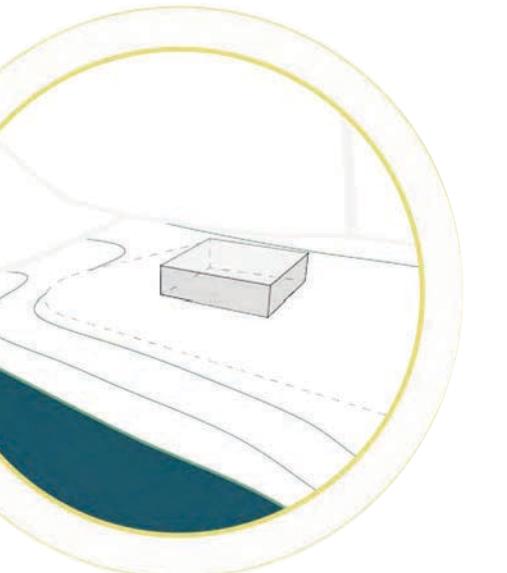
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## [ DESIGN TRANSLATION ]

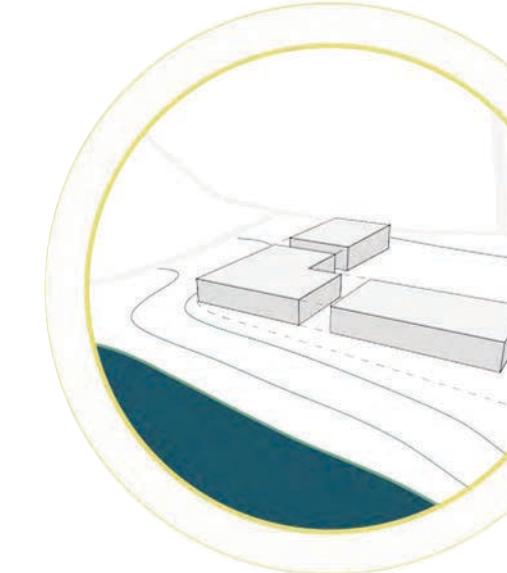
“ Contextual Design is demographics, topography, environment, culture, traditions, history harnessed to create a sensory experience.

- Perkins + Will Architects



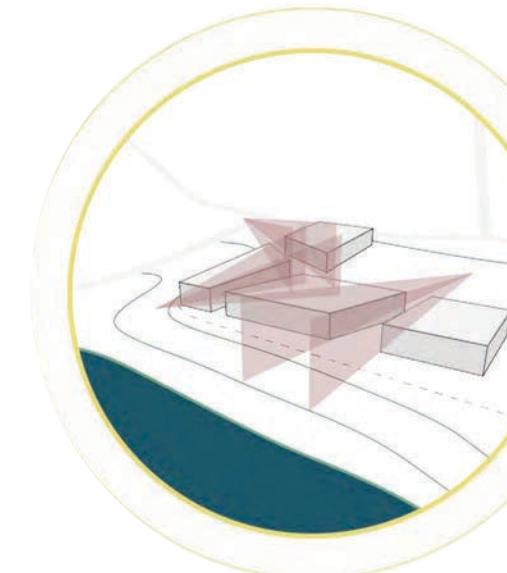
**Massing**

Simple volume placed in site context.



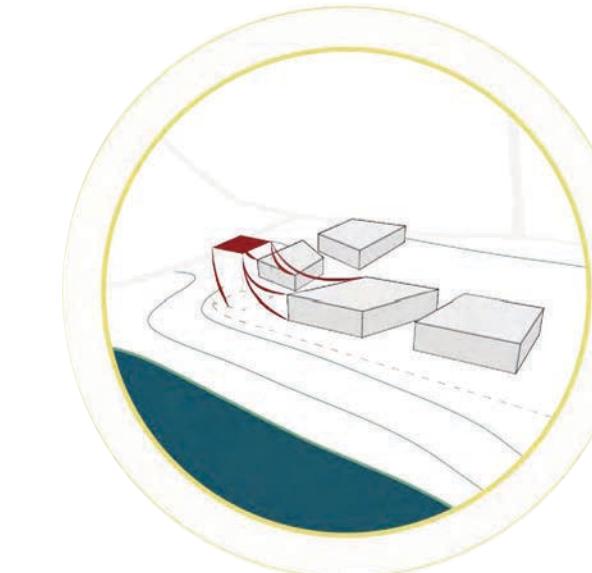
**Programming**

Separating volume into program nodes; cultural hubs.



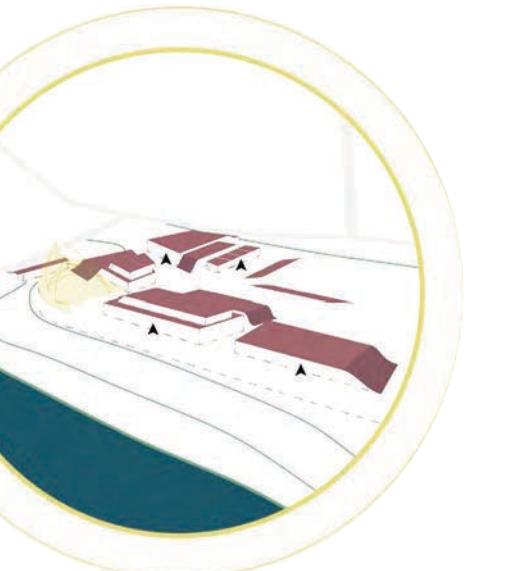
**Views**

Opening vistas into and through the site, aiding in the creation of open plazas.



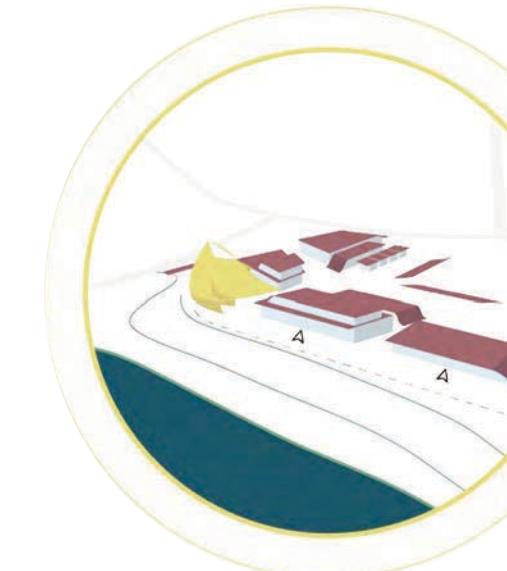
**Mill**

Contemporizing and unifying architectural forms at the main, unifying architectural element.



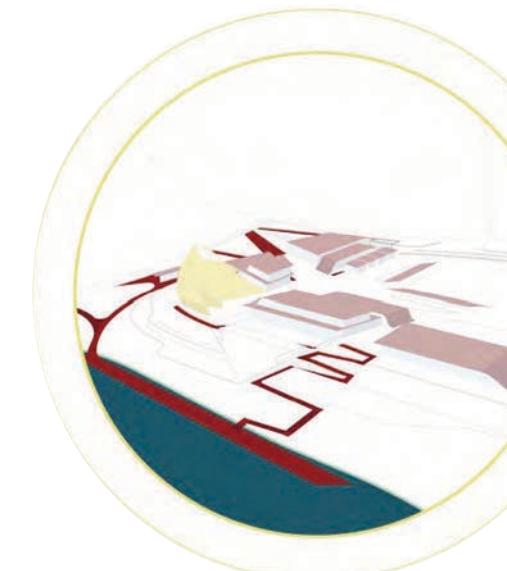
**Peeling**

Landscape lifting up to cover, protect, and weave program volumes together.



