



Doing the analysis of Saint Croix with GIS mapping erased the sense of place that was created during our people and places project. The information, while being detailed, did not show the unique history and culture that is apparent on the island. To bridge this gap, I turned back to my people and places project to an artist that inspired me. Roy Lawaetz and his Modular Triangular System captivated me in the first part of this studio. The triangles are put together in a sculptural style before paint is added. This idea comes from the Taino people thousands of years before Columbus. The Taino carved Zemis out of tiny-triangular-shaped stones. In addition to the triangles ties to the ancient past in the Caribbean region it has ties to a much more recent past. The triangle trade has strong associations with the black slavery phenomenon.

To combine this system with map making I first looked at the potential of building a triangulated model of Saint Croix with canvases that depicted scenes from the island. This idea soon evolved into something more abstract that would give greater opportunity to highlight areas of the island that were visited by my classmates. This evolution turned into a geodesic dome. A geodesic dome is a tessellation of triangles, hence tying in the Modular Triangular System. At the center of this dome there is a map of the island of Saint Croix. Holding this map in place, while also referencing the location of the photos are different colored strings. On a literal level the dome represents the world and a global scale. Normally in mapping we look at things from this larger scale and then down to a more personal level. By locating these very local photos on a symbol of the globe it forces the viewer to think about the local first.

Saint Croix is known as having flown seven flags, and before these dramatic European influences it fluctuated with different tribes throughout centuries. When considering just the island of Saint Croix you are looking at a local scale. The island is just a tiny spec on the whole of this planet. But it is a place that has not been a stranger to change and dominance.

The string that holds the map in place and shows you where the pictures are located pulls the map in different directions distorting its overall shape. In this tension I hope to represent the influences of the past on the culture of Saint Croix, influences that have all pulled the people of the island in different directions throughout centuries.

Before I can begin to try to understand a place I have never been too I dive into the history to get a sense for what I'm in for.

The history of St. Croix has seen people from many places throughout the world. The Island has flown seven different flags since Columbus landed in 1493. This, however, does not include the Amerindian tribes that had come to the island before the arrival of Columbus and the Western world.

The islands of the Caribbean had seen many tribes fluctuate throughout their many lands for thousands of year. The oldest site found to date is Banwari Trace in Trinidad. The people who lived here during this time were primarily hunter and gatherers. Around the same time but slightly more recent there were the Ortoiroids. This group probably migrated in from the Guianas in South America and they settled the Lesser Antilles as far as Puerto Rico. This group subsisted in much the same way, hunting, gathering, and collecting shellfish.

The next wave of people to arrive was the Casimiroids who may have originated from Belize in South America. This group inhabited the two largest islands of the Greater Antilles, Cuba and Hispaniola. This group arrived in around 4000 BCE, the next wave of people wouldn't come until closer to 500 BCE. This wave was the Saladoids and they came from the banks of the Orinoco River in Venezuela. There origins on the river have been traced back to as early as 2100 BCE. This was an agricultural group that cultivated a root crop. This group settled the islands from as south as Trinidad and Tobago to as north as Puerto Rico.

In 350 CE the Barrancoids made their way into the islands. This group is believed to have evolved from the Saladoid tradition in Venezuela. They had an extensive influence over the Caribbean having reached as far north as Vieques and Puerto Rico. The Troumassoids culturally evolved next from Saladoid origins in the Lesser Antilles. They first evolved into the Troumassen Troumassoids before further evolving into the Suazen Troumassoids. This group disappeared by 1450 and it is unclear why. It could be a result of the highly mobile nature of the people of the Caribbean and their ability to shift their population throughout the islands, or they may have left as an identifiable cultural group and the connection hasn't been made yet. There is also the chance that those that stayed were homogenized into the next group to occupy the island.



The images to above and to the right are from Myths and Realities of Caribbean History, by Basil A. Reid.

The group that replaced the Suazen Troumassoids was the Island-Caribs. The region they occupied was the windward islands of the Lesser Antilles. This group is still present in the islands today. The Ostionoids, named after the Ostiones site in Puerto Rico, became a cultural presence in the islands from 600 CE to 1200 CE when they evolved into the Tainos. This was the group of farmers, potters, and villagers that Columbus encountered when he landed in the Caribbean.

