



Art Gallery Brings Hope and Motivation to Local Artisans

Over the years, many art galleries have come and gone in Jarabacoa, Dominican Republic, diminishing the diversity in cultural programs for the people of La Vega and leaving behind little lasting benefit to the community.

Two years ago, Vida Para Todos, through the Movimiento Unidad Valores Arte (MWVA) artisan group, established their Art Gallery and Artisan Commercial Center in Jarabacoa with the intention of creating an open community space and art center where local artists and artisans could sell their work and actively engage in the community and local cultural movement.

“We had a vision, a plan for the future,” says artist and MWVA member Francisco Castillo. “When we started, people didn’t believe that we would be able to create something here. The roof was made of straw, the place was a mess. We started working hard and now look where we are.”

With funding from USAID-DSTA, MWVA has been able to improve their facilities by installing a power-generator, purchasing equipment for exhibition of paintings, jewelry, ceramics, furniture, and crafts by local artists and artisans, and opening its very own “Rembrandt Café”. In addition, MWVA has launched its marketing program through the creation of a website and the distribution of promotional material throughout Jarabacoa.

The Gallery has experienced a resurgence of community participation in its weekly cultural events program. MWVA’s open-mic nights, which take place every Friday, typically draw 25-30 attendees. “We want to offer a platform for artists of all types, a place where ideas can be expressed,” explains MWVA Director Belkys Vargas.



Local pianist performs at the Art Gallery. MWVA envisions the Artisan Commercial Center to be a shared cultural space for the Jarabacoa community.

MWVA also had its Second Annual Art Exhibition last November within the Jarabacoa Festival of Art and Environment. Attracting eager local and international audiences, the exhibition displayed various artworks by community artists and artisans as well as those of children participating in MWVA’s Youth Creativity Workshop, which encourages development of an “artistic vision” while providing a creative outlet for kids.

Led by local artists, MWVA’s workshops continue to carry out the mission of its Artistic Formation Program to support capacity building for youth, adults, and women of the community with interest in artistic production.

Aiming to raise income levels and competition between artists while diversifying products, establishing collective markets, and significantly augmenting the quality of the artwork, MWVA has identified opportunities for nationwide and international commercial exchange through bi-monthly sales trips to promote works of all artists and artisans featured in the Gallery. The Gallery and Artisan Center will directly benefit 25 artists and artisans through the sales of their merchandise in the art gallery, distributing 90% of sales to the artist and 10% towards MWVA’s sustainability fund.

This has created a permanent opportunity for the integration of community members by means of consistent sale of their products. “We’re beginning to motivate more people,” says Belkys. “They’re realizing that they can have a source of income.”