

Imprints of St. Croix

When we were first charged with making a map that was artful, conveyed a sense of St. Croix and made a statement about it I was a bit overwhelmed. The understanding that I got about St. Croix came after five days of walking, climbing and listening to the actual place, yet somehow my map should convey some sense of St. Croix in a few minutes to a viewer who might never have stepped foot on it's shores.

I thought first about what one aspect of the island someone who hadn't been there wouldn't get from looking at maps. And the topography came to mind. A map viewer can see topo lines, but they are poor expressions of what being truly immersed in the mountainous landscape was like. So using paper mache I made a 3 dimensional model of the landform that expressed the dramatic landform of the place.

I saw how I had modeled the land, and remembered that critiques to previous maps had been the lack of focus on the water. Since the water is an important part of St. Croix- a view that is almost constantly there, as well as a force that sustains and threatens inhabitants of the island, it was necessary to express this to. I chose to represent the coral of the island with crumpled trace because trace paper, like the coral is fragile and delicate, and can easily be torn or destroyed.

My model now had a physical sense of the island, but it was still missing something: a sense of the people and culture of St. Croix. I asked myself; who are the people of St. Croix? And while I was able to think of many partial answers, something kept asking the question back at me. And I remembered that the people themselves also ask this question: who are the people of St. Croix? They have been owned by so many different nations, and these have oppressed them, stealing their identity to impress their own into the island. The layers of history have left a complex and nuanced legacy on the people that is complicated to explain. Even now, as the island is owned by the US, but isn't a state, Crucians struggle to define whether they are Americans or something else. The issues of who votes, who gets representation, what the definition of a native Crucian and how those processes pan out contributes to this identity crisis. And while these are struggles shared in part by other US Virgin Islands, St. John and St. Thomas have recognized ecological and tourism identities while St. Croix is still working towards a recognized historical identity.

Conveying this idea of identity, and questioned identity, along with the layered nature of the history of the island led me to the fingerprint. Fingerprints are unique to a person- no two are the same, and this speaks to it's usefulness in establishing identity. A fingerprint by definition is an impression or trace left by the friction of the ridges in a human finger. These ridges are formed by the underlying interface between dermal layers- similar to the way the hills of St. Croix were formed by the tectonic plates under water. A finger's ridges serve to amplify sensory signals and assist in grasping surfaces. I felt that using the fingerprint to represent the identity of St. Croix would be a powerful metaphor, but I struggled with how to express this idea on my model. My first instinct was to cover the island with my own fingerprints in an interesting pattern. But that would be the worst way of expressing the islands identity- for that would leave the island covered in a singular persons prints- similar to the way the early colonizers of the mastered the island with their identities. Instead if fingerprints were to be expressed they needed to be the fingerprints of the island.

The trip to St. Croix certainly left an impression on me; a deep sense of place that is difficult to describe in only a few words. I know that my classmates had similar experiences, and I know that none of us would say that St. Croix has no identity. Rather this is an issue of identifying the identity, and I realized that as outsiders looking in, we could play a role in reminding the island just what is unique and special about it. Therefore I decided to express the identity of St. Croix by asking each of my classmates to choose the location on the island where they experienced the strongest sense of place- the moment when they were most struck with the islands culture or identity, and then to mark that place with their finger print- a symbol of the mark that that place had left in their minds.



SARAH

"I thought Maroon Ridge left the biggest impression on me because you were really in the landscape there and there was just this sense of the fact that other people have walked there before me and they had a totally different kind of a lifestyle and they had a totally different mindset from me where I was just kind of enjoying the landscape, the landscape for them was like literally saving their lives and they were in this really desperate situation. And so for me that was probably the most powerful sense of place that I got."

ZEINIX

"The area descending down to the coast was the moment for me when St. Croix became a place. Because you really felt that it wasn't just this trail that people do but it was something real that the slaves had to do and really not just doing it to do it but for their lives and it was just so powerful."

HANY HANAFY

"For me it was the airport when we were leaving, and just thinking about everything and remembering what I saw and trying to put it all together in my head. Especially through that plane ride when you leave the island and you're looking down and everything was just rushing through my head at once trying to remember everything that I saw, everything that I heard, everything I smelled, tasted, experienced, all these emotions, and all these senses just coming together and that's where I got my sense of place."

Nick Grandi

"For me my sense of place would be Point Udall. Just being out there I thought that the scenery was completely undisturbed: there were no buildings or houses out in the cliffs. When Salt, Benson and I hiked down to the edge there, watching the water break up about forty feet up in the air was crazy- I thought it was pretty intense."

Holly Nelson

"I'm going to choose this because it needs to be represented. It's not my favorite- Maroon Ridge was my favorite because it was the scariest- but the kayak ride in the bay, putting my body in the bay like a taino indian and I got to be in the middle of the site but mobile. And I think it's similar to Maroon Ridge in that every time it was my body in the landscape where I felt the physicality of myself and the landscape was where the experience was the most powerful."

Bob

"I'm going to go to the Columbus landing site, that's where I met Keith and Wayne, and I kinda felt like I was introduced to their house outside their house the way they had their camp site there and everything was setup. And I felt like I actually experienced what the locals experience when they're camping and just hanging out and just the way that the environment was and what they do and the water and the moon coming up the whole kinda thing. I think that set it for me."

STEVE

"I think I'm going to say- chicken shack. Probably because I relate to a sense of place more with the present day things than with the history of a place. When I'm in a situation where I can hear people talking, their day to day lives- I kinda get a feeling for what the place is like, and they don't talk about the landscape or the history- they're talking about their jobs, their wives, their kids and their broken down car or something like that and maybe they don't even care about that- they're just happy to have a beer on lunch. Another thing is you get to taste the actual food from the island from locals and I think that's really important."

VICTORIA

"I keep switching between a bunch of places. I've been to many Caribbean islands but this looked completely different from any other one and I think I got my biggest sense when we walked from the inn up to the visitor center and after I got up the hill and looked around I was like 'I've never seen topography like this, I've never seen the movements in each hill' so I think that was when I realized I saw somewhere I've never been before."

Christine Fong

"The place where I felt the biggest sense of place for me was the Arawak hotel. Jennifer was truly hospitable to us and gave us so much shelter and I didn't feel homesick at all, I didn't feel like I went anywhere at all. It felt like home."