Myths and Realities of Caribbean History, by Basil A. Reid

Seven Flags

Columbus landed on the island of St. Croix on November 14, 1493. The Spanish would be the first to fly their flag on this island. Attempting to capture the Amerindians, a battle ensued killing one from each side before the remaining Amerindians were taken prisoner. This began what would be a history of slavery within the islands as the Spanish King, Charles V, declared that all Amerindians in the islands should be eliminated. This conflict continued between the Amerindians and the Spanish for the next century. During this time the Spanish described the Virgin Islands as the "useless islands" because of attacks,

bad weather, and poor luck. By 1596 the islands were essentially uninhabited.

By the early 1600's the Dutch and English simultaneously settled the Virgin Islands, the Dutch on the east end and the English on the west. After some time conflict arose and the English Governor, Brainsby, was killed and then shortly after the newly appointed Dutch Governor was killed. With continued conflict the Dutch abandoned the islands leaving the English to control St. Croix until 1650. In that year the Spanish sent multiple ships and over a thousand men to kill everyone on St. Croix. The Dutch, thinking they might still have a chance to take the island, sent two ships to recapture St. Croix. The Spanish men who were left to guard the island killed all but 10 men as the Dutch attempted to land on the island.

The fourth flag to be raised on St Croix was that of France. In the same year, 1650, that the Spanish had ousted the English and driven off the Dutch the French captured St. Croix successfully. Their first colonization attempt was not so successful. Out of 300 colonists 200 died of sickness within the first year. In an attempt to rid the colony of its disease many of the forests were burned during the dry seasons.



Figure 1.1. An Indian Cacique of the Island of Cuba, Addressing Columbus Concerning a Future State. (From Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* [London, 1819].)

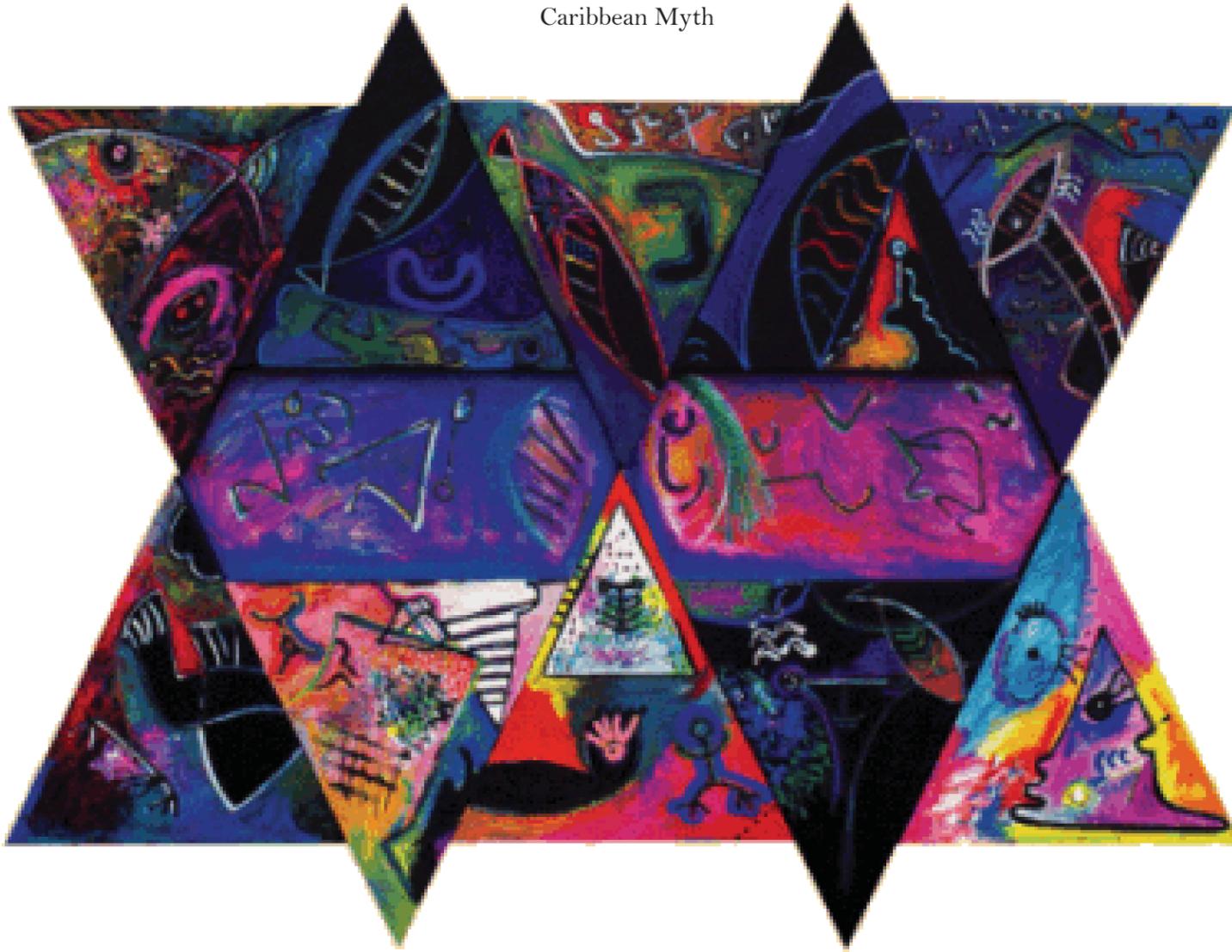
A decade later St. Croix was purchased by De Poincy, Governor of St. Kitts, and deeded to the Knights of Malta. The Knights did not fair well and sold island to the French West India Company in 1665. With the company appointed Governor, DuBois in place the island flourished with plantations that grew a variety of crops including sugar cane, cotton, tobacco, and indigo. With DuBois' death, followed by bad administration and drought the island went through a period of abandonment from 1695-1733.

