

# THE CITY BEAUTIFUL

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO DOING BUSINESS IN CORAL GABLES & CHAMBER OF COMMERCE DIRECTORY



CORAL GABLES  
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# Coral Gables sets the standard for public art



By NATALIA CLEMENT

In a city known for its lush green landscape and beautiful Mediterranean architecture, its outdoor experience continues to be enhanced through public art. Walking within Coral Gables, you'll notice various sculptures ranging in size, color, material, and design. This coordinated effort to build what seems like an endless outdoor gallery reflects the city's fierce commitment to the acquisition and exhibition of museum-quality artwork.

Arts and Culture Specialist Catherine Cathers sees public art as a way to elevate community spaces and create opportunities for interaction, education, and discourse. "Public art is, by definition, of the public realm. Therefore, it's artwork for everyone," she says. "The same piece is often perceived in different ways.... It's one of the most interesting and engaging things about it and what it brings to the community."

Since 2010, the Art in Public Places program has been responsible for more than 30

artworks scattered throughout various neighborhoods in Coral Gables. The overarching goal of the program is to display world-class art that enhances the city's character and identity. The carefully curated roster of high-level artwork adds beauty and interest to outdoor spaces, giving the public greater opportunities to experience art.

The city goes beyond Miami-Dade County's public art requirements for municipalities. Not only does Coral Gables allocate 1.5 percent of municipal construction projects to public art, it also requires private developers to contribute one percent of the cost of projects valued at or over \$1 million. By having its own program, the city has more participation and control over what art goes where. The program aims to maintain balance and variety in the types of works it acquires.

With multiple projects underway, the expansion of the city's art continues. One potential acquisition that's received lots of buzz is a piece by Frank Stella, a major contributor to modernism and abstract expres-





Mean Average



Coral Forest

sionism who is considered one of the greatest living American artists. Earlier this year, the City Commission voted 5-0 to pursue the purchase of a \$1.25 million piece by Stella.

Because art is subjective, determining its beauty is up to the observer. Cathers says the city's public art pieces usually engender zealous resident feedback. "There are as many experiences and opinions, and loves and not loves, as there are people," she says. "What I love is the passion people show for certain artworks and hearing about what their favorite — and not so favorite ones — are. That kind of passion demonstrates that a work is really a success. In the art world, there's nothing worse than a piece that has no response, that people walk by and don't notice."

## *A Gallery of Art in Public Places*

"Memoirs" (2020, Blessing Hancock) is composed of two stainless steel companion sculptures

placed in the Lifetime building's plaza. The pieces are wrapped in phrases that highlight the language and collective memories of the residents in the Golden Gate and MacFarlane neighborhoods across the street. Blessing Hancock is known for her large-scale, illuminated, and site-specific sculptures that she creates by working with the local community.

"**Mean Average**" (2013, Tony Cragg) is the landmark piece for The Plaza Coral Gables. The 19-foot abstract bronze sculpture is the work of prominent contemporary sculptor Tony Cragg. This welcoming feature has fluidity in its shape, creating a sense of warmth and familiarity. It was originally located on Park Avenue in New York City before being moved to Germany, where it was purchased by the owner of The Plaza for \$1.24 million.

"**A Midsummer Night's Dream**" (2018, R&R Studios) is a prime example of enhancing outdoor spaces, as it sits at the center of Balboa Square. This large-scale, coral rock sculptural bench is approximately 30-feet long and four-feet high. The bench is framed by 14-foot-high



Passion/Passiflora Incarnation



La Granada (Pomegranate)

lamps and complemented by a second piece, “Coral Carpet,” composed of inlaid terrazzo — transforming this small patch of grass into an immense outdoor living room.

“Cabeza XVII” (2018-2019, Arturo Berned), located at the southern point of the Lifetime property, looks like some sort of brain teaser or puzzle. Arturo Berned, an architect and sculptor, conceives and develops works based on mathematical laws and the golden ratio associated with the Fibonacci sequence. The Corten steel material changes with time due to outdoor elements, dripping into the ground beneath it.

“Ernest and Ruth (Exuberant Pink)” (2018, Hank Willis Thomas) is part of the series “The Truth Is I Welcome You,” consisting of four benches and 22 speech bubble-shaped signs (in 23 languages) by Hank Willis Thomas. The benches are scattered throughout the city, with the pink one on page 113 accompanying the signs on Miracle Mile. His works

are collaborative projects that involve the community — this piece encourages viewers to inhabit their own speech and beliefs.

“La Granada (Pomegranate)” (2005, Tino Marmoles), located next to the University of Miami campus, celebrates the international culture found in the Gables. Similar to the “Old Shoes” sculpture in Coco Plum Circle, this piece was a gift from one of Coral Gables’ sister cities — Granada, Spain (Old Shoes came from Cartagena, Colombia). The Coral Gables Sister City program seeks to create opportunities for cultural exchange.

“Coral Forest” (2018, Sibylle Pasche) is a group of three hand-sculpted marble spheres marking the east entrance of Giralda Plaza. According to Pasche, “the organic shapes of the sculptures remind us of living and breathing pieces of coral” that are inspired by “the earthy colors and outlines in the sand, the ocean, and the Florida skies.” A companion sculpture, “Secret of the Seas,” sits at the west entrance of the plaza. □

*Go to [coralgables.com](http://coralgables.com) and search Art in Public Places for an interactive map of the pieces placed throughout the city*