THE CHAMPION'S BENCH

An Important Vision for the Community: Miami Dade Museum of Art + Design

By Sarah Mason
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In a time where art is ubiquitous, the refreshing and vibrant collection at the MDC Museum of Art + Design (MOAD) can enthuse even the most jaded visitor. Located in the historically noteworthy Freedom Tower, the museum provides a gateway to cultural knowledge and aesthetic pleasure to visitors of all ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

“We are fortunate to be housed in a historic building that symbolizes so much for so many,” said Carolina Salazar, Executive Administrative Assistant at the museum, citing the museum’s efforts to put together the ongoing Exit Interview: Journey to Freedom.

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SPOTLIGHT ON KEY PLAYERS & EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS

Painting with Paper: Artist Jordi Prat Pons on Exhibit at Commenoz Gallery

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When Jordi Prat Pons sees pieces of paper thrown on the floor, he doesn’t see garbage. He doesn’t see scraps. He sees colors on a palette and starts imagining shapes on a canvas.

For the mixed media artist from Barcelona, Spain, forged pieces of paper are like missing puzzle pieces that he must find to complete his artworks.

“[I] paint with paper,” said the 49-year-old artist whose “Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” exhibit is on display at Key Biscayne’s Commenoz Gallery until the first week of January.

“I can transform each piece of paper and make it look...”

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KB & SOUTH FLORIDA HEARTBEAT

Lucky 13: Art Basel Miami Beach Returns Bigger and Better

By: Marlene Shohid
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For more than a decade, the first week of December in South Florida has been known as Miami Art Week — a veritable constellation of more than 20 art fairs, myriad special museum and gallery exhibitions, events, and, in the spirit of Miami, parties celebrating art in all its glorious forms, from paintings to performance.

This constellation’s center of gravity and the origin of it all is Art Basel Miami Beach (ABMB), housed in the Miami Beach Convention Center. Conceived thirteen years ago — the love child of the world-renowned, Swiss-based Art Basel and the yin to its yang in climate and culture — ABMB quickly became a star in its own right, fueled by Miami’s emerging...
exhibit that opened on September 19 as evidence of that significance. For the exhibit, the museum reached out to the South Florida community for memorabilia to help recount the struggles and triumphs of the exiled Cuban population during Castro's reign. "For many of the contributors, it was the first time they had stepped foot in the Freedom Tower since they first arrived in Miami in the '60s."

This is merely one illustration of MDC MOAD's role in the community. It is the only admission-free museum in the downtown Miami area and offers free lectures and events to the public. MDC MOAD also hosts a free monthly museum education program, GO GO MOAD!, which offers children and students the opportunity to participate alongside an array of professionals in the arts world, in workshops and events.

MDC Museum of Art + Design's vision is to utilize its ties with the community and its 17,000 square feet of exhibition space to present world-renowned artists, support the vast South Florida public, and present exhibitions by MDC's many distinguished students, alumni, and faculty while developing a premier collection of art. Its multi-faceted goals are achieved through a stunning permanent collection of 1,750 pieces (and counting), as well as works from cutting edge artists showcasing artistic expression that goes beyond the canvas.

One particularly exciting exhibit waiting in the wings is Shen Wei - In Black, White, and Gray, in which internationally acclaimed choreographer Shen Wei will unveil 11 new paintings. Wait, a choreographer who paints? This is precisely the kind of exhibit that makes MOAD such an intriguing place to visit. Shen Wei, dubbed "one of the great artists of our time" by The Washington Times and "startlingly imaginative" by The New York Times, explores the possibilities of connecting Chinese ink painting and Western oil painting with surrealism in his stunning representations of choreographical expression. Five public performances from his New York based company, Shen Wei Dance Arts, will accompany the unveiling of these paintings when the exhibit opens from Friday, December 5 to Sunday, December 7, coinciding with Art Basel Miami Beach Week. The exhibit and performances are free and open to the public, and his paintings will remain on display at the museum through February 1, 2015.

MDC MOAD's future programming includes the February 2015 exhibit of Susan Lee Chuin's sculptures and photographs that explore mapping and excavation of an unknown land, work by famed Argentine abstractionsist Raul Lozza, and more exhibitions themed around the expansive topic of design. Past and current work includes the locally relevant and celebrated photography collection Cuba Out of Cuba: Through the Lens of Alex Rodriguez-Durazno in collaboration with Tico Torres and the mixed media sculptures of 25 faculty members from MDC and New World School of the Arts in Work/Work.

"Our visitors are pleasantly surprised by what they find," observed Salazar. "It is a world-class museum inside a beautiful historic building right in the heart of downtown Miami."

Founded in 2012, MDC MOAD was established as the signature institution for the College's long-awaited permanent public art museum, and its recently-appointed inaugural Board of Advisors will lead the museum forward as it amplifies its identity in the community and ensures its doors stay open to the public at no cost.

In the words of Salazar: "MDC MOAD is a platform for our vast, creative community. It provides a place to present exhibitions by MDC's many distinguished students, alumni and faculty and serves as a collective cultural steward through its growing collection and preservation of our historic home."