Denmark bought St. Croix in 1733 and allowed rapid development to take place by allowing immigrants of other countries to move in. The English dominated the population and became the spoken language of the island. Sugar plantations flourished until the manufacturing of sugar from sugar beets killed St. Croix's European sugar market. This reeked havoc on the local economy and caused riots for decades to come.

In 1917 the Virgin Islands were sold to the United States of America. The U.S. is now the seventh flag to be flown on St. Croix. As an U. S. Territory the inhabitants of St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas are U.S. citizens.

<http://www.usvi.net/usvi/stx/history.html>

Caribbean Myth



This project is going to be about more than just design, it will be about connections. These connections that can be made with everything; the past, the future, the land, the people, the site, the climate, etc. In doing research for this project I found connections everywhere. There were connections in the lines of history that bring cultures along in evolution. There were connections between countries sharing and warring over the island. There are connections between locals, who may not feel connected to anything else. There are also connections between visitors and residents, the most forthright being the Salt River Bay Project. There are connections between artists who may not live on the same island but share a Caribbean identity.

In addition to reading about the Caribbean and most specifically the Virgin Islands I did research on Caribbean artists and had an interview with Dr. Harry Janes of Rutgers University. I found a lot of the art intriguing because of the similar underlying themes from people who came from very different parts of the region. This experience has definitely been a new and different way of trying to understand a place.

Roy Lawaetz

Roy Lawaetz is an artist from St. Croix. He has created the Modular Triangular System. This system uses triangles instead of rectangles to paint on. The triangles are put together in a sculptural style before paint is added. This idea comes from the Taino people thousands of years before Columbus. The Taino carved Zemis out of tiny-triangular-shaped stones.

This artwork amalgamates Caribbean, European, and African influences. Seeing this artists work and learning about his concept has given me something I can connect the people of St. Croix to. I find that his artwork represents the people of St. Croix and the complex history that has led to their unique culture. The triangles that create the canvas can be put together in many ways to create many shapes just as the multiple influxes of people from all over the world has and will continue to shape St. Croix's culture.

Flexible possibilities have been demonstrated with Lawaetz's use of the triangle in his own series of Caribbean installation paintings. Lawaetz believes that the rectangle is an European imported shape and that the triangle has a more profound ability to blend the new with the ancient.