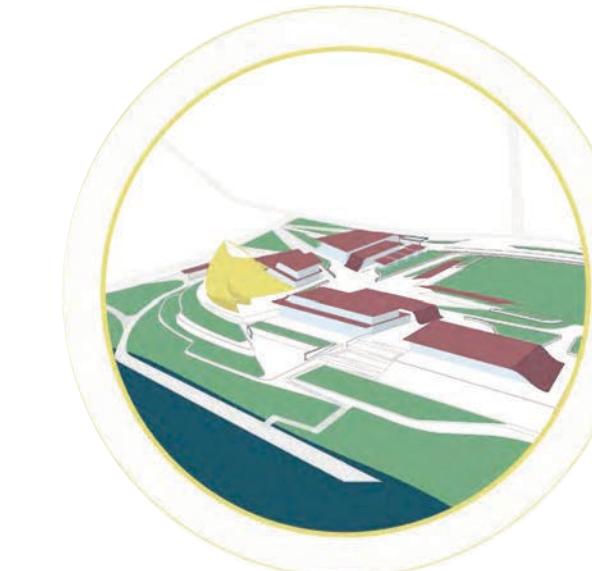
**Facade**

Recessed facade assists with shading, and use of glass maintains constant visual connections.



**Circulation**

Pathways through and about the site.



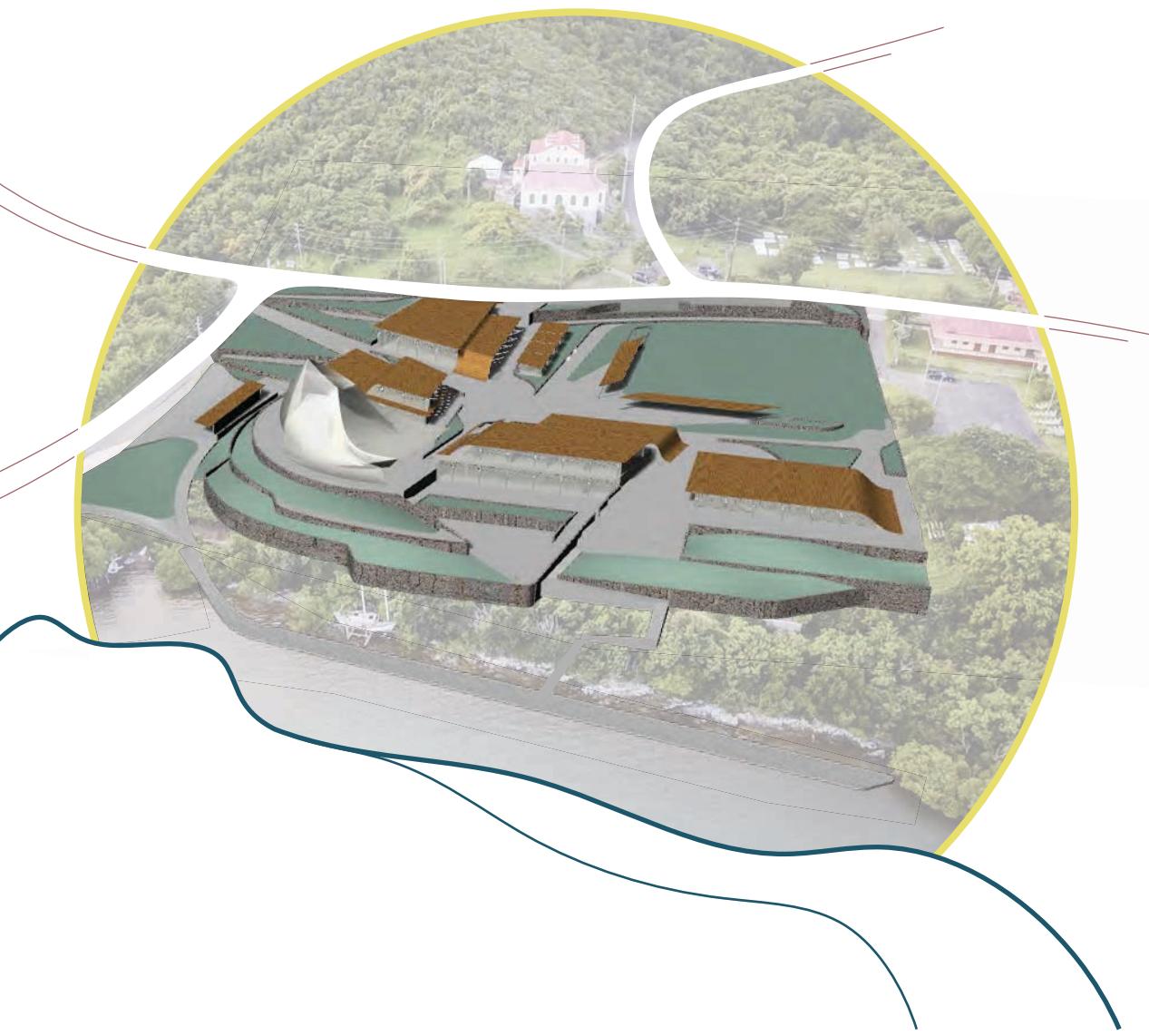
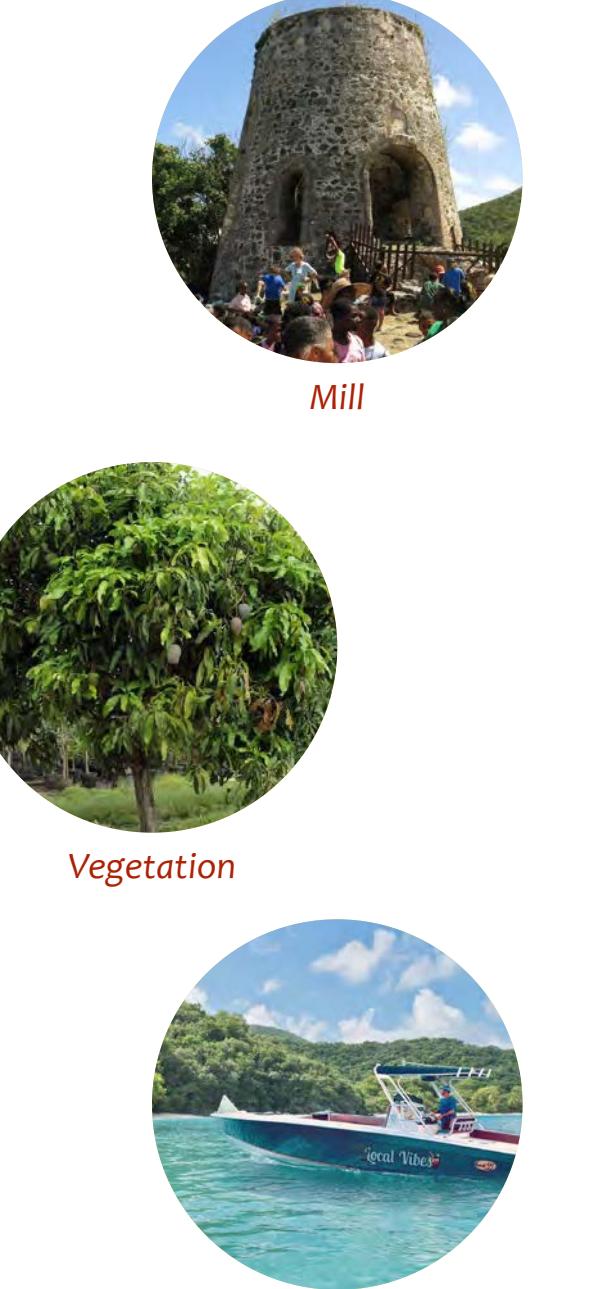
**Landscaping**

Green "yard" to assist with cooling space and facilitate traditional acts of gathering.

