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## Vibrant Mosaic “Dance With Us” Unveiled in Christiansted, Celebrating St. Croix’s Culture

The three-dimensional mosaic, celebrating the vibrant culture and festival spirit of St. Croix, was unveiled to an enthusiastic crowd near La Bahia Bar & Restaurant in Christiansted

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The collage features the artwork "Dance With Us", its creators, local officials, and community members. It was unveiled on Sunday, January 5, 2025, on Hospital Street near La Bahia Bar & Restaurant. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Excitement and cultural pride swept through downtown Christiansted on Sunday evening as the vibrant mosaic titled “Dance With Us” was unveiled on Hospital Street near La Bahia Bar & Restaurant. Hosted by Peter Zielke and created by artists Drew Barnes and Sederrick Raphiel, the three-dimensional artwork captivated attendees, including local officials, art enthusiasts, and

members of the community.

Unlike traditional flat mosaics, *Dance With Us* boasts a layered, three-dimensional design that invites onlookers to step closer and immerse themselves in its intricate details. The mosaic depicts two female dancers mid-movement, adorned with vibrant costumes, feathers, and fans that evoke the energy and spirit of the island's festival culture. One of the dancers holds a fan above an open space, creating an invitation for viewers to symbolically join in the celebration.

"The whole piece was meant to bring people together," explained artist Sederrick Raphiel. "It's called *Dance With Us* for a reason. We want people to immerse themselves in the culture."

The artwork's energy and cultural significance resonated deeply with attendees. Virgin Islands Attorney General Gordon Rhea was among the first to share his impressions. "It's absolutely spectacular. It truly captures the spirit of St. Croix and the Virgin Islands. I've been here for over 40 years, and this piece reflects the joy and energy of our celebrations and dances," Rhea said, encouraging others to experience the mosaic firsthand.

Senator Angel Bolques echoed these sentiments, highlighting the mosaic's cultural impact. "When I hear *Dance With Us*, I think of good vibes and positive energy—a true reflection of our culture," he remarked.

Peter Zielke, who commissioned the work, spoke passionately about his inspiration for the project. "This is something I've dreamed of since attending my first carnival and seeing the parades," Zielke shared. "The artists truly exceeded my expectations. This mosaic is made of thousands of stained-glass pieces and brings happiness and joy through the spirit of dance."

Zielke emphasized his hope that the mosaic would become a lasting symbol of community and culture. "My hope is that families will come here for decades and find joy in it," he added.

The project was a collaboration between Sederrick Raphiel and his son, Drew Barnes, who contributed to the design and composition. "This was a father-son effort," Barnes explained. "I did the sketching and researched the culture since I live in Texas, to bring the vibrant energy of St. Croix's festivals to life."

The unveiling of *Dance With Us* is a testament to the enduring spirit of St. Croix and the power of art to connect communities. Sederrick described the mosaic as "a celebration of life," emphasizing its role in bringing people together and immersing them in the island's rich culture.

Throughout the event, attendees admired the mosaic's vibrant colors and intricate details. Many agreed that the artists succeeded in capturing the spirit of St. Croix through the stained glass, transforming a simple wall into a canvas of shared history, community pride, and cultural celebration.