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# 81C features Shansi Miller art exhibit at inaugural opening event

By LORI ABBOTTS Daily News Staff  
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ST. THOMAS — 81C will hold its inaugural grand opening event tonight from 6 to 9 in conjunction with the St. Thomas Historical Trust. The new pop-up event venue will feature an art exhibition with works by St. Thomas artist Shansi Miller and will serve as a membership drive for the trust.

81C is a pop-up event space, art gallery, Airbnb and artist residency created by local entrepreneur Zack Zook. Located on Strand Gade near Market Square (on the road next to Moe's Fresh Market on the Waterfront), the two-story building was originally built in 1810 as a rum warehouse and residence and is now completely renovated and restored. Zook bought the building in 2017 with the intention of investing in support of the downtown beautification project taking place in Charlotte Amalie and to encourage the local community to return to the downtown area. The introduction of this historic building while partnering with the St. Thomas Historical Trust seemed a good pairing.

“From my perspective, the whole thing just fit,” said Zook. “It would be of interest to the community and it would be a good solid launch event for us. There’s so much to learn about the area. I kind of stumbled into the town thing thinking these buildings are so beautiful from an artistic perspective. Philip Sturm (St. Thomas Historical Trust board member) has been tremendous speaking with me about architectural specifics and he’s taught me a lot about town.”

With the launch of 81C, Zook aims to create a platform for creative event rental, artist/entrepreneur networking and giving young entrepreneurs a space to test new products or hold supplemental events to complement their online business. With a full bar/cafe and a neighboring boutique, the pop-up event space can accommodate group meetings, public/private parties and creative events of all kinds. The on-site Airbnb and artist residency program will launch in January 2021.

“I’m really focused on contemporary events. If we can bring locals to the space who are interested in a myriad of interests and events, that is really going to be good overall for the area,” said Zook.

“We can create a town to be recognized for rich history, artistic relevance on a global scale and a place where artists are encouraged to expand the cultural horizons of our island community,” added Joseph Hewes, one of the event co-organizers.

Zook, who owns and operates the construction firm Zook Industries, is a former director of the art space Alternative Art Alliance, AKA sevenminusseven, where he worked curating art exhibitions alongside organization founder and artist Clay Jones.

Tonight's free event will feature a number of works by St. Thomas artist Shansi Miller. Miller is known for her ability to capture moments of West Indian culture with intricate details, creating intimate glimpses of the story of island life.

Drinks and hors d'oeuvres will be served at the event. Waterfront parking is recommended. Private viewings of the exhibit can be arranged all next week.

81C is run by Zack Zook, Augustine Holder and Joseph Hewes. Contact 917-327-1561 for pop-up event booking inquiries and other information or visit 81CVI.com.

