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Miami Beach Flamingo 'For The Love of Dance' Gets a Rebirth

Artist Noel Suarez's Career Also Takes Him Around the World With Oceania

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Noel Suarez with one of his works in the Artist Loft where he is artist in residence on Oceania Cruises. (Photo courtesy of the artist)

By Michelle F. Solomon, Editor, Arts Writer

Artist Noel Suarez says he's had a wonderful career and he wouldn't change anything he's accomplished.

But redoing one of his famous flamingos, one of five that the city of Miami Beach asked him to design for its Flamingo Project in 2001 made him realize something.

"I'm extremely blessed," says the 66-year-old Suarez. "But then this flamingo made me realize that I have been living an extremely fast life, and of course, having fun creating, I've built a career. But maybe I want to come back to doing more things within my city (in Miami Beach) where I live."

He has been caring for the two flamingo sculptures that remain of the five. Three of them are now in private collections. "I've been preparing the damage that happened through the years. But there was one that was in bad shape."



Noel Suarez with Harvey J. Burstein and the flamingo "For the Love of Dance," which Suarez redid in 2024 giving the commission what he calls a "rebirth." (Photo courtesy of the artist)

The flamingo titled, "For the Love of Dance," was co-commissioned by the city and the Burstein Family Foundation for Miami Beach's project, of which Suarez was the selected artist, "Parade of Flamingos." "For the Love of Dance" was in front of the Jackie Gleason Theater on Washington Avenue but was then moved in front of the Parc Plaza condominium building, donated by Harvey J. Burstein to the property across the street from the Miami Beach Convention Center on Washington Avenue.

Suarez decided that this, his first flamingo in the series, was due for a rebirth. "In order for me to prepare to physically fix the whole thing and in order to paint it, I'd have to prepare it." Suarez says he decided that if he was going to "go through all that," why not just give it a whole new image as a commemoration of its silver anniversary.

"I used several painting images with ballet inspirations including the one I created for Miami's XXV International Ballet Festival." That work, "Universal Strength," was unveiled at the Miami Hispanic Cultural Center

"Getting the commission (for the flamingo project) was a special moment in my career," he recalls, adding that part of the payment came from the city and the rest from collectors. The second flamingo is on Miami Beach at Mango's Tropical Café.

He says working on the "Dance" bird gave him time to contemplate. "I was looking back on my 36 year career."



Noel Suarez with the flamingo "For The Love of Dance," which is on

Washington Avenue and was a commission in 2001.

Since 2013, he has been the artist in residence for Oceania Cruises. "I've traveled the world on Oceania Cruises' beautiful ships meeting so many interesting people from throughout the world and many of them have become collectors of my work," he says. "I have over 500, maybe more, collectors in my time with Oceania."

As the artist in residence, he says Oceania's guests get a unique experience – where they learn to draw and paint. Also, his career has had him exhibiting art in Venice, Barcelona, Rome, and throughout the world. "You name it," he says about where his paintings have been seen. But it's a most recent commission that has him talking about a "very special painting" he is thrilled to create.

"The title of the commission is 'Los Inmigrantes' (The Immigrants). Mr. Frank A. Del Rio, the president and CEO of Oceania, who is Cuban born like me loves the title and the details of the painting," says Suarez with excitement in his voice. The commission from Del Rio, a 60 X 96 painting, is for Oceania's new Allura, Oceania's eighth beautiful ship, which will embark on its maiden voyage on July 18, 2025 from Trieste, Italy, to Athens, Greece. The unveiling of Suarez's painting will be made on that maiden voyage. "I'm including influences from my favorite Cuban Masters and art teachers as well as architectural elements of my beautiful Cuba," says Suarez about the commission. "This painting will be a 'true' conversation piece and it will make a very special impact on Oceania's Allure amazing collection," he promises.



Harvey J. Burstein, publisher of miamiartzine.com and director of the Burstein Family Foundation stands with the commissioned flamingo "For the Love of Dance," which is now in front of the condominium Parc Plaza across from the Miami Beach Convention Center.

Suarez's painting will be along for every journey of the 11-deck ship. Two paintings from Suarez's latest collection will also be added to the ship's permanent collection. The art collection on board the ships have many Cuban masters. "Art is a major part of Oceania," says Suarez. "And Mr. Del Rio is a true art lover-collector."

Suarez says he's cutting back on his exhibition schedule for 2025 to enjoy more time with his partner of 22 years and his pets, but he won't let go of Oceania. Working on the ships, he says, is like having his own Art Basel around the world.



Noel Suarez has worked as artist in residence for Oceania Cruises traveling the world since 2013. (Photo courtesy of the artist)

"You have your own gallery when you're on board and you're exhibiting your work and you do your workshops." He has the dates for his next Artist in Residence aboard the ship, which will begin on March 23, 2025. In the meantime, he's creating commissions, one entitled "Movimiento VIII," an oil and metallic acrylic on canvas, for one of his patrons, a doctor in Miami Beach, and two for another Miami collector of his work, entitled "Pensando II" and "Now What." There's also a series of companion works, the first "Becoming I" and "Becoming II" and "Mujers" and "Vitales V."

"My whole life has been this trip of doing what I love," he says. "And for more than a decade, I've been doing the two things I love to do – travel and create my art."