Figure 8.3 : Design Translation Spread



Figure 8.4: Jancó perspective 2





## PHASE 1

PROGRAM : create

The pre-Columbians inhabitants of the territory lived a life heavily based on their ability to craft everyday items, and even after European settlement, these truths still were evident as slaves maintained these skills as imperative. Many art items started as practical crafts that assisted with work, and everyday tasks. The woodshop/craft node will serve as a “maker” community where fabrication that was otherwise impossible on the island is facilitated, filling a production niche.

## The Architecture

- This portion of the project will be built first so that it can serve as the means by which other components/details of the “community” can be created, promoting a greater sense of ownership for its users.
- Studios & the woodshop can be rented, fostering creative reproduction on island, economically and interconnected.
- Group studios are connected and can be opened to each other to create larger secondary workspaces if necessary.
- Rentable spaces providing opportunity for the “makers” to sell their goods.

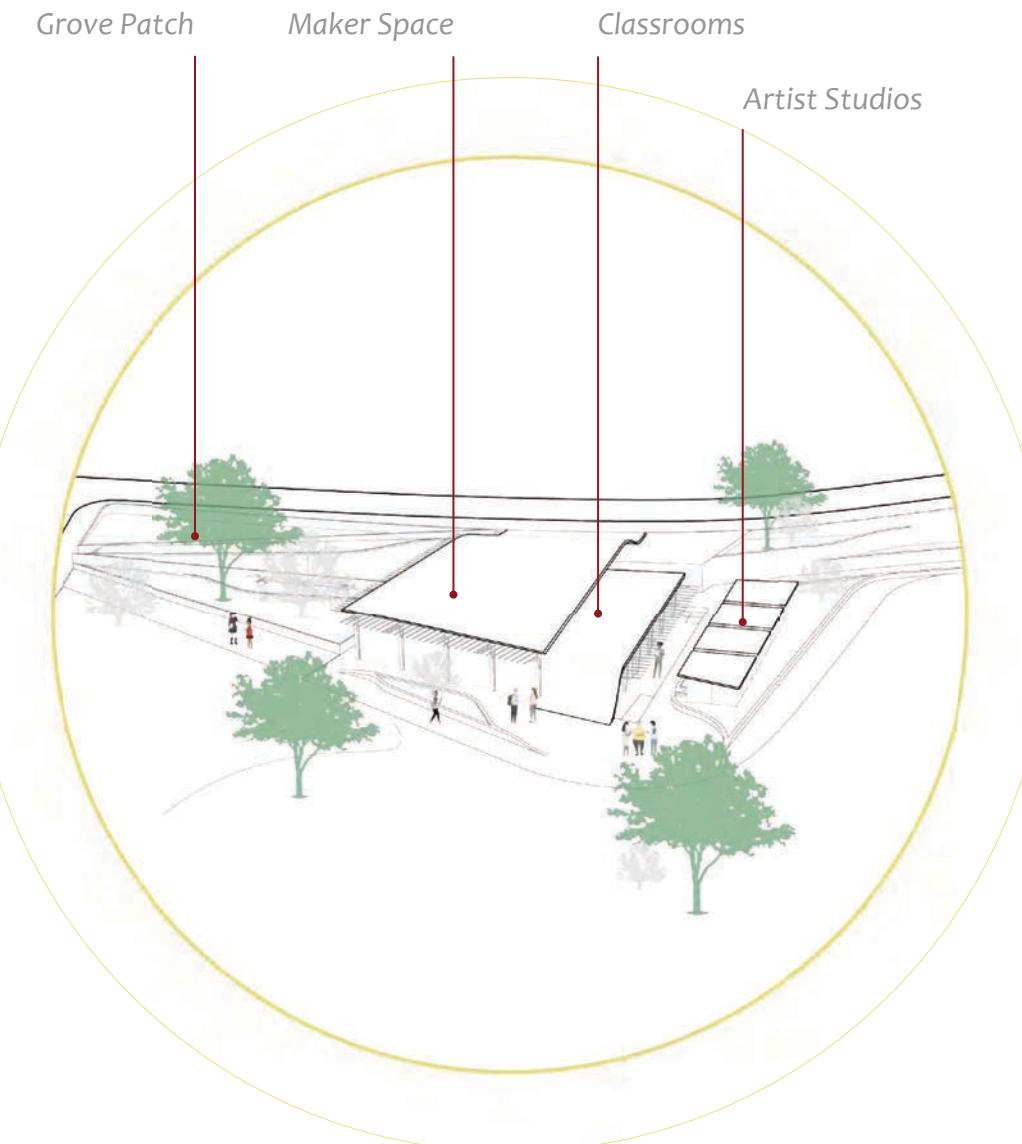
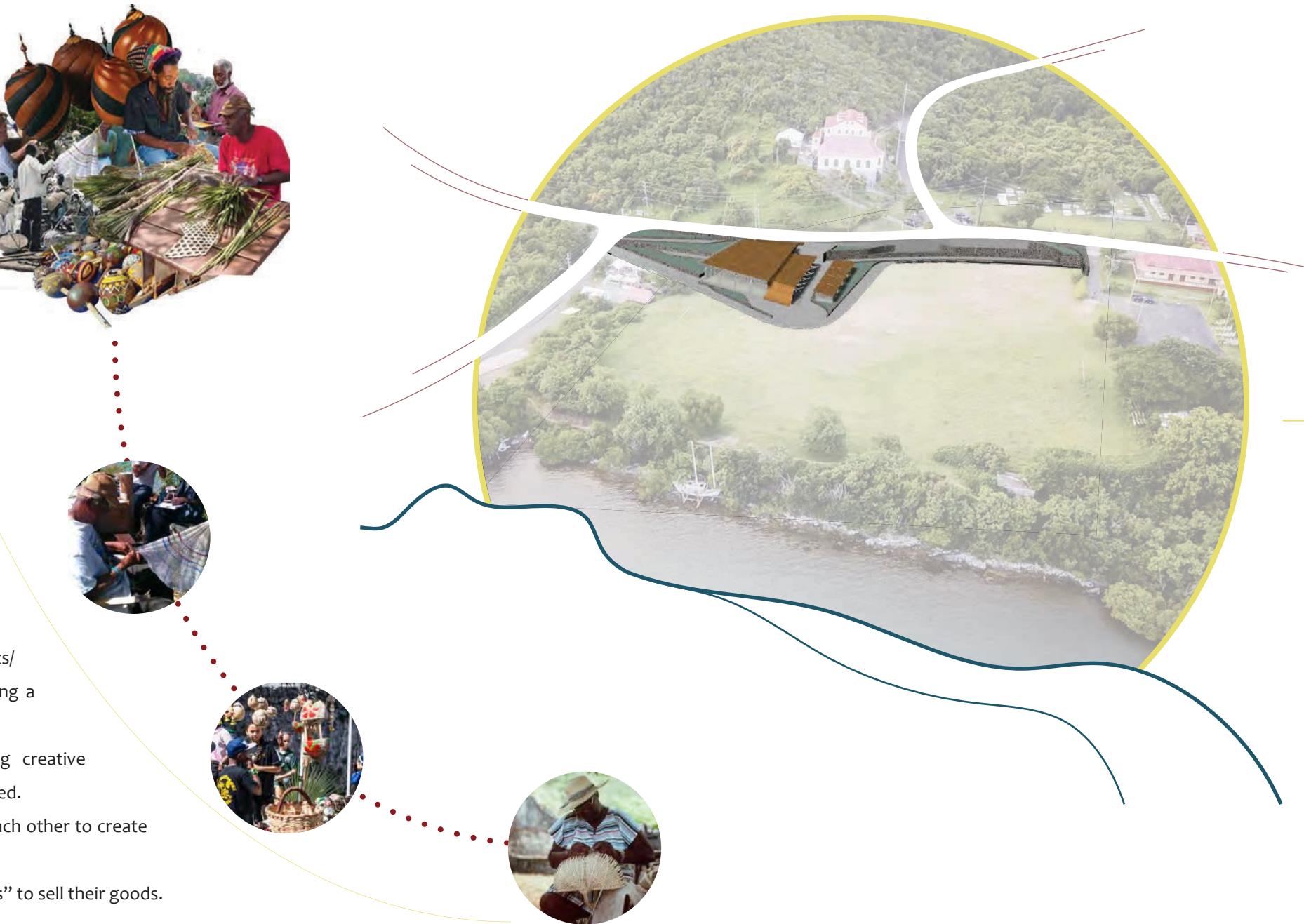


