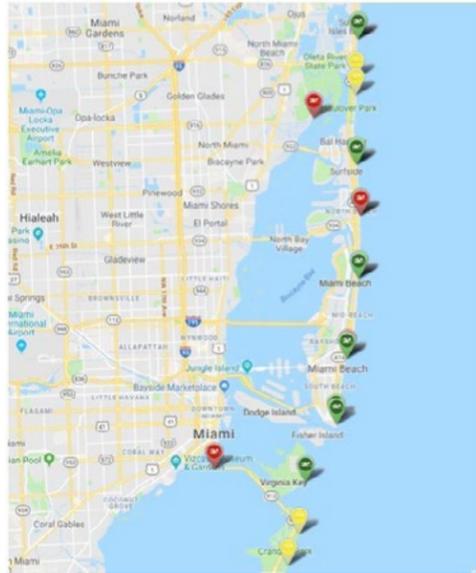




Xavier Cortada, "No Swimming Beach Flag," 2018

SHIT SHOW

BY XAVIER CORTADA



ABOUT SHIT SHOW

"I'd rather your eight-year-old hear the word than swim in it." These words are the foundation of Shit Show's development, artist Xavier Cortada's 2018 art intervention of South Florida's beaches in an attempt to address the high level of environmental degradation devastating the area. An art intervention, as defined by Tate, "applies to art designed specifically to interact with an existing structure or situation, be it another artwork, the audience, an institution or in the public domain."¹ Shit Show was created in partnership with Miami Waterkeeper and the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center, as Cortada set out to invite community members to stage their own specific interventions in conjunction with each other, these interventions designed to interact with the governing bodies in charge of water monitoring and the current water crisis. However, the intention was to introduce participants to advocacy organizations such as Miami Waterkeeper to continue growing their knowledge and engagement with the issue.

The dominating imagery used throughout the Shit Show intervention is that of toilet paper, a reference to the high level of fecal matter in the beach's water. Cortada depicts this image on a flag, No Swimming Beach Flag, similar to the warning system of beach flags used across the world to signal when it is unsafe to swim. Along with the depictions of toilet paper was its literal incorporation into the intervention, participants marching towards the beach carrying a variety of supplies, such as plungers, that reference the upkeep of fecal matter.

The toilet paper imagery was also carried into panel discussions on the issue, as Cortada placed a piece of toilet paper into the hand of each attendee before the start of these meetings, aptly presenting the dichotomy between the intimacy normally attributed to toilet paper and the socially charged nature of a panel discussion.

Shit Show is not just an intervention by the artist, but a platform for others to showcase their own intervention(s), a platform for spectacle. And thus, lies the intent and impact of the project, to create a spectacle as a statement towards those in charge, to draw attention to the problem in hopes of promoting change through constituent's voices; a protest. The processes used to engage his participants, namely the expanding field of social media, make Shit Show a form of social art collaboration. Cortada not only invited participants to join his own intervention but asked them to develop their own and post them across social media along with the hashtag, #MiamiSHITSHOW. This presents an interesting usage of social networks in the actual efficacy of the work, Cortada acknowledging the utility of such platforms in prompting collaboration and social impact. This type of social engagement is also seen in Shit Show's panel discussions, the point of which is creating engagement between participants and advocacy groups in order to prompt further involvement.



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Xavier Cortada is an artist and Professor of Practice at the University of Miami Department of Art and Art History. Cortada's work is intended to generate awareness and action towards issues of global climate change. Using the power and elasticity of participatory art to engage, Cortada educates and inspires community members to work together and learn together to solve our community's problems.

Cortada has created art installations at the North and South Poles to help address environmental issues at every point in between. His work is also in the collections of Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), the Patricia and Philip Frost Art Museum, the MDC Museum of Art + Design, the NSU Museum of Art in Ft. Lauderdale, the Whatcom Museum in Washington, and the World Bank and is the Artist-in-Residence at Pinecrest Gardens.

To learn more, visit www.cortada.com.



CORTADA

Pinecrest Gardens
11000 Red Road
Pinecrest, FL 33156

www.cortada.com
[@xcortada](https://www.instagram.com/xcortada)

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