BEN ANDREWS

"I'm going to have to go ahead and agree with Steve on this one actually. Mostly because not that the history of the site isn't important- because it certainly is- but thinking about designing for present day what we experienced at the chicken shack with this present day community- which is what it was it was this little community feeling- that you were overwhelmed with. I thought it was very cool just to sit there and sit back and observe people through this kind of interaction between them, who they were. There were tons of people; there were young people, old people, Joel from the NPS was there, it was like a meeting place and so I thought it was an important spot that we visited just to get a sense of the people of St. Croix."

SANTARELLA

"I'm going to have to go with Hany, but unlike Hany mine was more on the arrival. Because on the plane ride in, getting that whole void of the ocean, and I've never even been to the Caribbean, and then you see this topography and these mountains and it was exciting. And then you get to the airport and everyone drives on the left side of the road. It kind of all hit me at once."

Stacey Delgado

"I'm going to go with the organic farm. Not because it was my favorite experience but because it kind of put St. Croix on the map for me as far as world issues- it's just this tiny little island you can barely see on the world map but it has the same issues and it relates to other sites still so it just kinda put it in perspective for me."

JASON BENSON

"I'm going to go with point Udall to I'm torn between the chicken shack and point Udall. We went all the way down to the eastern most point of the United States and it was like you were completely surrounded by landscape. We were in this crevice and the water was right there and it just sort of seemed surreal. I've been to one other Caribbean island and when I was going to St. Croix I was expecting something completely different and when I got there I was kind of taken aback by what I saw. I guess I didn't do my picture research before- I didn't look at pictures at all I mean the books told one story but I think that even if I looked at pictures I still wouldn't have gotten the sense that we got on our trip because we didn't go as tourists we went as researchers. I got this sense of the power of the ocean and it takes the wave and just spits it up fifteen feet up in the air."



Impressions of St. Croix

When we were first charged with making a man that was white, conceived a vision of St. Croix and made a statement about it was a bit overwhelming. The understanding that I got about St. Croix came when I saw the way of walking, standing and listening to the actual place, and suddenly my mind started coming some sense of St. Croix in a few moments in a way that might never have revealed itself on a phone.

I thought first about what one aspect of the island someone who hadn't been there wouldn't get from looking at maps and the topography came to mind. I made several sets of top lines, but they are poor expressions of what living truly meant in the mountainous landscape was like. So using paper, which I made a 3 dimensional model of the land form that mimicked the dramatic landscape of the place.

I saw how I had modeled the land, and remembered that cartographers had been the last of focus on the island. Great the water is an important part of St. Croix, it was that is almost constantly there, as well as a force that sustains and transforms what exists of the island. It was necessary to express this to I chose to represent the land of the island with crumpled tissue because tissue paper, like the land is fragile and delicate, and can easily be torn or destroyed.

We made now had a physical sense of the island, but it was still missing something, a sense of the people and culture of St. Croix. I added myself, who are the people of St. Croix? And which I was able to think of many people, something kept taking the question back to me. And I remembered that the people themselves also ask this question who are the people of St. Croix? They have been varied by so many different nations, and these lines represented them, making their identity in memory their own into the island. The history of history, how they've come and moved across the island that is complicated to explain. I can now, as the island, it seems to be the US, but not a class. One seems struggle to define whether they are American or something else. The reason of who some, who gets representation, what the definition of a nation? Croix and how these processes can contribute to this identity crisis.

Considering this idea of identity and conditional identity, along with the internal culture of the history of the island led me to the fingerprint. Fingerprints are unique to a person, and that are the same, and they serve to it's usefulness in establishing identity. A fingerprint is an impression or trace left by the friction of the ridges in a human finger. These ridges are formed by the underlying interface between dermal layers, similar to the way the hills of St. Croix were formed by the tectonic plates under water. A finger's ridges serve to quickly identify objects and assist in grasping surfaces. I felt that using the fingerprint to represent the identity of St. Croix would be a powerful metaphor, and I struggled with how to represent this idea in my mind. My first attempt was to cover the island with the use of fingerprints as an identifying pattern. But that would be the worst way of representing the island, identity. So that would have the subtle pattern in a complex system, similar to the way the early colonizers of the mountain the island with their identities, instead of fingerprints, were to be expressed they needed to be the fingerprint of the island.

The trip to St. Croix certainly left an impression on me, a deep sense of place that is difficult to describe in words in the words. I know that my impressions had similar experiences, and I know that none of us would see the St. Croix the same way. Rather than an issue of identifying the identity, and I realized that my understanding of the island was a mix of memory the island just what is unique and special about it. Therefore I decided to express the identity of St. Croix by taking each of my impressions to create the landscape on the island where they represented the strongest sense of place. We envision when they were most struck with the island culture or identity, and then to mark the place with their finger prints, a mark of the mark that that place had left in their minds.

LANDSCAPE AS IDENTITY

SARAH NITCHMAN

In my design for the proposed Marine Research and Education Center within the Salt River Bay National Park I sought to use landscape as a way of expressing the identity of St. Croix while at the same time weaving in the goals and functional concerns of the center. There is currently a disconnect between the people of St. Croix, and some of the infrastructure and agencies there to benefit them. This subtle disconnect is the result of a lack of transparency in the workings and decision making on the part of the National Park Service as these decisions relate to the public of the island. Although the goals and objectives of the parks service are in many ways related to the priorities of islanders, there is a history of conflicting interests that have resulted in hurt feelings on at least one side. I refuse to believe that this current relationship is inevitable; in fact I see the landscape and specifically the design of Salt River Bay as an opportunity to bridge any gaps that might exist and open up views into the workings of everyone involved. Once lines of communication are opened, real learning and teaching can take place, and then the Center will reflect its context and the identity of the island, and the research and work done at the center will be reflected in the changed attitudes and ecosystem management of those living in St. Croix. It is through this new relationship dynamic that real change will occur- making both St. Croix and marine issues relevant worldwide.

