

Press Release

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For immediate release

Contact: Liz Young, FKCA Executive Director
305-295-4369

The Monroe County Board of Commissioner's Art in Public Places Committee is pleased to announce the installation and unveiling of the public art in the new Murray E. Nelson Government Center. On Tuesday, February 17th at the Grand Opening Celebration from 3:00-5:00, visitors will be able to view these new works for the first time.

The artists were selected by the Monroe County Art in Public Places Committee last Spring to create site-specific artwork which enhances and complements the building. These works of art are part of the County's progressive 1% ordinance for Art in Public Places that established funding for public art, which creates a legacy for our entire community. The AIPP committee consists of five members, each appointed by a County Commissioner, and is staffed by the Florida Keys Council for the Arts.

Mrs. Mary Nelson is delighted with the public art program, and feels the committee selected projects that bring the outdoors into the space. Mrs. Nelson greatly appreciates the efforts of the committee and all of the artists involved. She said, "the art is awesome and a real tribute to Murray's love of the Keys' environment. It complements the building's design, creates tranquility and makes a connection to history for all its visitors."

Once through the main doors, visitors are drawn to the large (6' x 8') oil painting by local artist, John David Hawver. His "Mangrove Canopy" draws in the viewer and seduces with the rich colors of the precious and local mangoves. John, a long time upper Keys' resident, comments "the AIPP committee did a wonderful job selecting the art for the space and he's happy to be in the company of the other local artists."

Xavier Cortada's striking "Native Canopy," consists of eight double-sided 72" x 36" sublimation dye print "digital tapestries" hanging from the ceiling. "I created the images for "Native Canopy" at the Nelson Center by photographing the shadow cast by native tree leaves and manipulating these with digital technology to create a series of eight unique, layered, colorful "digital tapestries." These exquisite tapestries will serve as reminders of place and markers of time: Climbing up the staircase could be like climbing the branch of a tree where one is coming up on "leaves." The experience can serve as an invitation to find a more balanced approach to coexisting with nature.

Key Largo resident, Cris Sandifer, created a series of six paintings reflecting on "Man's Influence on the upper keys." Her decision was to focus on images showing historical sites which share with the viewer places that were built by man and have survived. Mrs. Sandifer has done research and compiled information for a brochure to further educate the public on the special places depicted in her beautiful paintings.

Above the main entrance doors, visitors are exposed to a series of four fine art photographs on canvas by Sugarloaf resident and fine art photographer, Alan S. Maltz. His images "reflect in color, subject matter and spirit the essence of the natural beauty found in the waters of John Pennekamp National Park in Key Largo." His "Close Encounters" project consists of detailed close-ups of four coral species, Boulder Brain, Great Star, Elkhorn and Symmetrical Brain corals.

Key Largo resident, Stephen Frink worked with NOAA to print a navigational map of the region as the background for his Key Largo photographs. The images are printed on archival board behind optical plexiglass and mounted with stand-off hardware. Frink proposed to celebrate the enlightened management of our Sanctuary Preservation area which has created new fish populations and contributes to our healthy marine environment.

The Monroe County Art in Public Places program serves the community through the implementation of art installations and educational programming dedicated to enriching the public environment, and

to preserving and enhancing the artistic and civic pride of Monroe County. The program further promotes collaboration and creative art projects that improve the visual quality of public spaces. At their most successful, these public art installations can transform public spaces from ordinary civic areas to sites that can lift the spirit and connect with the community.

The goals of the program are several: to enhance the artistic heritage of Monroe County, to give dimension to the public environment for residents and visitors, to increase public awareness to works of art, and to promote understanding and awareness of the visual arts. The Art in Public Places program has given Monroe County national visibility in the arts and a leadership role in public programming. Through Art in Public Places, the County supports the development of a unique and vital civic environment.

For more information on the Art in Public Places program or the Florida Keys Council of the Arts, please visit, www.keysarts.com or call Executive Director, Elizabeth Young at 305-295-4369.

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