

## **“I AM QUEEN MARY” PUBLIC ART PROJECT**

**Date :** July 16, 2018

ST. THOMAS- The Office of Senator Myron Jackson, hosted the “I am Queen Mary: A Monument of a Rebel Queen Challenges Denmark’s Colonial Past.” The Public Art Project by Danish Artist Janette Ehlers and U.S. Virgin Islands Artist La Vaughn Belle held at the Capitol Building on Monday; is a significant part of Denmark’s colonial impact in the Virgin Islands and throughout the Caribbean.

“It is important us to understand the creativity of our artists and how it shapes history. This project represents 500 years of the history of the United States Virgin Islands. Today, there are images in public spaces including the Legislature. Each image is symbolic of the struggles, dignity, and strength of our people,” said Sen. Jackson.

The two artists collaborated to memorialize Queen Mary by creating a sculpture of her sitting in a peacock chair also known as a colonial chair while holding a torch and a whip in her hand. The statue of Queen Mary resembles power and strength. The concept of the sculpture connects to other resistance movements that occurred before Queen Mary and up to the present time.

Similarly, La Vaughn stated that the “I am Queen Mary” is significant because it connects to other movements in the African Diaspora that occurred many years later.

“This project resembles black lives matter which was started by three women. This resemblance is interesting to know because Queen Mary is a symbol. She has become a myth since there is not a lot of historical information on her. On St. Croix, she is a famous heroine. In Denmark, it appeared that the people had colonel amnesia. However, the people of color in Denmark began to see their relationship to this sculpture,” said La Vaughn.

Ehlers also shared her remarks.

“98% of public sculptures in Denmark are representing white males. It was challenging to have a space for black people where they positively see themselves. This statue represents injustice and the fight for freedom,” said Ehlers.

The proposed legislation supporting art in public spaces is An Act amending V.I Code title 3, chapter 5 adding subchapter III to enact The Virgin Islands Public Art Program requiring one percent of total capital improvement project costs expended for works of art placed in public buildings. Sen. Myron Jackson proposed this measure.

“What will the statue do for our future?” asked an event-goer. “This is our contribution to highlighting black culture and history. We encourage you to develop a curriculum, and we offer our support,” said Ehlers.

Photos: <http://www.legvi.org/committeemeetings/Media>

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