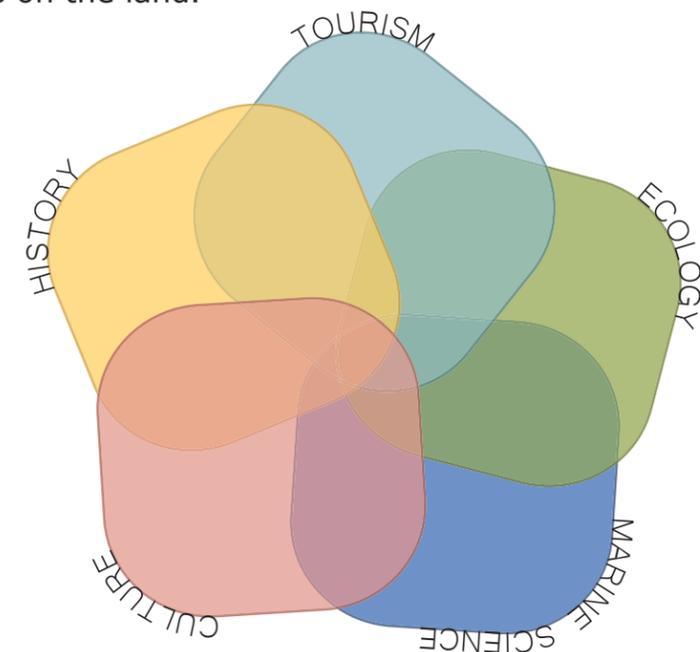
To accomplish these lofty goals I added to the proposed program of the Center areas for teaching that would be easily seen as community inclusive. Features such as an outdoor amphitheater, an aquarium with a touch tank so children can interact with marine life and a campground adjacent to a mangrove mitigation and study lab provide for classroom style exchanges between the public and the Center. Having the ability for the public to see into the workings of the Center by taking boat tours or visiting some of the less sensitive labs would serve to increase transparency of the research as well as spread the lessons learned at the center to a wider audience.

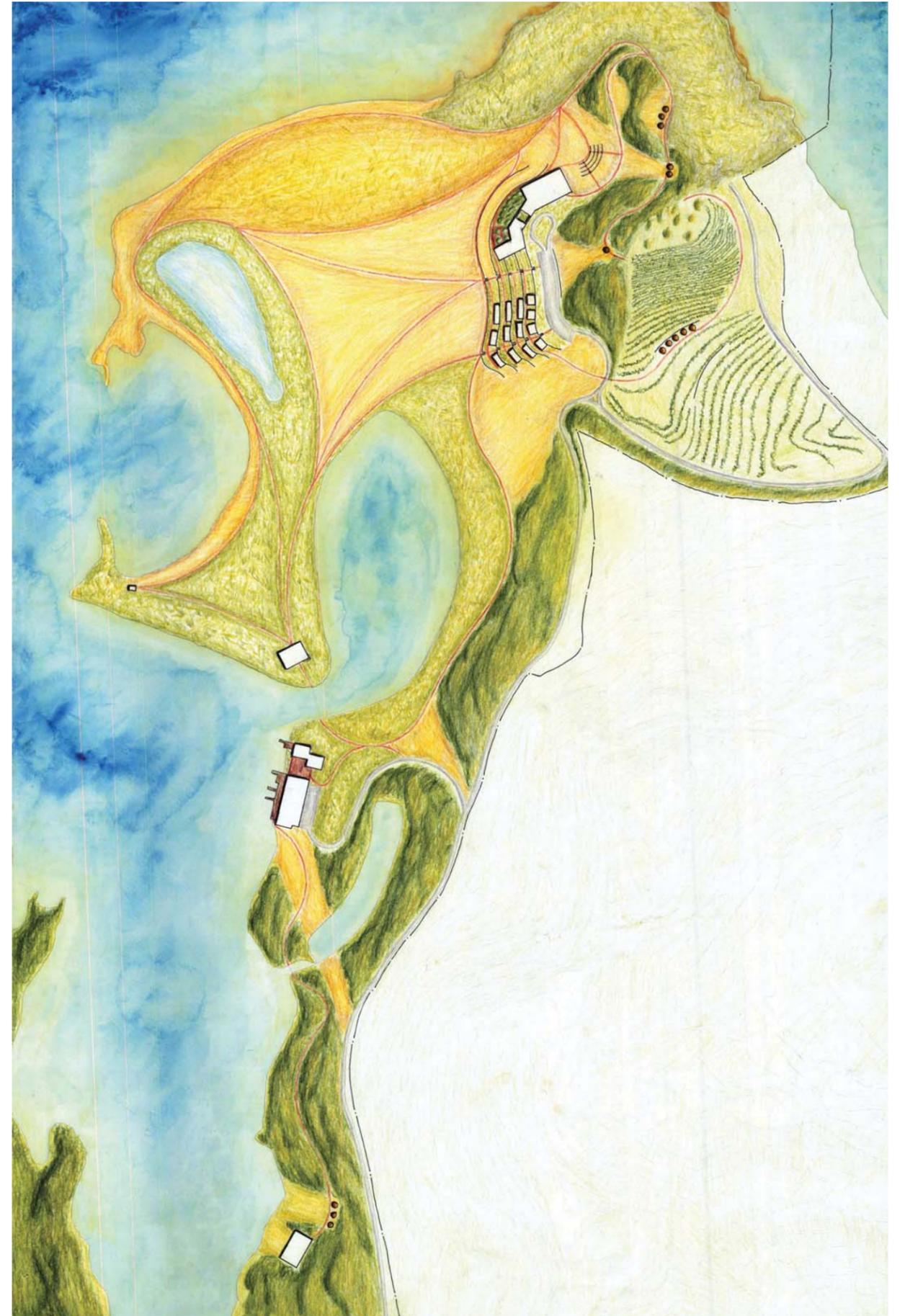
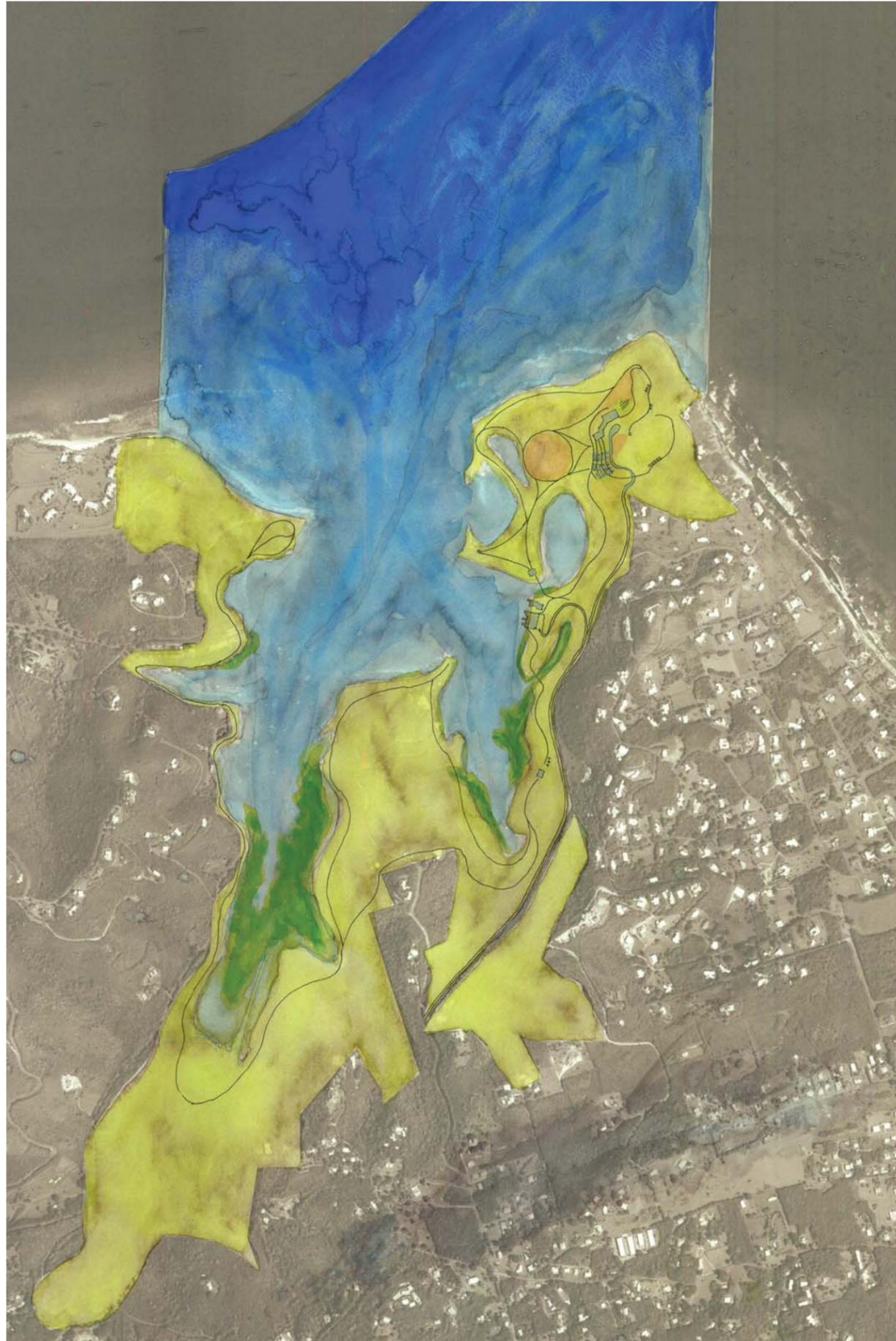
I also saw the importance of connecting the people of St. Croix with the ecology of the island in such a way that they would understand their impacts on marine life. Using kayaks to get people out into the bay, providing beach side recreation classes including swimming lessons, and hosting periodic Bioluminescent Swims are all ways to connect locals, students and scientists to the water.

