

For Immediate Release

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Students Display “Amazing Talent” In Coco Palm Painting Competition

By Dee Lundy-Charles



Rodney Bay Village (08 June 2017) An exciting new competition launched early this year by Coco Palm Resort in Rodney Bay has seen some amazing works of Art being submitted by budding student artists in Saint Lucia. The creative works, which had the hotel abuzz, are part of the inaugural ‘Coco Palm Original Art Competition’ and visitors to the resort got to view the entries during a very special art exhibition in June, as the submissions were put on display for judging.

As early as January, students from across the island were invited to create an original painting and submit it to the competition. As the deadline for entries was extended, a total of twenty-eight original paintings from five secondary schools were entered as follows: Beanfield Comprehensive Secondary School (BCSS)– 4 pieces; Castries Comprehensive Secondary School (CCSS) – 10 pieces; Gros Islet Secondary School (GSS) – 3 pieces; International School Saint Lucia (ISSL) – 7 pieces; and St. Joseph’s Convent (SJC) – 4 pieces. The collection was exhibited throughout June so that schools, friends and families could visit to appreciate the efforts of the promising artists.

Judging the competition was the tough assignment handed to a team of respected local artists, Luigi St. Omer, Arnold Toulon and Ron Savory. They visited the exhibition independently, scoring the paintings based on creativity, technique and above all, interpretation of the theme. The brief asked for paintings “featuring Saint Lucian scenery, flora, fauna, nature, people, sea or mountains”, and by all means, the students went to town on their creations, digging deep for inspiration from their island home. It is reported by manager Fenna Williams that all three artists were “blown away” by the talent on the walls of the Coco Palm conference room, as were some of the corporate groups that were lucky enough to hold their meetings in the temporary gallery.

In fact, the standard was so good - and judges choices so diverse - that organisers had to come up with two first prizes, three second and four third prizes for the highest-scoring competitors.

Mrs. Judy Chastanet of Coco Resorts led the initiative, and is passionate about developing the competition into primary schools too. “I was inspired by UNICEF years ago when they had Christmas cards done using children’s artwork, and I thought that was a marvelous idea. Also, I felt that the budding artists among our Saint Lucian children needed encouragement. So a competition was a good way to throw out the opportunity to the widest range of kids,” recounts Mrs. Chastanet.

In Saint Lucia, school-level art competitions are rare, which is why Mrs. Chastanet is enthusiastic about making this one an annual event and extending it to even younger artists from the island’s primary schools, emphasising that “no child should be left out”.

“One of the mothers confided in me it was the first time her daughter had ever taken part in an art competition, so she was excited and motivated to do her best. It’s very important to give these young people a platform to compete and show off their art if we are to develop their talents”, she added. Two other proud parents were immensely impressed by the artistic abilities of their children.

With the top prize of a weekend for four at Coconut Bay Resort and Spa in Vieux Fort, and runners up receiving pairs of weekend and evening passes at the popular Ti Bananne restaurant buffet at Coco Palm Resort in Rodney Bay, there was certainly a lot to paint for, and the resulting original works of art clearly delighted Mrs. Chastanet and the organisers.

“We are so impressed with the standard. You can see how much time and effort they all put in. It was a great turn out, but in fairness, many more students would have taken part if there had been more time. That’s why we are looking to start in January 2018 for the June deadline next time,” confirmed the self-confessed art aficionado.

The results of the Inaugural Coco Palm Original Art Competition were as follows:

First Place: Vereucha Devaux (ISSL); George Elzidi (ISSL)

Second Place: Valentina Phillip (SJC); Neena Bousquet (ISSL);

Third Place: Maya Attie (BCSS); Merkisha Desir (SJC); Caitlin Hackshaw (ISSL); Trouya Gajadhar (ISSL)

Art teacher at St. Joseph’s Convent, Mrs. Nikita Lucien, spoke positively about the need for more competitions and participatory events for the island’s young talent, as was echoed by Principal of Beanfield Comprehensive, Mr. Steven Auguste, who reported a strong core of interest in the arts at the Vieux Fort School, and encouraged the organisers to continue the initiative.

From the International School Saint Lucia’s art programme, Miss Donna Williams lauded the competition and was keen to pursue more collaboration between the participating schools during the planning and painting process next year, in order for students to share the experience. It was evident from the enthusiasm of the entire group that the Coco Palm Original Art Competition will have many more submissions in 2018.

The management of Coco Palm Resort thanks all those who made the first Original Art Competition possible: Mrs. Judy Chastanet for inspiring and initiating the event; Ms. Claudine Gilbert and Mrs. Fenna Williams for organising and promoting the activity; the Ministry of Education and all the participating schools; the esteemed panel of judges, Luigi St. Omer, Arnold Toulon and Ron Savory; first-prize sponsor Coconut Bay Resort & Spa; the staff of Coco Palm; and last but not least, all the budding artists who gave so much of themselves to produce an incredible collection of Saint Lucian paintings in the competition’s inaugural edition.

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