Cabarete Windsurfer Magnifico

Girl With Wild Horse



Flower of the Diaspora

Fountaining



World of Difference

MODI MANIFESTO
by Roy Lawaetz

MODI is a Caribbean aesthetic which draws from the collective cultural heritage of the Diaspora: It states:
That nature does not conform to one shape, neither should art
That in this consciousness role MODI art breaks away from the conventional rectangles towards triangles to form the basis of MODI thinking
That MODI has the innate ability to structure, to combine and create proto type status
That MODI can operate between blurred lines of painting, sculpture and installation and still be MODI
That MODI is attachable and detachable, like life MODI can add or subtract, multiply or divide, but it is not arithmetic, it is art
MODI can select, combine to create individualistic shapes
MODI is in its infant stage of existence like a new born baby
The history of painting is the celebration of the rectangle.
MODI is the rebirth of the triangle
MODI is an approach to Art that embraces cultural overlays and different civilizations
MODI utilizes the universal shape of the triangle as its cornerstone thus it breaks down barriers, builds monuments to lost legacies
The MODI triangle symbolizes spiritual concepts whether of so called pagan belief or Christian such as the Divine Trinity
MODI is a flexible vehicle of Art, not rigid with pictorial stereotypes determined by the manufacturing industry
MODI is invention, exploration, substance, visionary not academic and predictable
MODI is ancient but it can also embrace modern technology
MODI is Art with a designer attitude
MODI is not photography no matter how artistic
MODI is not sick art though it might sometimes rupture the senses
MODI is cultural reaffirmation art. It builds on cultural heritage but reinvents the story in fragmentary dimensions
MODI is not art which generates out of an urban phenomenology
MODI does not exist to feed the industrial framing industry. It strives to feed the soul
MODI liberates, frames confine like prison cells
MODI rejects frames for its own aesthetic conclusions and vision
MODI believes frames are accessories that often compete with the intention of the art work, sometimes even suffocating it
MODI is organic not static MODI is shape ready for flight launch like a space rocket

MODI is angle Modi is dangle
MODI stretches, steps over boundaries, dances where the grass is always greener and the horizon brighter
MODI is one brick at a time, it is slow, and it is construction
MODI is digging, excavating into the collective strata of human experience
MODI believes in fragmentation as the essence of existence
MODI can be taught in schools to infants but it is not geometry despite its angularity
MODI is cellular, it has structure, it can adapt to visual situations and physical spaces
MODI is the heightened celebration of the proto type in Art
MODI assimilates, it includes more than it excludes, what it excludes has always been included
MODI has montage features that are extraordinary
MODI can create or break rhythms
MODI is the spirit of the ancients but it is the handiwork of the living
MODI is gesamtkunstwerk or total art
MODI when passive can be like a hidden Jack in the box or Russian dolls
MODI when active can be exotic and passionate
MODI statements are like statements in a Chinese fortune cookie but they only affect the artist's fortune
MODI is the realm of diversity
MODI teaches the artist, the artist does not teach
MODI but he can pass on its inherent principles to others
MODI is still in its infant stages and so is the critique of its true significance
MODI is not formulaic each new prototype format challenges a different formula
MODI is risk art
MODI is not commercially strategic but it can be bought and sold
MODI is a structural visual language based on fragmentation
MODI exists in the realm of ideas
MODI leads to unpredictable sources of fantasy, energy and construction
MODI believes that the electric drill is just as important as the paint brush
MODI can fuse antiquity and technology in artistic coexistence
MODI's triangular family of shapes provide a vast resource that is capable of triggering the subconscious as well as the formal
MODI can transcend the limits of Western culture and embrace a vast multicultural horizon
MODI recognizes that in the development of one's signature art often rejection is the best teacher

MODI like nature assumes diverse shapes in its repertoire of proto types
MODI can be a weapon, it can defend
MODI is practical and impractical every coin has a flip side
MODI's angularity mobilizes a dynamic factor into the art equation
MODI's diversity with multiple applications gives the Support a wide range of options
MODI's flexibility provides the artist with a wider support base for innovation
MODI's alternative design is independent of premanufactured configurations
MODI's interactive options with technological integration gives the Support a new participatory role
MODI's interlocking features combine individual fragmentary elements for optimum versatility
MODI's modularity provides a more organiclike quality in the Support
MODI's mutative qualities on canvas elements can be expanded to include other distinct formats
MODI's sculptural qualities and tridimensionality can be interpreted into the art form if desired
MODI's voidfullness and its respective relation between them can be dramatically increased
MODI is where the classic departs to join the exotic
MODI is symbolic compression □ symbols compacted for a greater visual strength
MODI is living and depicting life enthusiastically
MODI dances with paint and does not walk rigidly as if to guide a blind man across the street
MODI understands that the value of an accomplished painting is in its intensity
MODI can be an element in isolation then evolve into harmony



No Rain - No Rainbow

Christiansted Scene

This watercolor is a view across town to Hemer's Point, now Judith's Fancy. It shows the Dutch architecture in the town of Christiansted.