St Croix, with the help of the National Park Service is working to establish the island as a National Heritage Area. This title would give St. Croix a greater sense of identity- something that I observed to be an issue on the island. It is fitting with the mission of the NPS and the interest of the locals that the rich heritage of the island and the site be celebrated within the design- an integration that would only enrich the experience of the Marine Research and Education Center- few of which have

ever been located amongst such historical wealth. A word wall featuring words originating in St. Croix announce your entry to the site. Historically accurate Bohios are used as social gathering places as well as for shelter in a Village designed to be a summer camp where children can learn Taino inspired land management and ethno botanic skills. A story trail winds its way through part of the site where signage explains the deep history of areas such as the Cape of arrows , Taino ball court and the site of old plantations. Because the effects on the benthic habitat occur on land, proper water and soil management throughout the site not only serve to increase the sustainability of the site but also to educate visitors in changes they can implement in their own homes. Rain gardens irrigated through water harvested in swales along terraces and pervious pavement choices all teach about basic sustainability principles. Repopulating the slopes with native plant communities that are beautiful and help to fight off guinea grasses and other invasive plants can inform people about their plant selections. Locating all buildings other than wet labs above the 20' contour teaches about the need to take precautions against sea level rise and storm surges during a hurricane, and the way these buildings are nestled into the land to protect it from the corrosive and salty wind is an important lesson.

The overall effect that I hope my design has is that it provides spaces where people can walk and learn, stop and interact and sit and listen, all with an emphasis on the people in the park learning and teaching each other. The park should therefore be able to convey in a truly rich way the identity of St. Croix, which is multifaceted and deep, while setting the stage for that identity to warp and grow with the people of the island as they move towards more ecological and sustainable interventions on the land.











St. Croix: The People and the Place





The plane took off from Philadelphia at 7:30AM. Most of the class had woken up at 3AM to arrive on time. This flight marked the first leg in an adventure that although it would last only five days yet would impact us so profoundly, leaving an impression in the shape of St Croix etched in our minds for the remainder of the semester. A few on our trip had been to the nearby islands, and some had not. Regardless of what we had or hadn't seen of other Lesser Antilles or Caribbean islands, we spent the plane ride purging our minds of expectations, and preparing to absorb every last bit of information, knowledge and sense of place from our brief trip to the Island of St. Croix.

The first, most obvious observation of St. Croix was the heat. To those whose only connection and interaction with the island will ever be a photo or video, know that since these medias can't convey thermal information, St. Croix is hot, humid, and the one salvation to North Americans was it's almost constant trade winds. For our preliminary research on the area we learned that the warm and humid weather lasts all year round, with no more than 8 degrees difference from season to season. This is the result of the warm seas surrounding the island. The island is coolest

just before daybreak and hottest at noon, and humidity stays between 50 and 70 percent. Elevation on Caribbean islands allows for lower temperatures at higher elevations. This causes rain to occur through convectional air currents between the cooler upland and hotter lowlands. As the air heats up during the day it rises, moving upland and bringing with it moisture from the land, as it rises it cools, creating clouds which shade out the land, cooling it and stopping this upward flow of air. Eventually the clouds cool off enough to drop the water they hold, leading to mid-afternoon showers. The amount of vegetation on an island is directly related to the amount of rainfall it receives, and the amount of rainfall is the result of how much moisture is picked up by the convection currents in the morning. Thus this is a cyclic process, and when one side of the equation decreases the other does as well.