Figure 8.6 : JanCo Phase 1 Diagram  
 Figure 8.7 : Unknown  
 Figure 8.8 : Folk Life Festival at Anseberg Sugar Plantation Ruins  
 Figure 8.9 : Learning About Folk Life

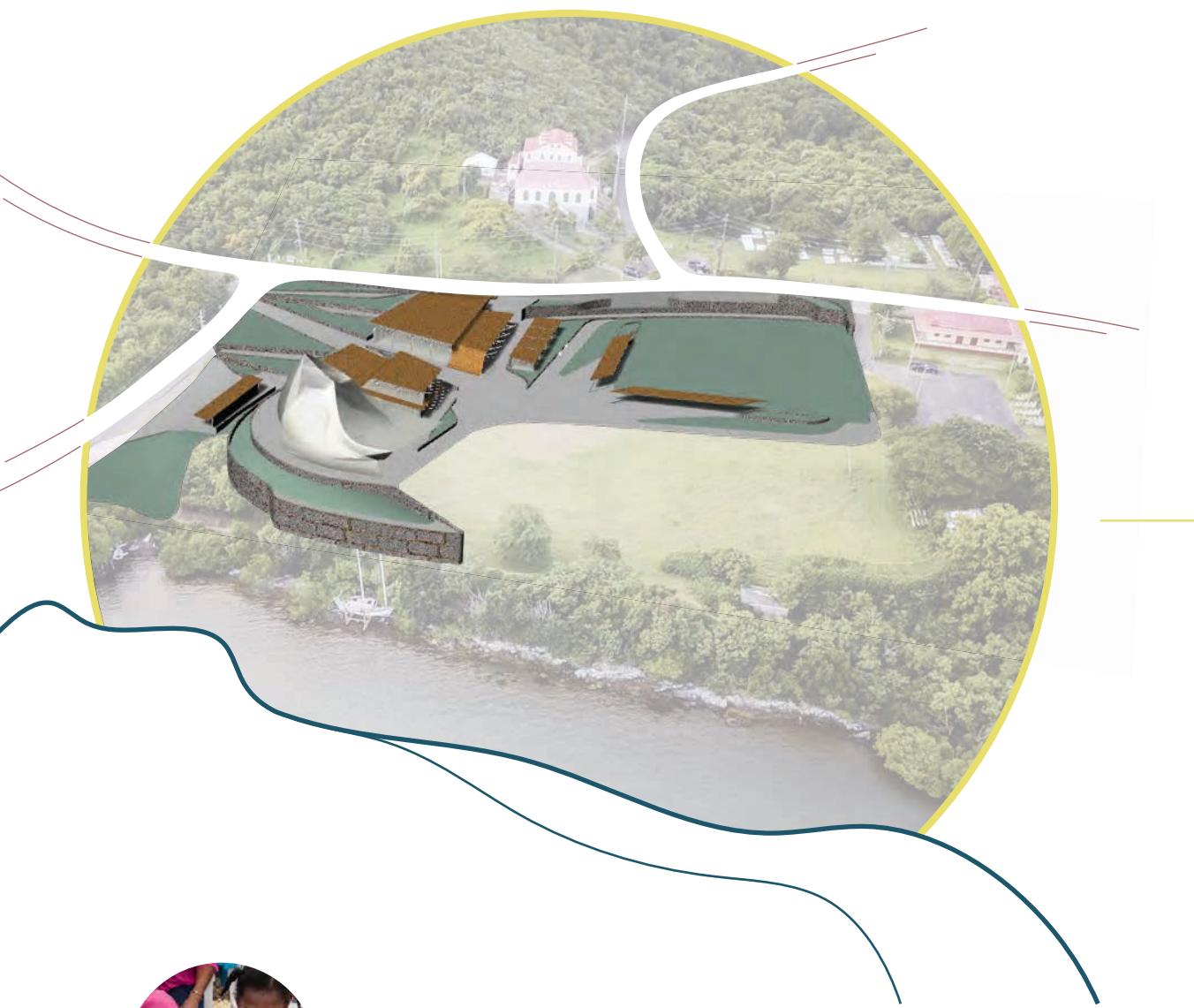
## PHASE 2

PROGRAM : nourish

One of the most significant expressions of Virgin Islands culture is through the creation of food. The food ingredients are a unique mixture of European, African, and Central/South American influences as many of them were brought from these regions during colonization. Food is such an integral part of the culture that there are very regular celebrations of food throughout the year to include Food Fairs, and Agriculture Fairs which takes place on each of the three main islands. The culinary component will function year round as a restaurant/dining venue:

## The Architecture

- Provides an otherwise unestablished place for consumption of local foods/drinks/treats.
- The community kitchen will further unify locals, and visitors, encouraging new connections and strengthening old ones.
- Local fruit/herb trees will be planted throughout the yard space and can service the culinary node.
- Will be embedded into the overall scheme, but separate enough to function on its own.



