

Staff. "New exhibits at Boca Museum of Art," *Boca Newspaper*, 28 November 2019.



As patrons enter the Boca Raton Museum of Art they are welcomed into an exhibit lined with hot pink plastic bags.

The pink glow is Maren Hassinger's "Embrace Love" installation. Visitors are surrounded by hundreds of recycled pink plastic bags that contain love notes and are filled with a breath of human air.

"Part of the love message is that we are all equals," Hassinger said.

The installation is made from recycled bags and her site-specific installation is made out of another recycled material— newspapers.

It is one of two new exhibits on display as the museum celebrates its 70th anniversary season. Museum members were treated to breakfast and a first glance at the new pieces of art last month.

Hassinger, a sculptor and performance artist, was commissioned by the Boca Raton Museum of Art to create an installation that explored Pearl City, Boca's historic African-American neighborhood.

For months, she worked with residents and museum patrons to create her largest installation based on Pearl City's landmark, the "Tree of Knowledge."

The 100-year-old banyan tree is the inspiration behind the installation that dangles from the ceiling. Its newspaper "roots and branches" made out of hand-twisted newspaper suspend from the ceiling telling words and stories of the community.

With the lighting and fans, the "tree" shines with a silvery glow and blows from the "breeze."

She said she likes working with newspapers because they represent stories and last forever.

And as the actual tree represents a gathering place for sharing stories, the exhibit showcases how locals sat together to weave together a story.

"It's a complete history," she said of the exhibit. "I want visitors to the museum to think about the endurance of the tree and the endurance of the people who live beside it. I hope they

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realize it's possible to build a world in which, like this installation, people work together side by side. Both the tree and the residents have inspired me with their mutual endurance."

Hassinger's new installation is about nature as knowledge and about education.

"I hope the community and all of the visitors to the museum take a moment to think about the materials used in the project, which are not traditional art materials, and realize that this giant project was made not by artists, but by the public, working together," she said.

After patrons made their way through the branches of the tree, they moved onto see Clifford Ross: Waves.

The Clifford Ross exhibition features a new approach to his depictions of ocean waves that the artist captures during extreme weather.

Ross is celebrated for his Hurricane Waves series, images that were photographed by the artist during storms and while hurricanes were off-shore. Ross would brave the ocean surf and tether himself to an assistant who remained on land.

The photos are blown up to large sizes and line the walls of the exhibit hall and the waves showcase their strength and power.

The exhibition also features a site-specific installation of extremely large-scale prints on wood, as well as the artist's Digital Waves - computer generated videos displayed on an LED wall that has been acquired by the museum for its collection. Other sections include: the Horizons series (photographs that explore movement with the added power of obstruction); his Hurricane Scrolls; and the Grains series of bold abstract works exploring the purity of color.

"Somehow the apocalyptic quality of the show does not erase the basic lyricism and beauty that I see in nature," Ross said. "When I started out, wanting to celebrate nature by creating bodies of work that were an homage to the sublime, I didn't understand that the images were also capturing evidence - evidence of our negative impact on nature. The ferocity, the forms of these waves were partially due to global warming. This project has come full circle, as much a meditation on the medium of photography as it is a photographic reflection of our world."

On the subject of Clifford Ross: Waves, museum executive director Irv Lippman said, "It would seem obvious that a museum with a coastal address such as ours would naturally be ever fascinated by the subject of waves. The subject of Clifford's photographs in this new exhibition, however, goes deeper into the unpredictable shapes of waves, as much about abstraction as realism."

"When I first began photographing these hurricane waves 30 years ago, most of us were unaware that global warming was seriously damaging our oceans," Ross said. "Now, as I look back on my work, it takes on a whole new meaning."