We learned from the accounts of people on the island and from our own investigation that the island which was once heavily vegetated was almost entirely clear cut to grow sugar cane and other agricultural crops during the colonial slavery period of the island. This significantly reduced the amount of moisture being picked up by air cur-



rents- partially because there was less biomass releasing moisture, and partially because the roots for these original plants were no longer in place to slow down rainfall and keep it in the soil longer before it escaped the system into the ocean. It is a fact that the annual rainfall on the island of St Croix has decreased significantly since what it was estimated to be at when Columbus first landed. In addition to convection currents, the size of an island also affects the amount of annual rain it receives. Smaller islands receive smaller amounts of rain than larger ones, and St. Croix, although the largest of the US Virgin islands, is on the smaller side, and therefore more arid than 'tropical' islands.

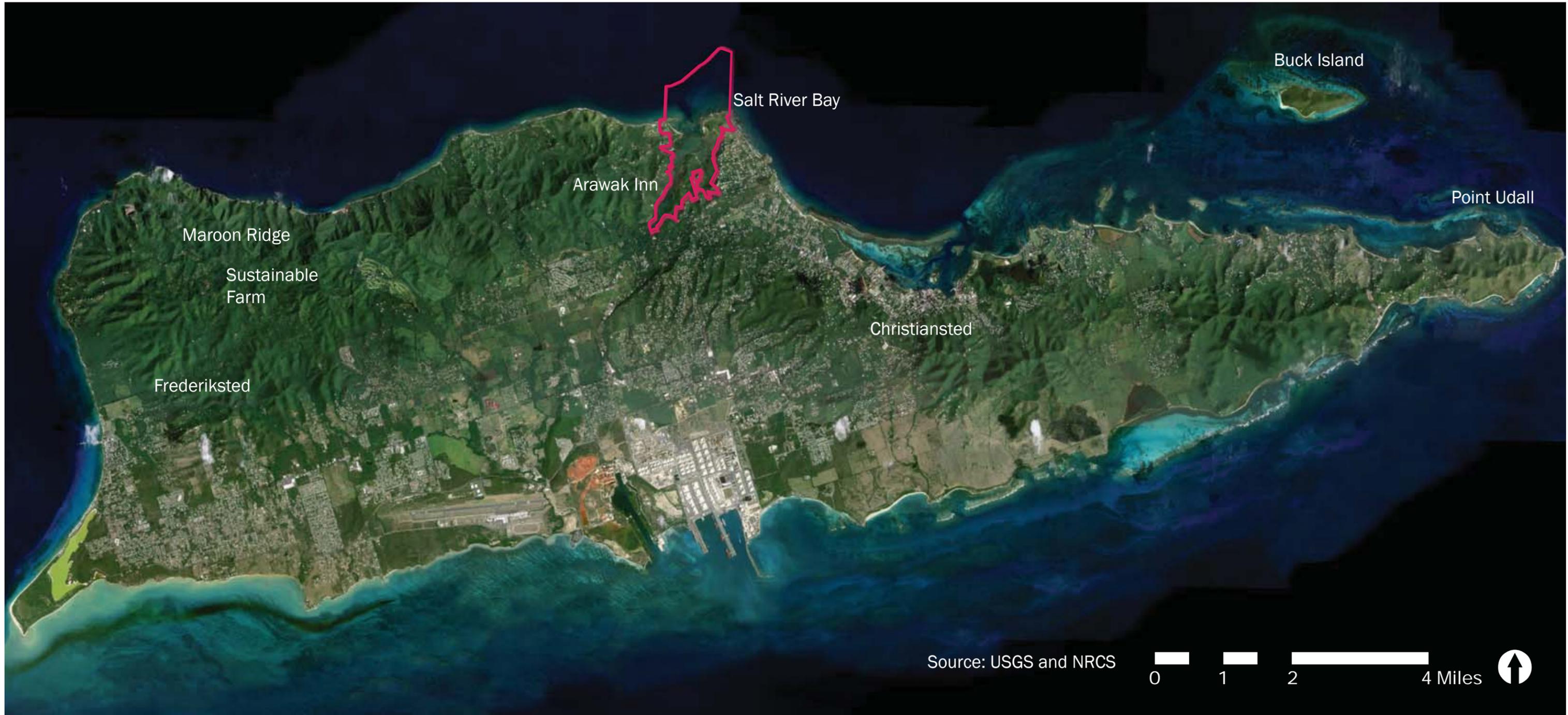
After exiting the plane our class's first trip was to a local grocery store. There we bought small food items to bring along with us throughout the trip, and water- a very important purchase as all fresh drinking water on St. Croix comes from the desalinization plant or is shipped in from elsewhere. This was the first, but certainly not the last encounter we would have with the issue of fresh water. We heard from almost everyone we spoke with that the island has no sources of fresh or running water- there are no streams, rivers or brooks on the island, although there once

were several. Over time, these were 'silted in' because the indigenous forest had been destroyed and its roots were no longer holding soil in place. We also heard, and have not yet verified, that the Army Corps of Engineers actually filled in many of the remaining trickles because the water in these existing streams had been so backed up and was brackish as a result of erosion that they were no longer useful to humans, serving as prime habitat to mosquitoes which not only cause discomfort to those on the island, actually carried diseases like yellow fever and malaria.

Erosion is not just an issue for the land; it also affects coral and other marine life under the sea. Coral needs sun to survive. Erosion, silt and pollution can coat coastal coral and block it from the sun. This is a big reason for 70% decrease in healthy coral in the Caribbean, and St. Croix is not immune to it either.

