



Introduction to Xavier Cortada. 2:13 min. Photo & Design: Raymond Elman.

# Xavier Cortada Blends Art & Science

By Elman + Perez-Trujillo + Rivas

**X**avier Cortada (b.1964) grew up in Miami and holds a degree from the University of Miami College of Arts and Sciences (Bachelor of Arts, 1986), the Miami Business School (Master of Public Administration, 1991) and School of Law (Juris Doctor, 1991). His science art practice is oriented toward social engagement and the environment. He has created art installations in the Earth's poles to generate awareness about global climate change. In 2007, as a National Science Foundation Antarctic Artists and Writer's Program Fellow, Cortada used the moving ice sheet beneath the South Pole as an instrument to mark time; the art piece will be completed in 150,000 years. In 2008, he planted a green flag at the North Pole to reclaim it for nature and launch an eco-art reforestation effort.

Cortada often collaborates with scientists in his art-making:

At CERN, Cortada worked with a physicist to develop a site-specific art installation capturing the five search strategies which the CMS experiment has used to discover a new Higgs-like particle. The five giant banners hang at the location (100m below the ground) where the particle was discovered.

He has also worked with a population geneticist on a project exploring our ancestral journeys out of Africa 60,000 years ago, with a molecular biologist to synthesize an actual DNA strand made from a sequence randomly generated by participants visiting his museum exhibit, and with botanists in participatory eco-art projects to reforest mangroves, native trees and wildflowers.

Cortada is currently working with scientists at Hubbard Brook LTER on a water cycle visualization project driven by real-time data collected at a watershed in New Hampshire's White Mountains.

Collaborating with the Florida Coastal Everglades LTER team at Florida International University, Cortada developed works depicting the glass shells of diatoms preserved in sedimentary core samples studied by scientists to grow our understanding of sea level rise in South Florida. From 2011-18, Cortada based his engaged art-science practice at Florida International University where he served as Artist-in-Residence at FIU School of Environment, Arts and Society, the FIU College of Arts, Sciences & Education, and the FIU College of Communication, Architecture + The Arts.

Recent works that address sea level rise and global climate change include:

- Underwater HOA | Village of Pinecrest (2018)
- DO NOT OPEN | MACLA, San Jose (2017)
- Testamento | City of Hialeah (2016)
- Hot for Hialeah | Union of Concerned Scientists and Florida International University (2016)
- Five Action Steps to Stop Sea Level Rise | Rauschenberg Residency (2015)
- Just Below the Surface (Founding of Miami Beach) | Florida Coastal Everglades LTER (2015)

Earlier works include:

- Endangered World: Biscayne National Park (2010)
- Native Flags: North Pole | NYFA Sponsored Artist (2008)
- Longitudinal Installation | NSF Antarctic Writers and Artists Fellowship (2007)
- Antarctic Ice Paintings | NSF Antarctic Writers and Artists Fellowship (2007)
- The Reclamation Project | Frost Science Museum (2006)

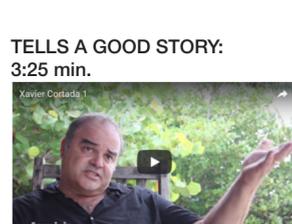
The Miami artist has also worked with groups globally to produce numerous collaborative art projects, including peace murals in Cyprus and Northern Ireland, Switzerland murals in Bolivia and Panama, AIDS murals in Switzerland and South Africa, juvenile justice murals and projects in Miami and Philadelphia, and eco-art projects in Taiwan, Hawaii, and Holland.

Cortada has also been commissioned to create art for CERN, the White House, the World Bank, Florida Botanical Gardens, Miami City Hall, Miami-Dade County Hall, the Florida Turnpike, Miami-Dade Housing Authority, the Frost Science Museum, Museum of Florida History, and the Frost Art Museum

The videos below are organized by topic and run between 30 seconds and 6 minutes. Click on any video. You must be connected to the Internet to view the videos.

**TELLS A GOOD STORY:**

3:25 min.



*Were you involved with the "Rising Waters" project at FIU?*

**COLLABORATION:** 5:46 min.



*How do you engage with your audience? How do you measure the impact of your research and artwork?*

**PERSEVERANCE FURTHERS:**

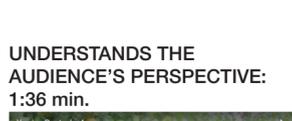
1:07 min.



*Tell us about the "Reclamation Project."*

**UNDERSTANDS THE AUDIENCE'S PERSPECTIVE:**

1:36 min.



*Will you be revisiting the Reclamation Project at different intervals throughout your lifetime?*

**COLLABORATION:** 1:01 min.



*What's the role of collaboration in your work?*

**FAIL FORWARD:** 5:37 min.



*What particular skills and behaviors are essential to your success?*

**TELLS A GOOD STORY:**

1:57 min.



*Can you describe your writing style and how you evolved as a writer?*

**CRITICAL THINKING:**

1:32 min.



*What have you learned from your many different projects?*

**INSIGHT & INSPIRATION:**

4:50 min.



*How do you use humor or satire in your work?*