

Downtown Miami looks to put on artistic face for visitors

By CATHERINE LACKNER

In anticipation of promoting itself to a cadre of well-to-do visitors during next month's Art Basel Miami Beach, interests in downtown Miami are mounting special exhibitions that showcase the city's artistic side.

"South Florida is a great place for large-scale events," said Alyce Robertson, executive director of Miami's Downtown Development Authority. Anticipating Art Basel, Super Bowl XLIV and other late 2009 and early 2010 events, "Miami DDA's best and lasting investment of dollars for major events is in making sure our community looks good and is a welcoming place to visit," Ms. Robertson said. "We have teams planting and cleaning and have expanded our ambassador program to cover more areas in downtown Miami as we head into event season."

The authority, along with the Knight Foundation, the Marquis

condos and the Akerman Senterfitt law firm, sponsor DawnTown 2009, an annual international architecture competition. DawnTown's mission is to bring innovative architecture to downtown Miami and help tell its urban story, organizers say.

This year's competition aims to put a new face on the long-shuttered Metromover station in Bicentennial Park, at the north edge of Museum Park, adjacent to the proposed Miami Art Museum.

The competition, produced in partnership with the schools of architecture at the University of Miami, Florida International University and Miami Dade College, as well as the Design & Architecture Senior High, the Miami Art Museum and the City of Miami, drew 90 entries from around the world for prizes that range from \$2,000 to \$8,000.

Judges included Terence Riley, director of the Miami Art Museum; Gillian Thomas, president of the Miami Science Museum; Mera Rubell of the Rubell



'[Participants] can get local building and transit officials to look at their facilities from a new perspective, with an eye for improving them.'

Alyce Robertson

Family Collection; Dennis Scholl, program director of the Knight Foundation; and Harpal Kapoor, director of Miami-Dade Transit. Winners will be announced during Art Basel Miami Beach on Dec. 4 at the Marquis, 1100 Biscayne Blvd.

"The event helps tell the exciting story of downtown for folks who are visiting for Art Basel," said Andrew Frey, DawnTown executive director. The design entries "are never-before-seen images generated

by smart folks from around the world who read the brief, liked the topic and immersed themselves in downtown." Entries came from "all over Europe," as well as Japan, China, Indonesia and Thailand, he said.

Few of the architectural hopefuls traveled to Miami to see how their designs fared in the competition, but that wasn't the primary goal.

"It's mostly to steer people toward downtown. Lots of people are coming to Miami Beach and to

Wynwood, and that's great, but those are kind of one-note destinations," Mr. Frey said. "Downtown there are so many building blocks of a great urban area — huge real estate investment, gorgeous waterfront, both bayfront and riverfront, a beautiful performing arts center, the Miami Art Museum. Downtown has all this rich urban context. The idea was, how could we show this off to the visitors who are coming?"

"The ideas that come from the competition are amazing," said Ms. Robertson of the downtown authority, "and they can get local building and transit officials to look at their facilities from a new perspective, with an eye for improving them."

Meanwhile, the Miami Art Museum (MAM) is staging a number of events, some of which are open to the public.

"Miami Art Museum's Art Basel Miami Beach line-up includes the most comprehensive survey of Guillermo Kuitca's work ever presented in North America," according to a museum release. The works include "Everything, Paintings and Works on Paper, 1980 – 2008," at the main museum, with a satellite installation, "Guillermo Kuitca: Everything (else), Large Scale Works" at the Freedom Tower.

A shuttle is to run between the museum and the Freedom Tower during "Party on the Plaza," MAM's signature invitation-only Art Basel event.

This year's "Party on the Plaza" will celebrate an outdoor project by Shepard Fairey, a street artist known for the iconic portrait of Barack Obama superimposed with the word "hope" that became the most recognizable image of the 2008 presidential election, according to the museum.

The outdoor public art project, "Arab Woman, 2006/2009," will be on an exterior wall of the museum from Dec. 3-6, visible from the Miami-Dade Cultural Center Plaza, in the county's arts/government complex on Flagler Street. Also on view at the museum is "Space as Medium," which includes Charles Ray's "Ink Box, 1986," and Katharina Grosse's "Carlos Bunga: Metamorphosis," the Portuguese artist's first US solo exhibition.

The MAM Ball, Miami Art Museum's main annual fundraising event, is set for Dec. 5 at the Fontainebleau Miami Beach. The Parodi Lecture in Philosophy of Art, "Diagrammatic Spaces," by John Rajchman, associate professor at Columbia University, takes place Dec. 6.

"Miami is a very decentralized city," said René Morales, MAM associate curator. "The interesting things that are happening are not necessarily concentrated in one spot. It's important for visitors to be adventurous, to see different aspects of the city.

"We have a very exciting trio of exhibits; all three are linked together thematically," he continued. "This is the first time the museum has ever consolidated all of its spaces under one under conceptual theme. I think there are going to be a lot of surprises, even for people who have been here in the past."