Hurricanes are frequent in the Caribbean, and our group just missed Earl, which skimmed the tip of the island a couple of days after we left. Hurricanes are the result of areas of low pressure combined with global wind patterns, creating unsettled periods called 'easterly waves'. These waves can sometimes develop into hurricanes, which vary











in size and whose paths are somewhat unpredictable. Relatively recently Hurricane Hugo hit St. Croix with such force that it not only devastated nearly all of the islands structures, it also ripped up much of the vegetation on its hills. While hurricanes do have their negatives, they are a powerful and important part of the natural system on this and other islands. Maritime wildlife- especially coral, are sensitive to temperature change. In tropical regions where climate doesn't fluctuate much throughout the year they have not evolved to deal with temperatures outside of the norm. Hurricanes serve a vital role in keeping the oceans habitat at the right temperature; they come around during the hotter seasons, and their powerful winds stir up the oceans bringing cool water up from below to relieve the coral.

"The landscape of St. Croix has been burned, cut and razed; below the surface is a torturous landscape" (Edgar Lake). With erosion, invasive plant species, water issues and more, it is clear that the ecological issues of the island are many. At the midpoint of our trip to the island we visited Nate Olive at the Sustainable Farm on the west end of the island. In a relatively short amount of time Nate has taken

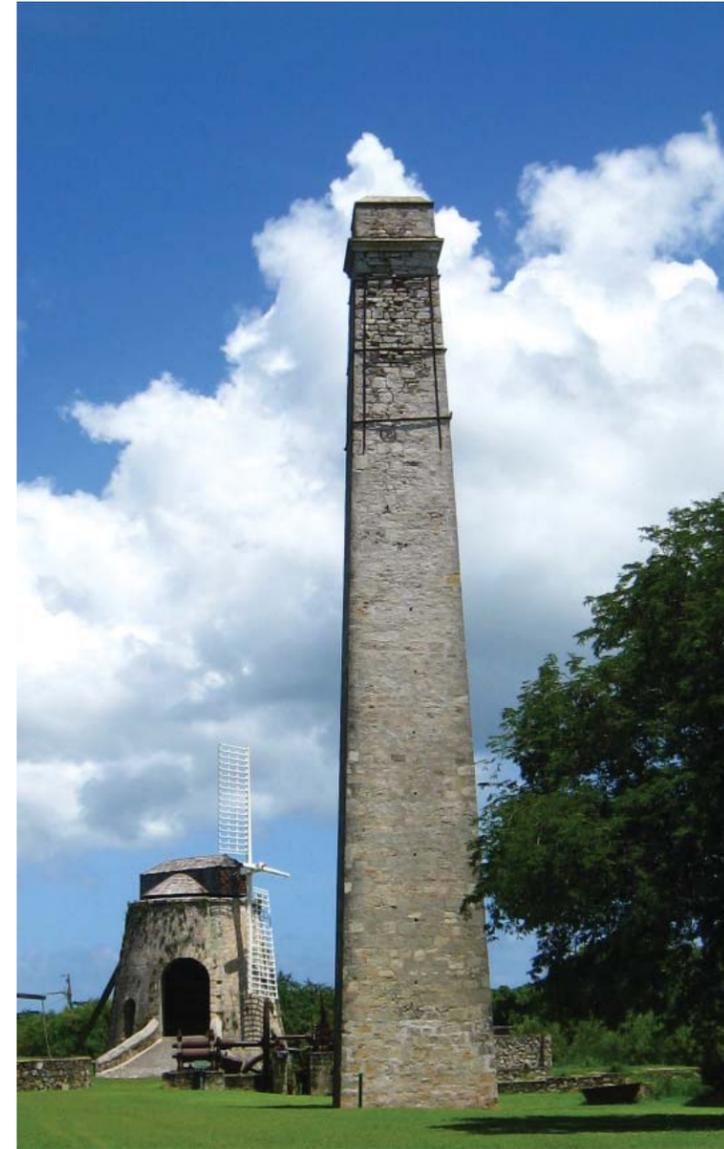
a large area that was once clear cut and full of invasive plants, and developed land management strategies, techniques and implementations that have transformed an unhealthy landscape into a lush and functioning "green wall". At the core of Nate's philosophy is the idea that nature can heal. Nature can take care of itself, and it will- regardless of what humans do, however if we work against nature and degrade it too far then nature will take care of herself by getting rid of us. If humans want to live well and long on the land we have to begin to understand nature and work with it, instead of trying to conquer it at every turn.

Part of working with nature means understanding how nature creates, and mimicking it. Along with water and sunlight, soil is one of the most important factors in growing plants but if the soil doesn't have the proper nutrients or water holding capacity the amount of water won't make much of a difference. Therefore Nate's farm doesn't focus as much on growing plants as it does on growing soil. While at the farm we were able to take part in the soil making process. We used a combination of green and dried plant material, which is piled up and allowed to sit. This compost

pile proceeds to break down in time becoming a very rich compost which eventually is added to the soil to increase the SOM or soil organic matter.

In addition to creating compost from what would typically be considered waste, soil can also be enriched just in planting species which accomplish different things in the soil. Nate's farm is about planting species to restore and improve the soil environment, while at the same time plants that are useful for food, medicine or other uses. While there we planted Cassava because not only is the root edible, the plant also helps to loosen and break up compacted soils. In the future, after harvesting this crop Nate will plant a different crop which will do a different thing for the soil, and enjoy the more aerated soil left by the Cassava.

One of the most apparent things about St. Croix's history is how layered it is. Prior to 'discovery' by Columbus the island was populated by the Caribs- known for their ferocity, or the Arawaks- known for their peacefulness, or perhaps both. Archeologists are still discovering new artifacts and sites all over the island, and with each new find,



new clarity on what was there is added. The National Parks Service has interest in the cultural heritage of the island, and specifically in areas like Salt River Bay, which has been designated a National Park.

Early in our trip we spoke with Meredith Hardy, an archeologist working with the National Parks Service. From her we learned the ancient people in Salt River Bay came from South America. They lived in well organized villages of five to twenty or as many as fifty structures. These were made of wood and thatch and had different styles reflecting the statuses of the household. Villages had circular plazas in their centers, and often these plazas house cemeteries for their dead. On top of the burial grounds were ball courts, and games were played for ceremonious reasons, to settle disputes, and for fun. Personal items were kept in baskets gourds and hammocks, and canoes were used for trade over distances as far as Guatemala. The Taino practiced 'swidden agriculture' which was characterized by production in an area until the nutrients were exhausted, and then a crop rotation to another area. This process was continued and after about twenty years crops would once again rotate to the original area.