East End

Another unnamed sketch, this plantation is probably now known as Fareham, a south shore estate.



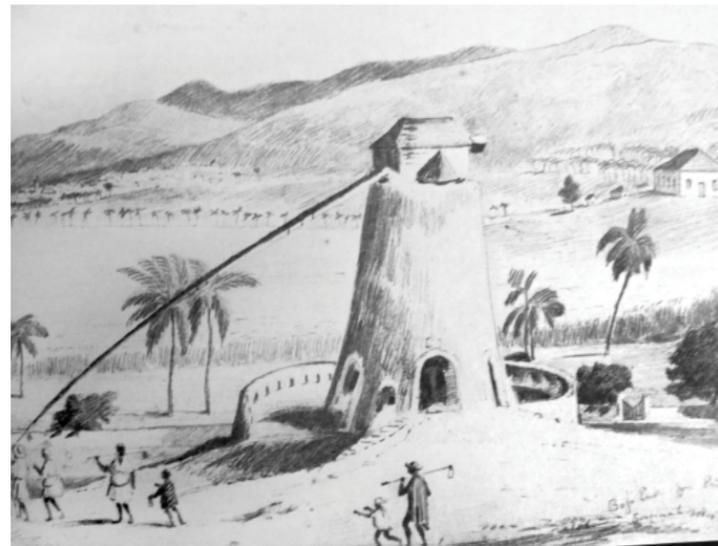
Miss Patsey's Bassin

A wooden-shingled house on Strand Street.



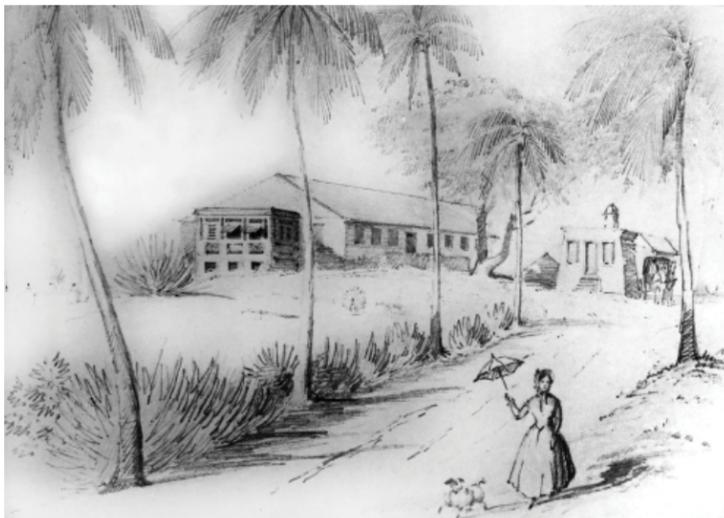
From Princess-Government Schoolhouse

This is a sketch of one of the first schools built for slave children in 1841. It was sponsored by an educational program that Governor von Scholten and is still in use.



South Gate Farm

One of the first sugar cane plantations established to the east of Christiansted. The plantation switched first to cotton, and then to a cattle farm in the years since this sketch was done.



Diamond Schoolhouse

This watercolor is another school that opened in 1841 due to Governor von Scholten's education program. Because of their ability to speak the Dutch creole dialect, that was used by the slaves to communicate with each other, the teachers were Moravians.





Kenwyn Crichlow

An artist from Trinidad. Kenwyn considers himself a product of the Caribbean due to its complex and many-layered history and culture. His paintings are an,

“attempt to reflect the brown of our earth, the blue gold of our sky, the aquamarine of our sea, the whiteness of our sand, and the tantalizing exuberance of our people.”