## Market Stalls Gathering Spot Community Kitchen

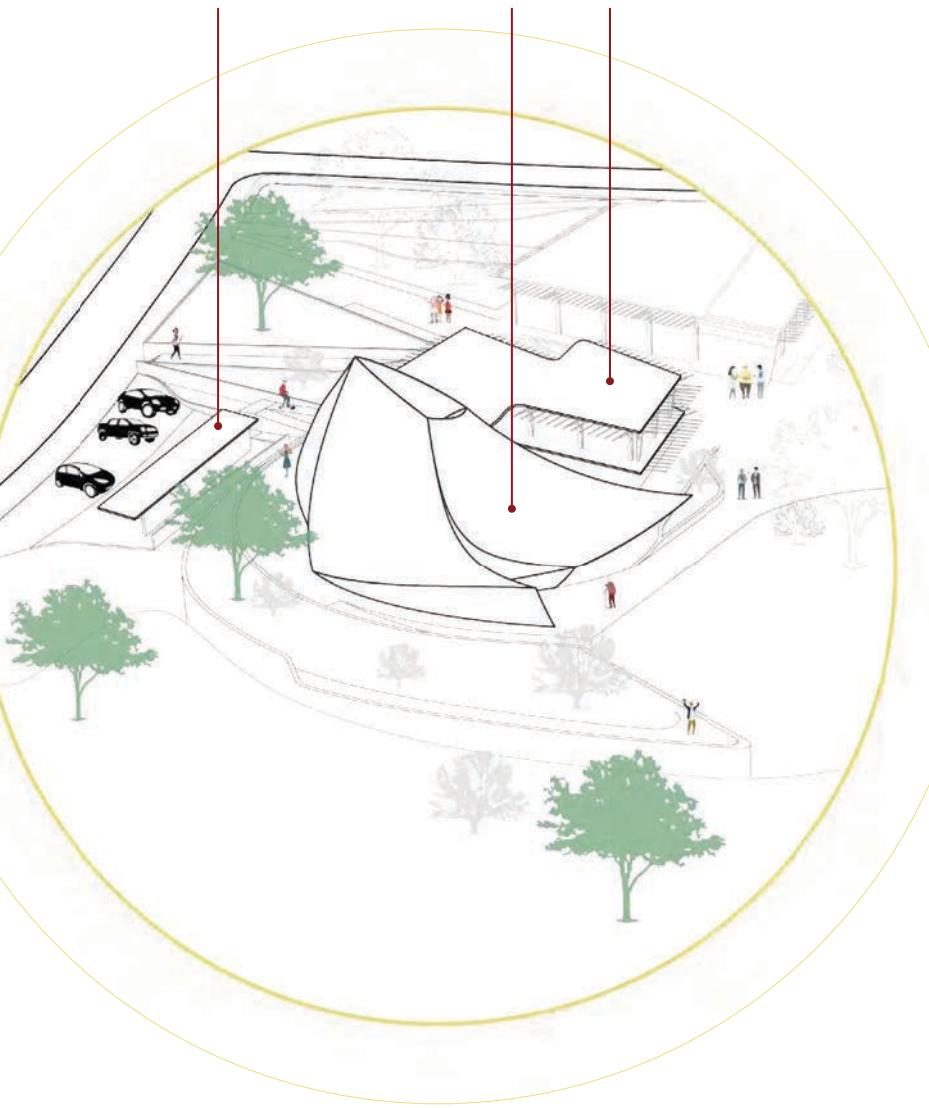


Figure 8.10 : JanCo Phase 2 Diagram

Figure 8.11 : Charles "Do Good" Jackson cuts sugar cane for the children to eat

Figure 8.2 : Mangoes

Figure 4.5 : Making Johnny Cake



## PHASE 3

PROGRAM : perform

Performing & live arts on the island will have a newfound “place” in the third major node of the design. Traditional music in the Virgin Islands was/is used to praise, boast, tease, and tell stories. Here the call and response, native to Africans, was maintained as a means to communicate through song, but other forms of music were also invented.

## The Architecture

- Large musical performances and gatherings on the Fairfield.
- Black-box theater will service more intimate functions like plays, spoken word performances, storytelling, lectures, town halls, etc.
- Classrooms can be rented for the instruction.
- Plazas will also accommodate impromtu sharing.
- The viewing deck from the southern edge of the site cascades down to the waterfront.
- Docking will also provide means for fishermen/boaters to access the site.

