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Fair takes to the streets with outdoor exhibits

From colorful murals on highway underpasses to towering sculpture on oceanside parks, dozens of artists are striking up community conversations through public art projects for Art Basel Miami Beach, which runs through Sunday at the Miami Beach Convention Center. Much of the effort is motivated by the third annual fair, with some artists creating works specifically for Art Basel and others eager to give voice to their hometown at a moment when tens of thousands of residents and visitors are focused on art. Some of the most visible works will be part of Art Projects, a showcase of bronze sculpture, mosaic murals, video projections and other original work produced by 13 artists specifically for Art Basel. Independent artists, both local and out-of-town, also have chimed in to the dialogue with murals, interactive exhibits and other creations. Taken together, these projects create a patchwork of public art laced with the individual perspectives of artists from South Florida and abroad...

Discovering communities is a central theme in Yellow Arrow, an interactive public art project by New York artist Michael Counts. The project invites people to place specially coded yellow arrow stickers (available through yellowarrow.org or at some local art galleries) on favorite places and objects -- a view of the city, an unusual fire hydrant, a local bar -- and create a text message, via cellphone, using the sticker's code. Persons who place stickers are also encouraged to photograph the object and upload it to the website, where Counts is building a global gallery.

When someone encounters a yellow arrow sticker, they call 646-270-5537, enter the unique code on the arrow sticker and receive the text message associated with the arrow. Jesse Shapins, a creative collaborator on Yellow Arrow, said the objective of Yellow Arrow is "to say the city of Miami is an artwork, to curate the city itself."

Counts launched Yellow Arrow in New York City in the spring and has taken it across the country and around the world. The Miami version of Yellow Arrow premiered Thursday, with Counts curating an exhibit at the former Versace Mansion, Casa Casuarina, with 75 large light boxes placed throughout the Mediterranean marvel on Ocean Drive for a party hosted by Piaget jewelry and an international group of art collectors and personalities.

Beginning today, the lightboxes will be placed on prominent buildings and locations in Miami Beach, the Design District, Wynwood and downtown Miami for the remainder of Art Basel, which closes Sunday. On Saturday, Counts will present an outdoor slide show of Yellow Arrow stickers placed around the world -- from Basel, Switzerland, and Berlin to Miami, New York and San Francisco -- at Glottman Antepima, a gallery on 270 NE 39th St., Miami.

Perhaps the best part about Yellow Arrow, Shapins said, is that it will remain in Miami and other cities indefinitely. "It's creating a structure where every person has an opportunity to be an artist," he said, "and be part of an artistic act."

-- Daniel Chang

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