



Introduction to Dennis Leyva. 3:06 min. Photos: Robin Hill. Interview: Raymond Elman. Videography & production: Christina Hester.

Dennis Leyva: Curating Public Art for Miami Beach

By Elman + Hester + Pinos

DENNIS LEYVA worked at the City of Miami Beach for 22 years. As the Public Art Administrator for 15 years before retiring in 2019, he worked as the City's liaison to the Art in Public Places program. His primary focus was curating and commissioning site-specific projects for public spaces throughout Miami Beach. During his tenure a total of twelve projects were commissioned with budgets ranging from \$5,000 to \$2.2 million for individual examples of public art. The works commissioned variously reflect the geography, architecture, and history of Miami Beach.

At the end of his career with the City he oversaw the implementation of \$7 million in six public art commissions for the newly renovated and expanded Miami Beach Convention Center. This extensive 2019 project is to date the largest single public art commissioned project by a municipal percent-for-art program in the U.S. The six artists are Franz Ackermann (Berlin), Elmgreen & Dragset (Berlin), Ellen Harvey (Brooklyn), Joseph Kosuth (New York), Joep van Lieshout (Rotterdam), and Sarah Morris (New York).

Leyva moved to Miami from Cuba in 1958.

In college at University of Miami, Leyva studied history and literature, which gave him the foundation for his worldview of art, as well as a greater understanding of artists and their artistic vision.

Leyva was also one of the key individuals, among major collectors and prominent city officials, who played an instrumental role in bringing Art Basel, the largest art fair in the Western Hemisphere, to Miami Beach. He also served as the City's liaison to Art Basel Miami Beach and its representative to Art Basel in Switzerland.

The videos below are organized by topic and run between 30 seconds and 11 minutes. Click on any video. You must be connected to the Internet to view the videos.

EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES: 0:39 sec.



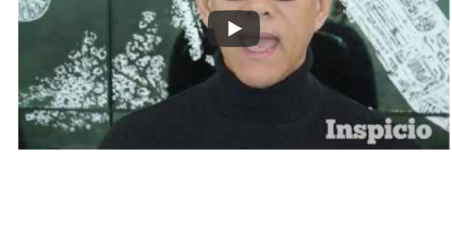
What is your first memory of art of any discipline?

INSIGHT AND INSPIRATION: 1:42 min.



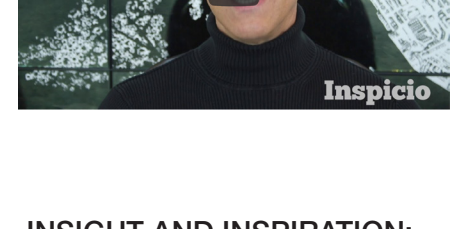
How did the films you watched shape your perspective or world view?

INSIGHT AND INSPIRATION: 2:21 min.



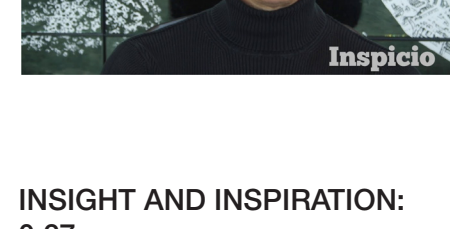
What helped encourage and spark your passion for fine arts?

EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES: 1:22 min.



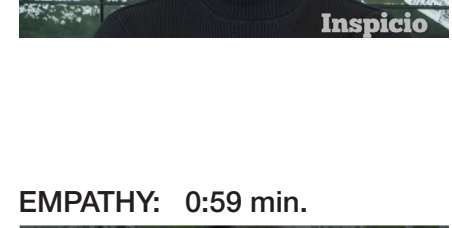
What did you study in school and how did it help you with your career in the arts?

EMPATHY: 4:25 min.



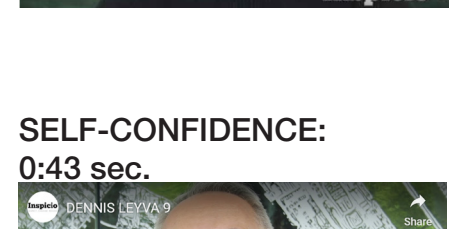
What do you remember from your early years in Cuba, and what was the impact of moving to the USA in 1958?

INSIGHT AND INSPIRATION: 0:56 sec.



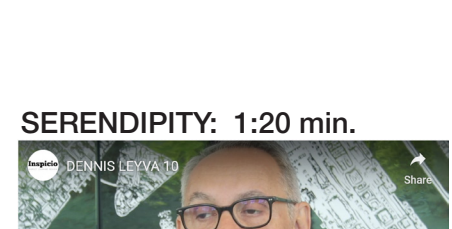
Who are some of your most important role models and influencers?

INSIGHT AND INSPIRATION: 0:27 sec.



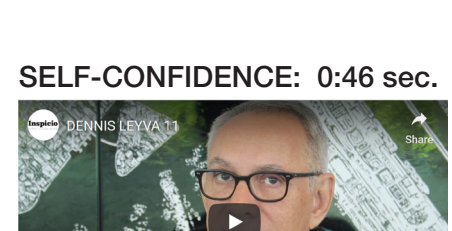
Your mother exposed you to sophisticated forms of art. What was her background?

EMPATHY: 0:59 min.



Did your parents have the opportunity to see you evolve in your current career?

SELF-CONFIDENCE: 0:43 sec.



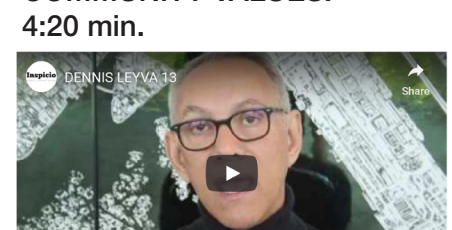
Were your siblings drawn to the arts as well?

SERENDIPITY: 1:20 min.



What are some of the most iconic performances you got to attend in your youth?

SELF-CONFIDENCE: 0:46 sec.



How did your teachers and fellow students react to your love for the arts?

CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND: 11:00 min.



Describe the arc of your career.

COMMUNITY VALUES: 4:20 min.



How has the city of Miami Beach upheld its commitment to the arts?

UNDERSTANDS THE BUSINESS OF ART: 2:43 min.



Who are the people most responsible for bringing Art Basel to Miami Beach?

UNDERSTANDS THE BUSINESS OF ART: 2:19 min.



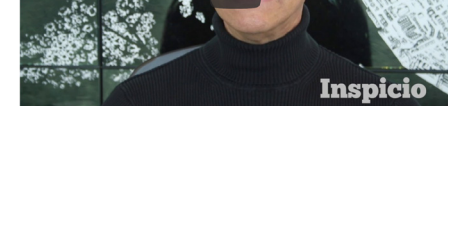
In your wildest dreams, did you ever imagine that Art Basel Miami Beach would grow into such a phenomenon, which includes over 20 satellite art fairs?

UNDERSTANDS ARTISTS' NEEDS: 3:49 min.



What are a few of your favorite Miami Beach public art pieces and why?

OVERCOMES CHALLENGES TO SUCCEED: 5:19 min.



Describe a challenging situation with a successful outcome.

STRONG DRIVE FOR ACHIEVEMENT: 1:51 min.

What is your vision for the future of art in South Florida?

RESPECTS OTHERS POINT OF VIEW: 1:55 min.

I have heard people disparage the intellectual sophistication of South Florida. What are your thoughts about that?