

MODERN LUXURY

# Interiors

Volume Three 2022

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SOUTH FLORIDA

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## LIGHT AND TRUTH

Roots, ritual, culture and community bring former Yale students to the NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale.

By Jesse Bratter

Between the years 2000 and 2010, while the world was experiencing historic shifts in culture, politics and the art market, a group of art students of color at Yale University were, unbeknownst to them, preparing for an exhibit that wouldn't happen for another 12 to 22 years, depending on their respective graduating class. At the time, Yale School of Art had not been historically diverse. And so this group of creators came together to invite other artists, curators and writers of color to guide their time of learning and honing their craft beyond the classroom. Meanwhile, Bonnie Clearwater, now director and chief curator of NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale ([nsuartmuseum.org](http://nsuartmuseum.org)), was busy collaborating on solo shows for a handful of these artists—william cordova, John Espinosa and Luis Gispert—while serving in a former post as director and chief curator at MOCA North Miami. It would turn out that her early work with this group was also a prelude to that same exhibit, which would come to be named *Lux et Veritas* as an homage to the motto of the Ivy League alma mater.



PHOTOS BY STEVEN BROOKE/COURTESY OF NSU ART MUSEUM FORT LAUDERDALE





## Exhibition Artists

Mike Cloud  
william cordova  
Njideka Akunyili Crosby  
Abigail DeVille  
Torkwase Dyson  
John Espinosa  
Luis Gispert  
Rashawn Griffin  
Leslie Hewitt  
Loren Holland  
Titus Kaphar  
Jamerry Kim  
Eric N. Mack  
Wardell Milan  
Wangechi Mutu  
Mamiko Otsubo  
Ronny Quevedo  
Mickalene Thomas  
Anna Tsouhlarakis  
Shoshanna Weinberger  
Kehinde Wiley

Mutu's "Sentinel VI"—sculpted using paper pulp, soil, emulsion paint, charcoal, ink, coconut, silver oak, croton and Jacaranda—towers before Mutu's "The Original Nine Daughters," depicting the founders of the Kenyan Kikuyu tribes.

"Over the years, I took note of how many artists of color I worked with who also graduated from Yale, and, following a conversation with Miami collector Dr. Barry Silverman, who made a similar observation, I reached out to william cordova to see if he agreed that this was a subject to research," Clearwater says. "As it turned out, william had been documenting the generation of artists of color who attended Yale School of Art between 2000 and 2010 and he confirmed that this was an important transitional period in art history

that needed in-depth study. NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale is dedicated to making significant contributions to art history with original research and exhibitions. This exhibition establishes the important contribution of South Florida artists to contemporary art and public discourse in general and it provides a historical context for the museum's collection, with its emphasis on work by women and artists of color."

On view at NSU Art Museum through Jan. 8, 2023, *Lux et Veritas* highlights the postgraduate work of artists

the likes of Wangechi Mutu, Mickalene Thomas and Kehinde Wiley, among others, alongside archival photographs and videos of their time at Yale. Visitors can expect to see a variety of mediums from cordova's installation of 200 found speakers, candy, pennies and vinyl record jackets to Gispert's polychromed stones and gold chains to Wardell Milan's paper collages that look like boxing matches in motion.

While the museum credits this group of nearly 20 artists with changing institutionalized

art education, sparking a movement, and influencing art and pop culture, cordova says that being part of this collective evolved before any of the artists arrived at Yale University. "A sense of roots, ritual, culture, ambition and community kept us close, critically astute and grounded," he says. "The *Lux et Veritas* exhibit is a way to acknowledge our creative architects, our previous generations of cultural practitioners. Women and men who sacrificed so much so that we too could sit at the table." ■



From top: Works by Kehinde Wiley, Mickalene Thomas and Wangchi Mutu; William Cordova's "Machu Picchu After Dark," on view as part of *Lux et Veritas* at NSU Art Museum.

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