The island of St. Croix, like many Caribbean islands were first settled as colonies- settlements on lands far away from the mother land, and maintained for the benefit of the homeland. The initial push for settlement in the islands was to extract gold. The indigenous peoples were enslaved- a process referred to as encomienda- to find the precious metal, and worked until they died, later to be replaced by slaves from Africa. Enslavement of these people were justified by the king because "they were cannibals

who refused to obey the Spanish”(Rogozinski) The Lesser Antilles, including St. Croix, were largely ignored at this time since they didn't contain gold, however several raids to islands, possibly including St Croix were made to seize the native people and use them to procure gold elsewhere. Europeans brought more than their obsession with gold to the Caribbean; they carried diseases including smallpox, measles, typhus, yellow fever, malaria, tuberculosis and pus infections- all of which were new to the natives. “Thus they died in staggering numbers... at least a quarter million Arawak and Carib Indians...within 20 years, almost all were dead” (Rogozinski).

The Spanish didn't occupy St. Croix in the way they did 'more valuable' islands. Starting in the 1600's informal occupation by other counties began in the form of pirates, privateers and smugglers. In the 1620's the first of the island's sugar plantations were developed. At this time both the British and the Dutch had plantations on the island, with the Dutch in Christiansted and the British near Frederiksted. Eventually the British drove the Dutch out, only to be attacked and expelled by the Spanish soon after. France arrived and won the island from the Spanish. St. Croix is often referred to as having had “seven flags” over the course of it's history, and later on I will discuss how it is still affecting the island to this day.

The sugar industry on the island lasted well into the 1800's. With the natives extinction, and countries fighting for the rights to the island, new labor sources were introduced to the island. Slaves from Africa were shipped in masses to the island. Slavery in the Caribbean was especially brutal. The climate was difficult to work in, and the





slaves were worked until they literally died. This didn't hurt the plantation owners- it was more economical to ship new slaves every few years to replace those that died than to lower the amount of work and keep them alive. The average lifespan of a slave was five years.

Some slaves escaped the plantations, an action called "maroonage". When a slave marooned they either did so permanently, as in grand maroonage or they were captured or returned voluntarily, as in petite maroonage. Escaped slaves would sometimes escape the island of St. Croix as well while others tried to survive by hiding in the hills. Towards the end of our trip to St. Croix, under the lead of Olasee Davis, a local to the island, we visited and hiked Maroon Ridge, the main area where marooned slaves fled to. Protected by the almost impassible terrain as well as dense brush, runaway slaves subsisted off water caught between rock crevices and wild fruit, using poisonous qualities of certain plants as weapons against those who might pursue. Olasee told us that it wasn't uncommon for a runaway slave

to jump from the edge of a cliff to his or her death to avoid being taken back into captivity. Just before beginning our 5 hour hike through Maroon Ridge we spoke with Sonia Dow, the Chair that the Whim plantain museum in Frederiksted, who spoke of the sacred qualities of the site. The walk was more of a climb, and we journeyed in single file along a one foot wide path through rapidly changing landscapes. Being as immersed in the landscape as we were, hearing the accounts of the desperation of the marooned slaves from Olasee, seeing the heights, and subsequent jaggedness below the cliffs people had jumped from impressed upon all of us a real sense for just how terrible slavery on this island had been.

During our time on the island the subject of slavery came up a few times, but it always seemed to be a topic that was carefully danced around, not really confronted head-on. Joel Tutin compared dealing with the issue to "dealing with a rape victim". The walk on Maroon Ridge, information I've read since about slavery on the island, as



well as Joel's assessment leads me to believe that the issue of slavery might be a wound still to raw yet to touch. The one event related to slavery that people seemed comfortable to talk about was the Fire-Burn of 1878. Throughout the plantation period of the island slavery uprising and escapes were a relatively frequent occurrence, however in 1878 slaves from both Christiansted and Frederiksted met together to plan an overthrow of the plantation owners. According to Joseph, the man who drove us around the

island during our trip, the slaves in Christiansted initiated the uprising, but didn't show up when the event transpired. As a result the slaves in Frederiksted won their freedom by burning down the town, and settled in a shanty town called Grove Place, while those in Christiansted remained enslaved. Joseph told us that there is residual resentment and animosity between the two towns as a result of Christiansted not participating in the Fire Burn, and this adds to some of the subtle and complex island politics we detected





while on St. Croix.

Having the chance to interact with the locals on St. Croix was a really powerful part of our trip. There is only so much knowledge that one can gather from reading accounts, histories or hearing about the local's needs, points of views and culture from a non-native perspective. Throughout our time there the people we encountered were gracious, friendly and welcoming. I was struck by the way everyone knew each other. As a native New Yorker I am accustomed to social interactions being reserved for the evening, while the day time is busy and somewhat harried. In St. Croix the people were productive, and accomplished, yet not hectic. Driving anywhere on the island never took more than 20 minutes and we only experienced one slight traffic jam. On our second day in St. Croix we ate lunch at the Chicken Shack- a local hot spot, and I was impressed with the joviality and friendships between the locals sitting around on bar stools talking animatedly.

I observed, from flyers hung around the Chicken Shack and from talking with Joseph that playing Dominos is a big thing for the crucians. On a drive through the 'jungle' of St. Croix he pointed out to us a popular club where people

will go to play Dominos and drink beer well into the night. When I asked Joseph how he would describe the people of St. Croix he said they were "nice and laid back" but that "can be bad because people can take advantage of us".

Two weeks before Easter the island begins to shut down in preparation for the annual week-long, island-wide campout on the beaches. The islanders are worried that as the National Park Service gains more power and more land this tradition will no longer be permitted on the island. The Park Service is concerned with maintaining the nature of pristine or important landscapes, and the western Salt River Bay site in particular has important archeological importance as the only ceremonial ball court found in the Caribbean was located there. Additionally the beach and vegetative areas adjacent to it on the site are littered with garbage including car parts, tires and food packaging. It is possible that rather than this being evidence of a lack of concern or for the area, this trash acts as a territory marker- an attempt by locals to deter developers from wanting to build there, and distract the National Parks Service from wanting to regulate its use. This annual event has been a bone of contention between the NPS and the locals, and





whatever the end result becomes I think it is important for the Parks Service to recognize that much of the nature of St. Croix the place is it's close knit community. Without the Easter tradition, which plays a large role in fostering this community I don't know if the culture of the island would stay the same. Rather than fighting locals, it would be great if a solution could be found that would harness the locals passion for community and cultural heritage to a point where they cherish historical and cultural sites such as this one and work in tandem with the park to manage it to a mutually agreeable end.

