

ST. CROIX—After spending the past two decades spreading the joy of quelbe music throughout the Virgin Islands, Wayne Petersen has returned to his love of painting.

Petersen, better known as "Bully," will display some of his works during an exhibit which opens with a gala reception from 6 to 8 p.m. Sept. 2 at the Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts.

"I'm going to be showing some of my past work, and I'm going to have about five new originals," said Petersen, who works in acrylics.

Petersen's artistic talents were always evident growing up on the island of St. Croix, but it was not until 1989 after being challenged personally and by other local artists that he started to take painting very seriously. He quickly grew in popularity as one of St. Croix's finest artists, and his art works have been exhibited throughout the Virgin Islands, as well as in Washington, D.C., at the Smithsonian Institute.

Individuals who attend Petersen's gala reception will have an opportunity too see and purchase his paintings.

"They're going to come and have a cultural experience in bright, vivid colors," he said.

Petersen, a self-proclaimed artist at heart, said he was more active at painting back in the late 1980s and '90s. When he started his band, Bully and the Musical Kafooners, in 1991, he said he shifted away from creating his paintings.

Even though he kept up with his artwork over the past two decades, Petersen said he decided to really get back into his artwork because a lot of people miss it. He said his mother also kept telling him he has a natural gift from God that he needed to bring back.

"It was just time for me to get back," he said. "I've been inspired to start creating again."

Therefore, Petersen appropriately named his exhibit, "Dih Bull is Back." And next Friday's gala

reception will include live entertainment by Petersen and his band. Refreshments and a cash bar will be available.

Petersen has been creating during his time away from art, too. He wrote all the songs on his latest album, "Frederiksted Memories," and has a new album in the works. He even earned himself a bachelor's degree in accounting.

Petersen uses vibrant and brilliant colors in his artistic depiction of Crucian traditional life and architecture. He is inspired by his memories of how life used to be on St. Croix in his childhood days.

"I do paintings of old buildings and cultural stuff based on my memories as a kid growing up," Petersen said.

Besides acrylic painting for which he is best known, Petersen's artistic talents include ink drawing and he has done illustrations for local writers such as Richard Schrader, Denise Bennersen, the late Delta Dorsch, Alcess Lewis-Brown and several others. Petersen also has done illustrations for publications such as the Our Town Frederiksted's "West End Reunion" booklets and others.

When he isn't painting or writing and playing music, Petersen's other artistic talent includes storytelling. He is working on a storybook titled "Frederiksted Tales," a compilation of short stories written and illustrated by him.

Petersen has earned the distinction of being a traditional and cultural bearer of St. Croix due to his music and artistic dedication to Crucian culture.

The exhibit will be in the museum through October 15. The Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts is open Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and all cruise ship days from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Additional hours will be added later as the season begins. The museum is located on the waterfront at 10 Strand Street in Frederiksted. Refreshments and a cash bar will be available during the gala reception. The exhibit is funded by the Virgin Islands Council on the Arts and other private supporters. Admission is free.