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Miami Beach Announces Major Site-Specific Artworks Coming To Convention Center



Chadd Scott Contributor ⓘ
Arts
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Elmgreen & Dragset. Bent Pool. 2019 - in production. Steel, stainless steel, aluminum, concrete, lacquer, rubber, lights 600 x 392 x 344 cm |2361/4 x 1541/3 x 1351/2in Unique. ELMGREEN & DRAGSET AND CITY OF MIAMI BEACH

The greater Miami area generally and the City of Miami Beach specifically can no longer be considered emerging global contemporary art hot spots. Both have definitively arrived.

Another significant statement of that fact occurs in May when the Miami Beach Convention Center unveils new site-specific permanent works by Ellen Harvey, Joseph Kosuth, Joep van Lieshout, and Sarah Morris. The City of Miami Beach selected these internationally-recognized artists from an application pool that exceeded 500. These installations form the core of what has been a year-long initiative.

Projects by Bill Fontana and Franz Ackermann were unveiled in late 2018, and 2019 concludes with a major Elmgreen & Dragset sculpture going on display at the end of the year.

All together, these commissions constitute the largest ever single site percent-for-art purchase in American history at \$7 million.

“When I was a teenager, we had little more than professional wrestling at the convention center,” Miami Beach Mayor and native Dan Gelber said of his city’s ascension as a world renowned arts destination. “Institutions like the Bass Museum, New World Symphony, and Miami City Ballet among many, and events like Art Basel have turned us into a true international cultural destination. That is a far cry from the community we were decades ago.”



Soundscape Park by West 8. ROBIN HILL

Art Basel Miami Beach, officially North America's largest contemporary art fair, unofficially the art world's version of Mardi Gras meets New Year's Eve in Times Square meets Black Friday at the mall, fills the Miami Beach Convention Center with hundreds of contemporary art galleries and tens of thousands of visitors spending tens of millions of dollars the first week in December each year. Debuting in 2002, Art Basel Miami Beach has acted as the supercharged engine driving the region's reputation as the place to be to view and display important, cutting edge contemporary art.

Art Basel Miami Beach lasts just one week per year, however. The cultural scene there never stops.

“Miami Beach is home to fifteen world class cultural institutions that offer year-round programming for our residents and visitors,” City of Miami Beach Tourism, Culture and Economic Development Manager Brandi Reddick said. “In addition to the Art in Public Places Program, the City of Miami Beach invests over \$3 (million) annually to the performing and visual arts.”

The Miami Beach Art in Public Places Program is a City of Miami Beach initiative for commissioning public art. The program was created in 1984, with its ordinance adopted in 1995. The program allocates funds totaling 1.5% of all capital costs for city projects and joint private/public projects.

Miami Beach has furthered its commitment to the arts by sponsoring a pilot program which will see a selection of the area’s museums and performing arts institutions added to the math and science curriculum at six Miami Beach schools. [The city will spend almost \\$200,000](#) to test the program on more than 2,000 students.

A community filled with artwork benefits everyone according to Gelber.

“When you are a true arts and culture destination, two things happen: you attract sophisticated tourists and your residents have more interesting things to do,” Gelber said. “Using our entire city as a canvass improves our quality of life and provides wonderful amenities for our residents.”



Ellen Harvey with the design for ATLANTIS in studio, 2018. Design (hand-painted in acrylic on 60 aluminum panels. Each panel: 40 x 60 in, together: 10 x 100 ft.) JAN BARACZ

Visitors to the Miami Beach Convention Center Grand Ballroom Lobby will be sure to notice one of the new works, Ellen Harvey's ATLANTIS. They will also see themselves in the work. ATLANTIS is a 1,000-square-foot hand-made mirror engraved with a drawing of the waterways connecting Miami Beach to Biscayne Bay and the Atlantic Ocean as well as the Everglades leading all the way to the Gulf of Mexico.

Harvey spent more than a year on the project using a satellite view of the area as her guide.

"I chose to paint the design for ATLANTIS life-size (100 ft x 10 ft) because I want people to be able to see the marks of my hand, to see another human being physically trying to describe something that is really too complex for one person

to grasp,” Harvey said. “Almost a year later, I still sometime dream that I am flying over Florida trying to piece together the landscape below and feeling as though I am constantly failing.”

Harvey’s inspiration for the project came from a 2009 visit to the Everglades.

“When you’re in a fair at a convention center, you tend to forget where you really are,” Harvey said. “There aren’t many places in the world where you have a huge urban center directly abutting an equally huge national park—I think it’s something that’s easy to take for granted, but it’s actually something very special and I wanted to make that visible.

“We need to take care of that natural world or Miami Beach will disappear beneath the waves, just like the mythical Atlantis.”



Ellen Harvey with the design for ATLANTIS in studio, 2017. Design (hand-painted in acrylic on 60 aluminum panels. Each panel: 40 x 60 in, together: 10 x 100 ft.) JAN BARACZ

New artwork isn't the only face lift given the Miami Beach Convention Center. Completion on the main phase of a [three-year, \\$600-plus million dollar renovation](#) occurred last fall.

The city's emphasis on artwork goes beyond aesthetics. According to the most recent Americans for the Arts Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations (2015), the direct economic impact of the arts industry in Miami Beach is \$159 million per year.

Another example of this takes place in April when the International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art hold their annual congress in Miami and Miami Beach, marking the first time in the organization's 45-year history it has held the event in the United States.

"Miami Beach is always trying to discover the best version of itself," Gelber said. "Art and culture has lit the way."



Chadd Scott Contributor

I still remember visiting the Prado museum in Madrid. What I knew about art prior to that trip would comfortably fit on the end of a paint brush. My life would be changed that day by a tour guide who took the time to explain the greatness of the paintings I was looking at w...

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