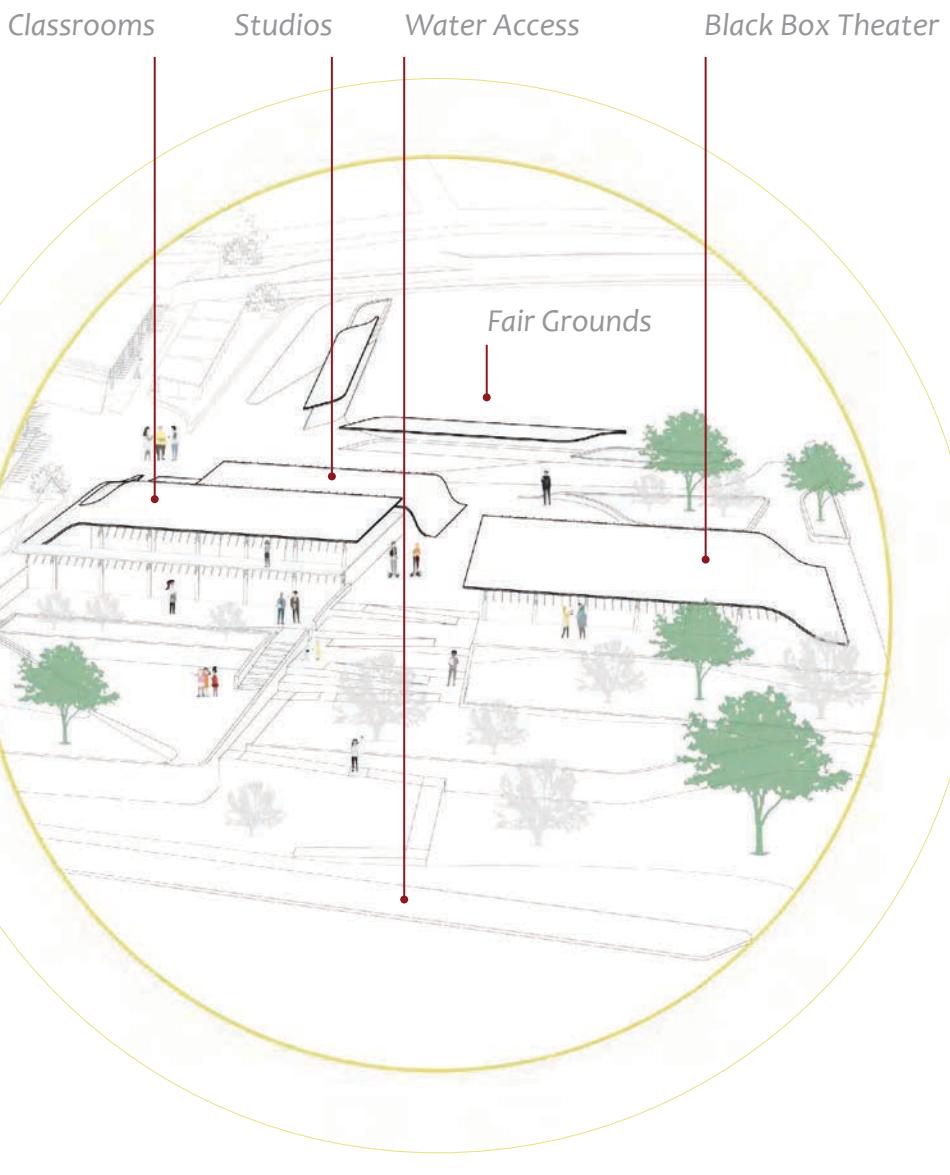
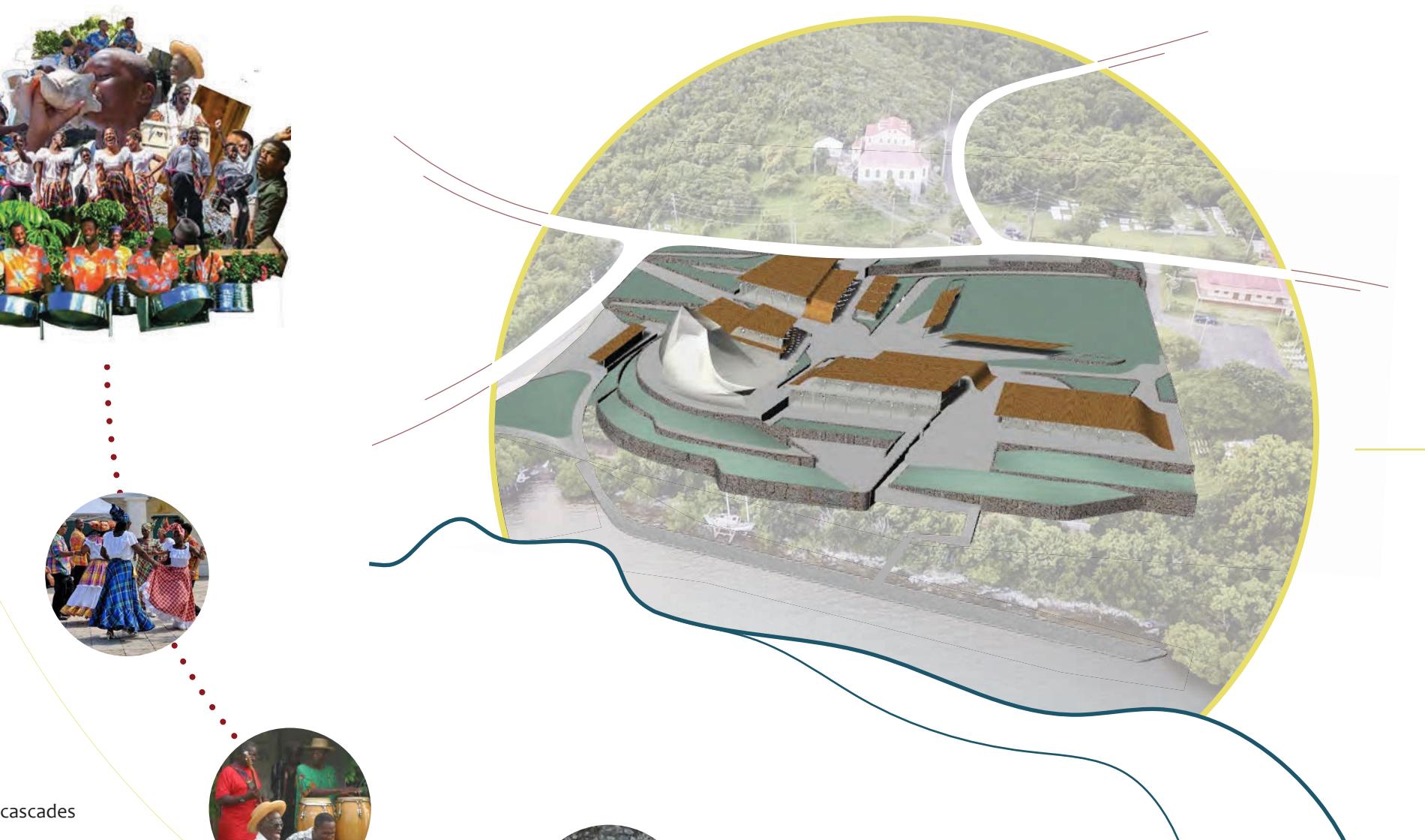


Figure 8.13 : JanCo Phase 3 Diagram

Figure 8.14 : Various

Figure 8.15 : Unknown

Figure 8.16 : Fay Fredericks at Naaberg



[ JanCo ]

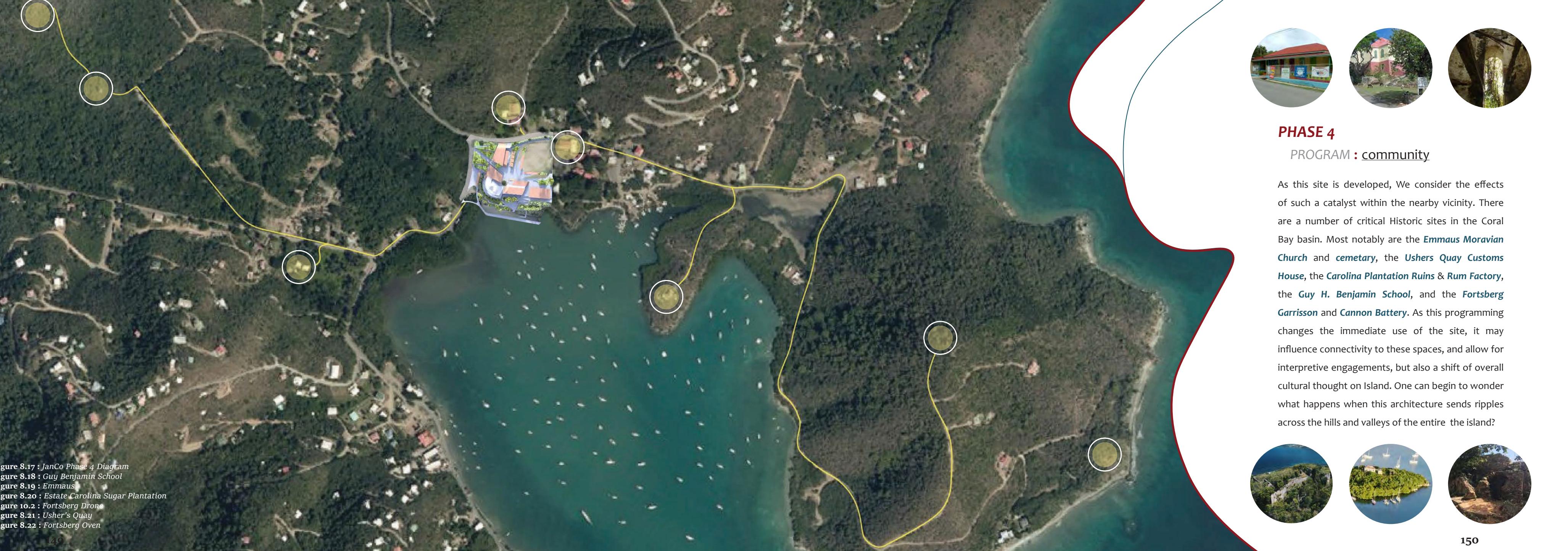


Figure 8.17 : JanCo Phase 4 Diagram

Figure 8.18 : Guy Benjamin School

Figure 8.19 : Emmaus

Figure 8.20 : Estate Carolina Sugar Plantation

Figure 10.2 : Fortsberg Drone

Figure 8.21 : Usher's Quay

Figure 8.22 : Fortsberg Oven

[ CONNECT ]  
[ USE ]

## COMMUNITY SPACE

[ COMFORT ]  
[ ACCESS ]

### Guy H. Benjamin Campus

St.JanCo: The St. John Heritage Collective is a community land trust, on St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands (VI-US). St.JanCo is on a mission to preserve the history, identity, and culture of St. John's people, especially those whose ancestry on St. John predates the 1917 American Purchase of the VI-US from Denmark, and the 1956 establishment of the Virgin Islands National Park. This initiative aims to create a cultural heritage exchange space on St. John unlike any we've had before. The historic building school building was used as classrooms for generations. The intention is to restore the historic building to house a permanent heritage gallery, but also a living space for sharing to include demonstrations, rotating exhibits, virtual/in-person classes, etc.