Because the island has been in the control of so many different countries, and with each change of hands the islanders had no say over the trade agreements or who the new ruler would be. Because the islanders have had very little control over their destinies, there is a difficulty in defining or explaining who the people of St. Croix are. They are not their own country- as the island was purchased by the US, and while they all have US passports and can integrate into American culture by attending schools or getting jobs in the continental US, there is a sense that they are not fully American either. This sentiment is reinforced by lack of identity recognition on the part of US officials to; we heard from Sonia Dow that during debate in Congress regarding monies spent for something on St. Croix one representative asked why the US was spending money on foreign countries in the first place. When word of this got back to the islanders it reinforced their sense of isolation and confused identity.

Even though it is somewhat difficult to definitively describe the people of St. Croix, there were certainly small things that spoke to a deeper sense of the character of the locals. During an interview with Edgar Lake and other locals, conversation moved to a discussion about Alexander Hamilton. Up until that point I had observed a slight hero-worship of the man; with buildings, streets and other pieces of the island set aside to honor him. At the time I didn't understand the infatuation, but the conversation with Lake began to fit the pieces together for me. They spoke of the hardships that Hamilton had to endure during his childhood in St. Croix; an illegitimate son during a time when that was frowned upon, he had "no inheritance" and was virtually "left and orphan". The wondered if he would have fared as well if he had stayed on the island instead of going to

America for school. They spoke of the importance of his friendships and speculated that he might not have been the man he was were it not for those relationships. I saw in all of this that maybe the people of St. Croix identify so strongly to this man because there are commonalities between his life and theirs; they too have been robbed of their inheritance, and left as an orphan with a lack of identity. They value friendship and being able to identify someone who's relationships were so impactful validates their values. I also made the connection between their admiration of Hamilton and the tendency islanders have to leave St. Croix to make a name for themselves, only returning afterwards. Lake described St. Croix as "a staging ground- you can learn here what you need to succeed wherever you go", he said that children "are bred to learn to leave".

In the midst of this island exodus trend, there are many on the island who are really excited about Cruzian culture and strive to make it a place where success can happen without having to leave first. One such person is Frandel Gerard from the Cruzian Heritage in Native Tourism (CHAINT) organization. Her organization is working to reorient the tourist industry so that it will benefit the locals and local business owners. The goal is to have tourism "that would preserve and promote the cultural heritage" as opposed to other island destinations where historical tours are run by those who do not understand nor have a connection to the history of a place. Having businesses owned by locals is a big part of this, as well as identifying events, activities or elements that are decidedly Cruzian. These include partnering with schools to teach children while they're young to value their culture, initialing events such as "Jumbie Talk" where age-old ghost tales are shared around a fire, and indigenous plants are celebrated.











Implications for the Site

“We cannot spend the next 500 years thinking about just Columbus; we must be thinking about the global picture.”
-Edgar Lake

“We grow soil- and stuff happens”
-Nate Olive

“There is all this money for marine everywhere, but all the impacts are above the water line”
-Nate Olive

“It’s like building in Rome”
-Holly Grace Nelson

“Feelings towards slavery discussion are similar to those dealing with a rape victim”
-Joel Tuteim



There is a real need for marine research in the Caribbean- especially now that so much loss of coral and other marine wildlife has been occurring. There is speculation that the dieback is the result of global warming, but there is also scientific evidence that it has more to do with erosion and land use issues. Because there is no new or well equipped research facility in this region, this area of study has been somewhat handicapped in its quest to discover the real reason why coral coverage is decreasing. The National Parks Service has been given the funding to design and create a new facility that will serve to study these and other marine research issues, and Salt River Bay has been identified as the most suitable area for this facility to be built.

In addition to serving the research community and the marine life of the island, as a National Park the program of the site has to take into account issues such as the archeological and historical aspects, local culture and needs and ecological issues. During our visit to the island we tried to divide our time up between the site and the overall island. Up to this point I have focused on island- wide issues and information, but now I will go into specific issues and challenges for the site.

Salt River Bay is home to some of the richest earliest archeological sites on the island. Both the western and eastern points of the site had Taino settlements on them, and the mouth of the bay was the first sight Columbus saw when he encountered the island. Over the years various archeological digs have uncovered new findings, and it is important that in our program we leave several areas alone so as not to disturb and destroy what future archeologists may need to look for. On the western side of the site the remnants of a triangular landform fort, originally built by the French, is still evident, although covered by brush so it is difficult to see. There is no desire by NPS to restore this fort, however keeping the plant

cover to a low layer of grass would be sufficient to show the remaining shapes. There are no windmills or stone remnants from the slavery period within the site boundary, but there is one nearby and the area was certainly clear-cut and used to grow sugar cane. The NPS has the responsibility to honor cultural landscapes, and so part of our program will be how we will acknowledge and highlight the very important historical nature of the site. According to Zandy, the park ranger who showed us the site, there are three options for how the history could be expressed:

- 1) Go all the way back to a wooden and glass Amerindian landscape.
- 2) Bring it back to a specific historical period.
- 3) Have a brand-new look without any cultural

baggage.

The site at Salt River Bay became a National Park in the first place largely as a result of the archeology present there. To then decide to use land procured to preserve cultural landscape and not address it at all in our design would be inappropriate, however at the same time we need to be careful that our design isn't stuck in the past. Edgar Lake emphasized the importance of not designing solely through a historical lens when he said: “we cannot spend the next 500 years thinking about just Columbus- we must be thinking about the global picture”.

In addition to addressing the cultural landscape, there were other matters they wanted our designs to address. In an area so exposed to constant saline sea breeze the materials used to build our program are of utmost importance. Durability of the design given the risk of hurricanes and earthquakes, and the location of each element in the landscape must take into account the 20'-40' elevation required to be tsunami safe.