Top Left:
Midnight in a Distance
Kenwyn Chichlow

Bottom Left:
Raging Fire of the Heart
Kenwyn Chichlow

Top Right:
Entre dos mundos
Myrna Baez



Myrna Baez

An artist from Puerto Rico. Her themes are landscapes, people, and interiors. Color and light in the tropics affect each other and play strong roles within her paintings. She states that,

“The elements that appear in my work speak a Caribbean idiom: windows are open, curtains are moved by gentle breezes, and the vegetation is familiar to those of us who have lived in these islands: crotons, palm trees, and mangroves are given pride of place.”



Aquaculture and Aquaponics on St. Croix

Dr. Harry Janes, of Rutgers University, has done work on St. Croix. On the island he put together an aquaponic system for research, and to help support the people who live there. The site he created has become a place where people from all over the world can come and take a course on setting up and using systems like the one he has developed. His system grows Tilapia (fish) on land and uses their waste to fertilize plants hydroponically. The fish waste is processed through a bio filter where bacteria break down the extra nitrogen and the solid material is filtered out. Water is then used for plants, which clean the water even more, before cycling back into the fish tanks. Before the fish can be sold to eat they are “rinsed out”, by not being fed, for 7-10 days. The fish are processed on the island in a USDA certified facility before heading to market. Unfortunately though the system works the cost of the fish is much higher due to the cost of raising them.

While talking about the time Dr. Janes spent working on the island he did not have negative things to say. He stated that he at no point felt uncomfortable or in danger, in fact the people he met seemed friendly and hospitable. He spoke of how strange it was that the cars on the island are in the American style, steering wheel on the right, but the roads are driven on the British or left side. He also spoke of the implications of the island as a tourist destination. Fredricksted seemed closed or boarded up at times when cruise ships were not in the harbor. The biggest issue, he pointed out, was medical care. There is only one hospital on the island and the hospital will fly people to San Juan in Puerto Rico. Dr. Janes also touched on the issue of a lack of social interactions between the visitors and the residents. Though he has been there many times he has only had short stays which continues the outsider feeling of just being a visitor. A highlight of the island for him was the size of the rainforest in addition to its close proximity to a desert ecology. He also spoke of the beauty of the beaches on the northwest shore and the privacy of the beaches on the northeast side.



These images are from the University of the Virgin Islands: Aquaculture website.



These elements have given me a better sense of the culture and people who live within the Caribbean. I do not know if I can say that I understand the place, for as Lippard defines place as the “external world mediated through human subjective experience.” For me, St. Croix remains an un-experienced landscape. However, this is not a loss because my point of view is no longer detached. I have done research which has led to a range of emotional connections that could not be possible if I were still detached from this place.

I fell in love with the Modular Triangular System the moment I stumbled onto Roy Lawaetz’s site. His combination of new and ancient technologies is incredibly intriguing. Using shapes that have historic and cultural significance to define the boundaries of his artwork

is powerful. It gave me the ability to start making connections between the people of this culturally jumbled up place.

I have found angst in the lack of representation of all cultures within the resources I have learned history from. It upsets me that St. Croix is called Seven Flags when there have been way more than seven cultures that have influenced this place. The failure to recognize the pre-Columbus civilizations seems to add to the society’s lack of cultural identification. Another element that adds to the lack of cultural identification is the residents’ inability or lack of desire to talk about their more recent past in slavery. From speaking to my classmates I have learned that this was a touchy subject for everyone they met. I’ve seen firsthand in my research what a profound impact it has had not only on St. Croix but the entire Caribbean region. To deny these roots is just as ignorant as denying the roots of Amerindian cultures that came before it.

It has been interesting to see the similarities in philosophies of some Caribbean artists, which in turn can produce some of the broadest ranges of work. Though the artists I featured are from different islands, in different areas of the Caribbean, it was not hard to find a significant common ground among the artists. I did not find that St. Croix was incredibly different from its surrounding islands, but that there was a lot of general ground amongst them. They may not have seen the same societies sweep through and take over, but there is a general mixing pot that brings all of the islands together while making each one slightly different and unique.

From all of this a point I will be taking through the next steps of this process, is that while no one culture should be ignored, and more importantly, no one culture should be focused on. More than anything I would like to try to help find an identity that people can relate to. I do not feel that this identity can be pinpointed to any one culture, nor do I think that a handful of cultures would fit; I think that this identity needs to be found in the pride that these people have in who they are and this has to begin by accepting where they come from.