These additional buildings will all serve as the tangential spaces to the main historic building which will be treated as a "monument in place" on the campus. In these spaces we will facilitate cultural



Figure 8.23 : GHBS Ruin



Figure 8.24 : GHBS Aerial

classrooms, serving the on-island community as well as our visitors, administrative offices for St.JanCo, and a research lab and archive. As they don't exist in Coral Bay, there will be the facilitation of community meeting spaces, a meeting place for cultural heritage enthusiasts, and a starting point for what can eventually be an interconnected network of historic places & narratives in Coral Bay, and on St. John at-large.

The expanse of yard space on the campus allows for the exploration of community gardens which will supply the renovated cafeteria/kitchen's new function as a community pantry/diner. The nutritional needs of our community, especially the underserved, can begin to be met in a communal space like this which can serve as a point of distribution, but also education.

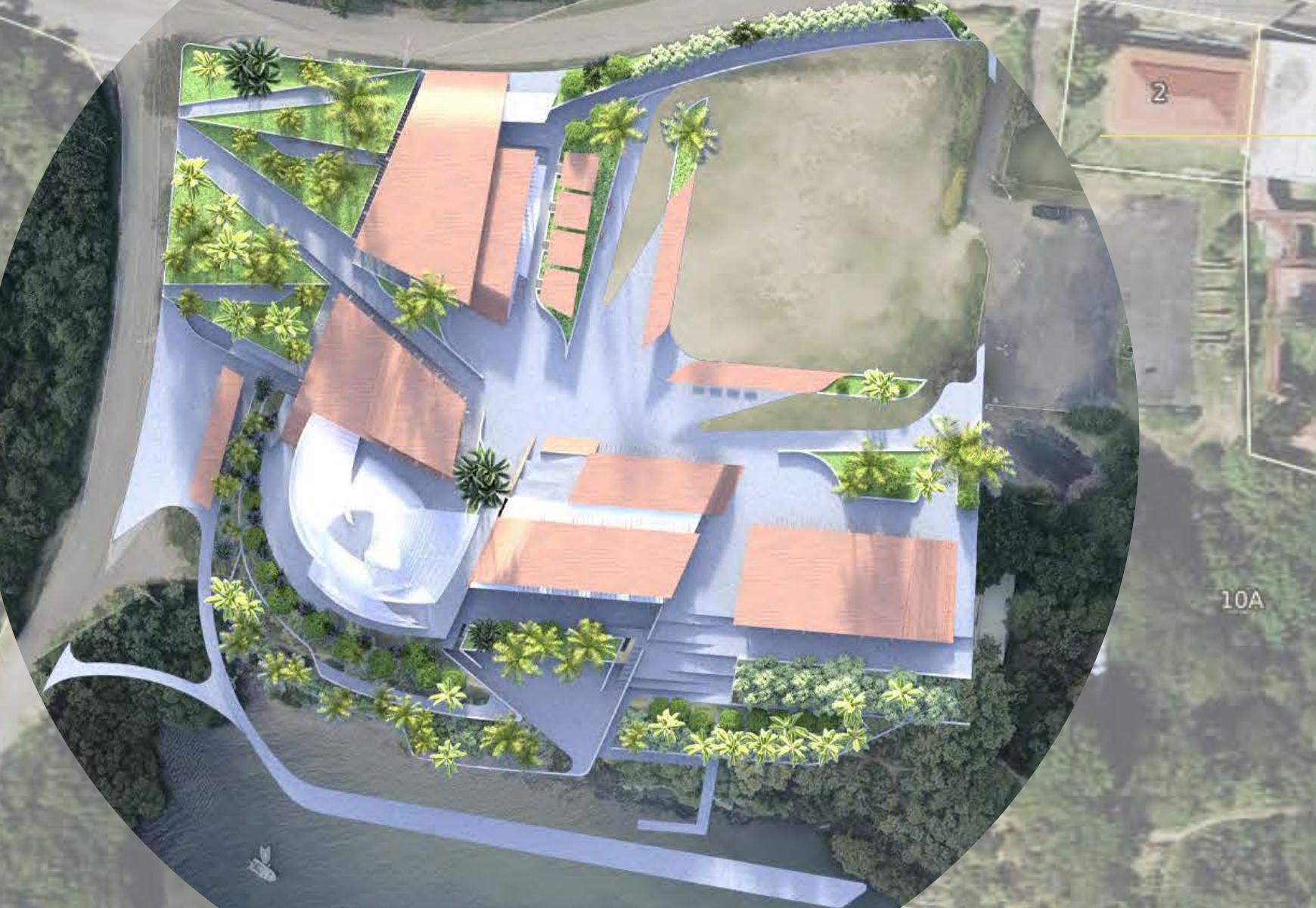
**“** Culture makes people understand each other better. And if they understand each other better in their soul, it is easier to overcome the economic and political barriers. But first they have to understand that their neighbour is, in the end, just like them, with the same problems, the same questions.

- Paulo Coelho



Figure 8.25: *InCo perspective 3*

[ JanCo ]



Site Plan



Figure 8.6 : JanCo Site Plan

## [ PLANS ]



Level 0



Level 1

## LEGEND:

1. Courtyard Plazas
2. Welcome Gallery
3. Library & Archive
4. Woodshop
5. Craft Classrooms
6. Office
7. Restrooms
8. Conference/Event Space
9. Recording Studio
10. Black Box Theater
11. Roadside Market
12. Community Yard
13. Yard Stalls/Seating
14. Artist Studios
15. Storage
16. Community Kitchen
17. Dining Deck
18. Teaching Classrooms
19. Dock
20. Groves/Community Gardens







Figure 8.32 : *InCo perspective 5*

# 09

## Conclusion

*In retrospect.*

Things learned throughout this process & exploration. Next steps?

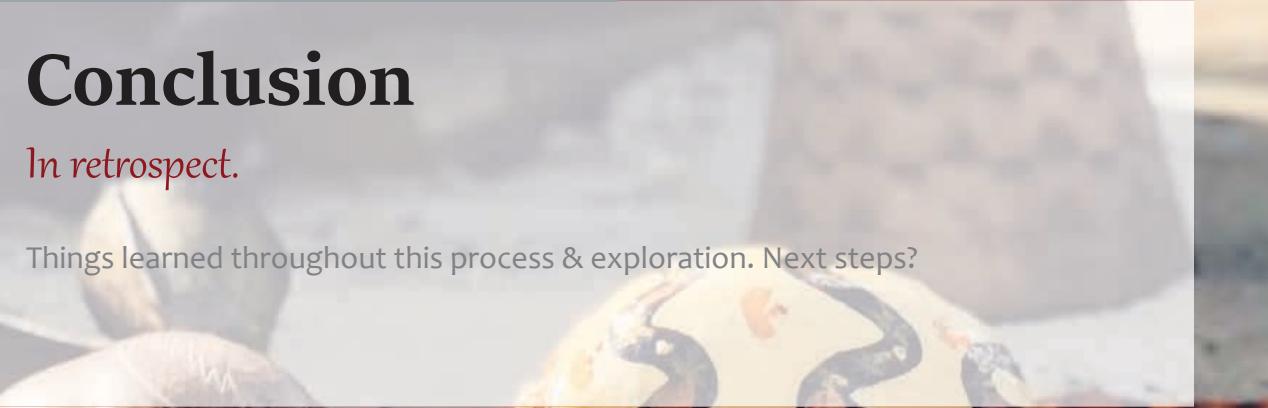


Figure 9.5: Journeying

## [ Conclusion ]

*Persistence, beyond erasure.*

Sin Johnians, and all Virgin Islanders are experiencing extreme erasure under the Settler Colonial apparatus that is the United States Empire. Our spikes in crime, cultural appropriation, loss of space, low education statistics, poverty levels, health issues, and on, are directly attributed to this reality. In returning home to the island in 2016 post graduate studies, and my initial thesis exploration, I realized and could speak to much of this.

Sin Johnian's are largely unhappy, uncomfortable, and absent — even those that live on island. There is a collective mourning taking place here, and an underlying socio-cultural depression that is eating away at the very fabric of our reality. We suffer mainland Americans threatening to "take away" their support through tourism when we voice our desperate concerns for proper representation and participation after **103 years** a colony of the United States. We suffer mainland corporate interests establishing legal tax havens on our shores and hiding the sinister truths of their wealth in plain sight

— i.e Jeffery Epstein. We suffer mainland politicians denying us and the other territories proper treatment under UN declaration, and the denial of their honoring of treaties.

*We weep, as we fear the perpetual unraveling of our territory's soul.*

**"So We Live"** hopes to be a reinvigorated, spirited, audacious reclaiming of ancestral native narratives of Sin Johnians, and all Virgin Islanders. This project explores the concept of urban intervention as architectural catalyst. This "culture house & incubator" seeks to deconstruct notions of regularity of space, its permanency, cultural accessibility and production, as well as re-imagining painful icons in attempts to heal ancestral trauma — i.e Plantation Wind Mills. Virgin Islanders have been culturally displaced throughout the past **103 years** of violent US colonial rule, and this is largely due to misunderstandings of the homogenous force of Neoliberal Capitalism on the small islands' already

enculturated community. As we have no proper public archive, museum, culture center, or even library that are accessible, yet we continue to be bombarded with development project proposals and offshore interests, **"So We Live"** was born from this need for continued resistance, adaptation, and education.

Virgin Islanders — Sin Johnians — know their place on this soil, descending from an inheritance reaped of blood, and sweat, and overwhelming loss. We seek to remind our "friends" from afar of this, that they respect our very real existence here, especially beyond tourism, and US dependency.

## [ Ase! ]



**“***i lost cultures  
i lost whole language  
i lost my religion  
i lost it all in the fire  
that is colonization*

*so, i will not apologize  
for owning every piece of mine  
they could not take, break  
and claim as their's.*

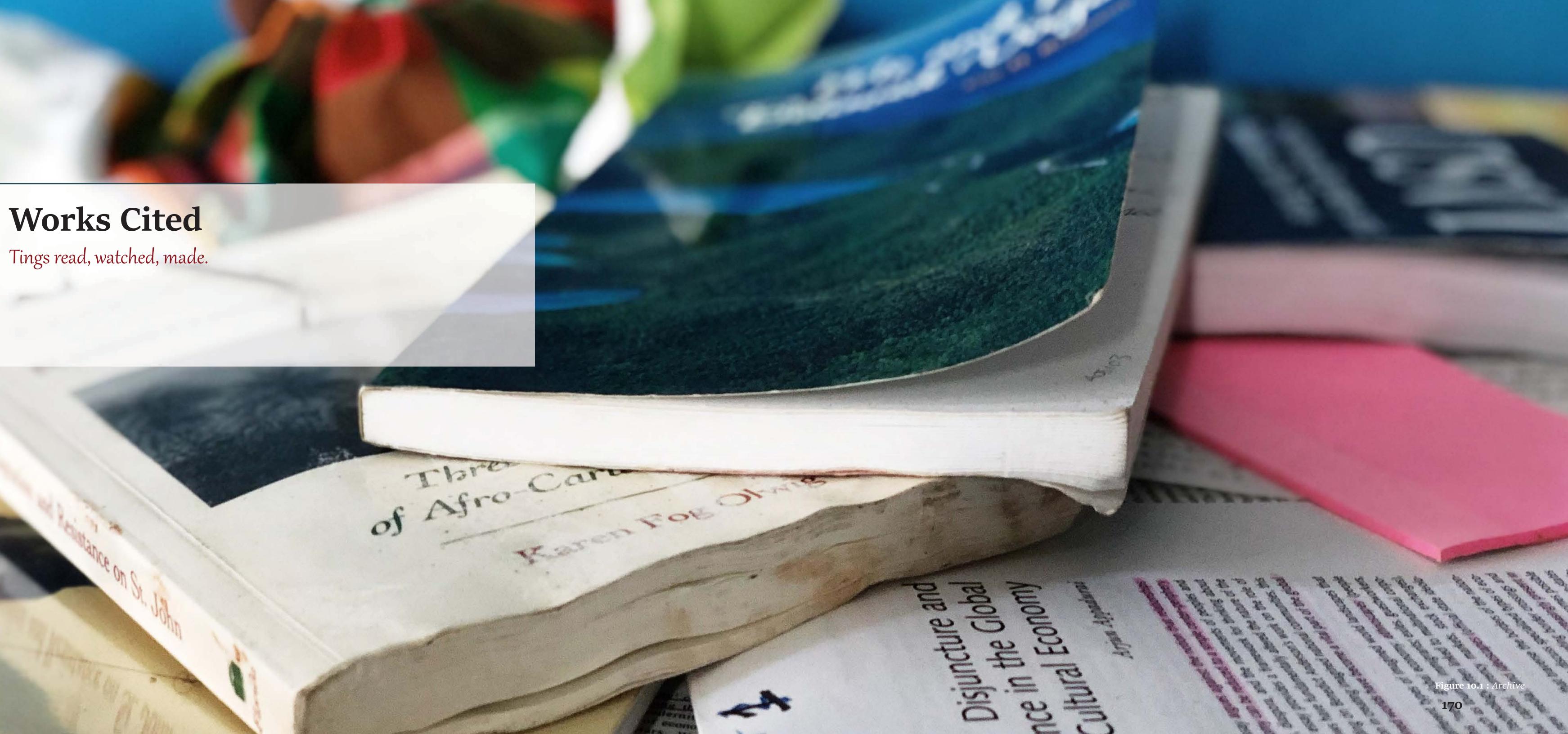
*- jenmonau ne binyu*

Figure 2.2 : Foodie Kulture

# 10

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Figure 10.2: *Forsberg* Drone

PART of S<sup>E</sup> THOMAS.

