

'Seven Solos' dazzles at the Cornell

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Luminaria 1, by Alex Trimino.

By April Klimley

Art lovers will be thrilled with *Seven Solos*, an exhibition of immersive installations now showing at the Cornell Museum in Old School Square in Delray Beach.

The museum's dynamic curator, Melanie Johanson, has brought together eight artists to create seven fascinating spaces that will transport viewers from celestial awe (Brookhart Jonquil) to soothing tranquility (Shinduk Kang).

Even art lovers with no experience of "installation" art will walk away moved by this experience, which takes up both floors of this gem-like small museum, and brings South Florida some of today's most cutting-edge installation artists — an achievement in keeping with the museum's mission to showcase contemporary art for residents and visitors.

Seven Solos, which runs through Oct. 6, breaks out of the confines of the picture frame or traditional art gallery. Not simply the way Christo and his wife Jeanne-Claude did with their environmentalist installation of *The Gates* in New York's Central Park in 2005, nor even the way Judy Chicago did in 1979 with her feminist *The Dinner Party*. Instead, these installations alternate surprise and an intent to inspire the viewer to deeper thought and inner contemplation.

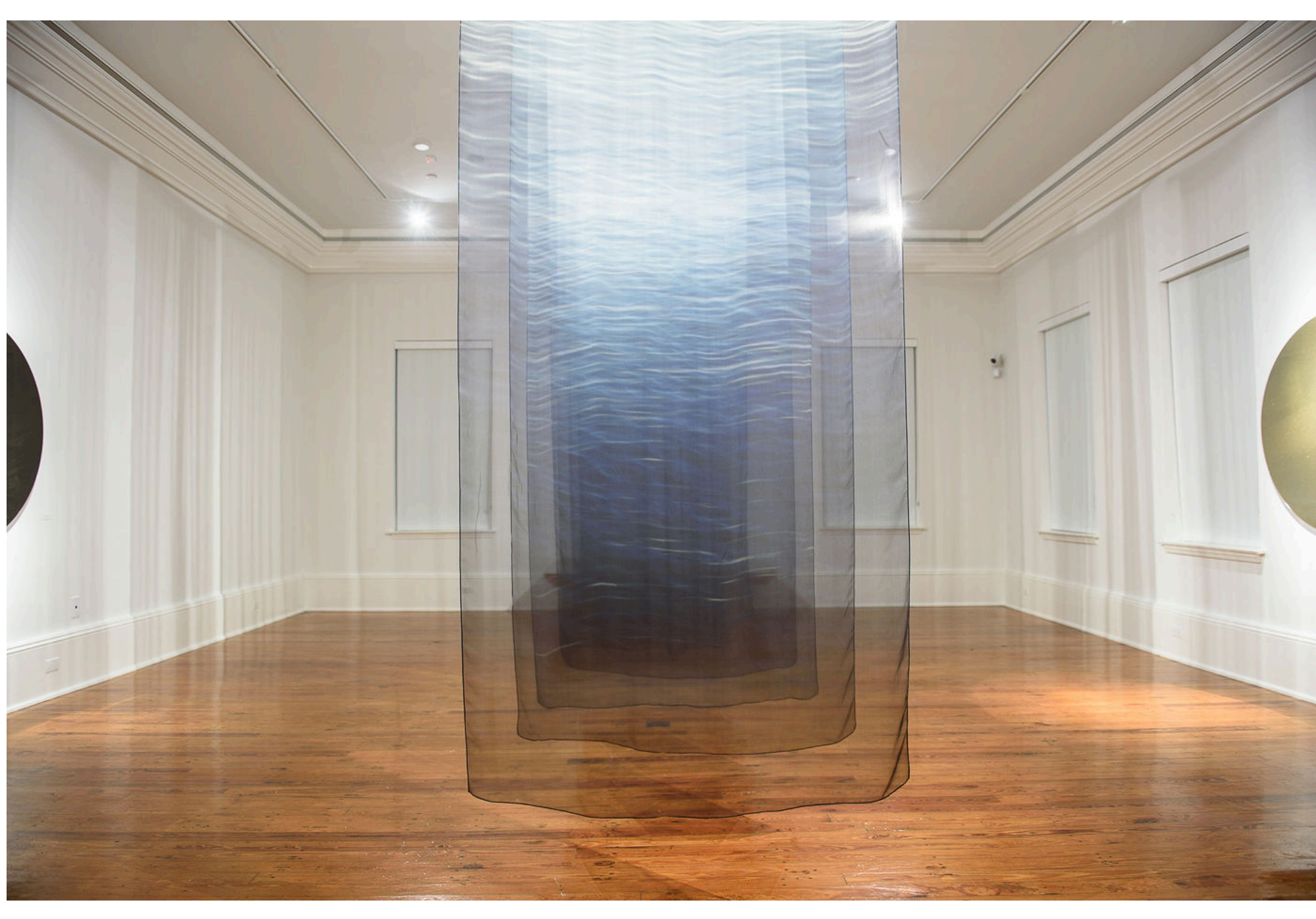
The first piece of *Seven Solos* sets the tone of the exhibition — a call for visitors to examine the piece and interact with it. It's a twin tower of fluorescent lights, some of them wrapped in fabric from the artist's native Colombia. *Luminaria 1*, by Miami-based artist Alex Trimino, features towers made up of brightly colored fluorescent lights hanging from the two-story ceiling of the atrium.



Ebb and Flow, by Giannina Dwin and Freddy Jouwayed.

A small stature of a conquistador is cleverly embedded at the bottom of one tower in an artificial tree stump, while the second tower of lights is thinner and barely reaches the floor. Although at first glance *Luminaria 1* is a very joyful piece of art, when one looks deeper, it also suggests a struggle between modernity and the pain and cultural loss caused by conquest.

Ebb and Flow, a collaborative work between Giannina Dwin and video artist Freddy Jouwayed has a very different feeling. Everyone quiets down as they walk into this darkened space. Visitors stop to peek around one large see-through video screen to see a larger screen in the back where a loop of fuzzy images of buildings and palm trees moves along slowly. An ocean of whitecaps floats between the two screens. But these small valleys and hills are actually created out of salt by Dwin, an artist well-known for creating art that is impermanent.



Waves Becoming Light, by Miya Ando.

A nearby installation, Miya Ando's *Waves Becoming Light*, also focuses on the ocean, but in a completely different manner. The room is filled with delicate, transparent black panels of cloth hanging from the ceiling. These flutter as you walk past them to examine the two large discs and mixed media art on the walls. Ando describes her installation as "a connection between the moon and tides," and its serenity reflects her own Buddhist faith and heritage, which is part Japanese, part Russian-American.

Upstairs, if you take the elevator hidden away in the gift shop, you'll walk right into one of the most arresting installations: Six large hollow heads — the size of giant Easter eggs — and looking something like inflatables. Each head has two faces, painted in circus colors and stripes, but with serious expressions.

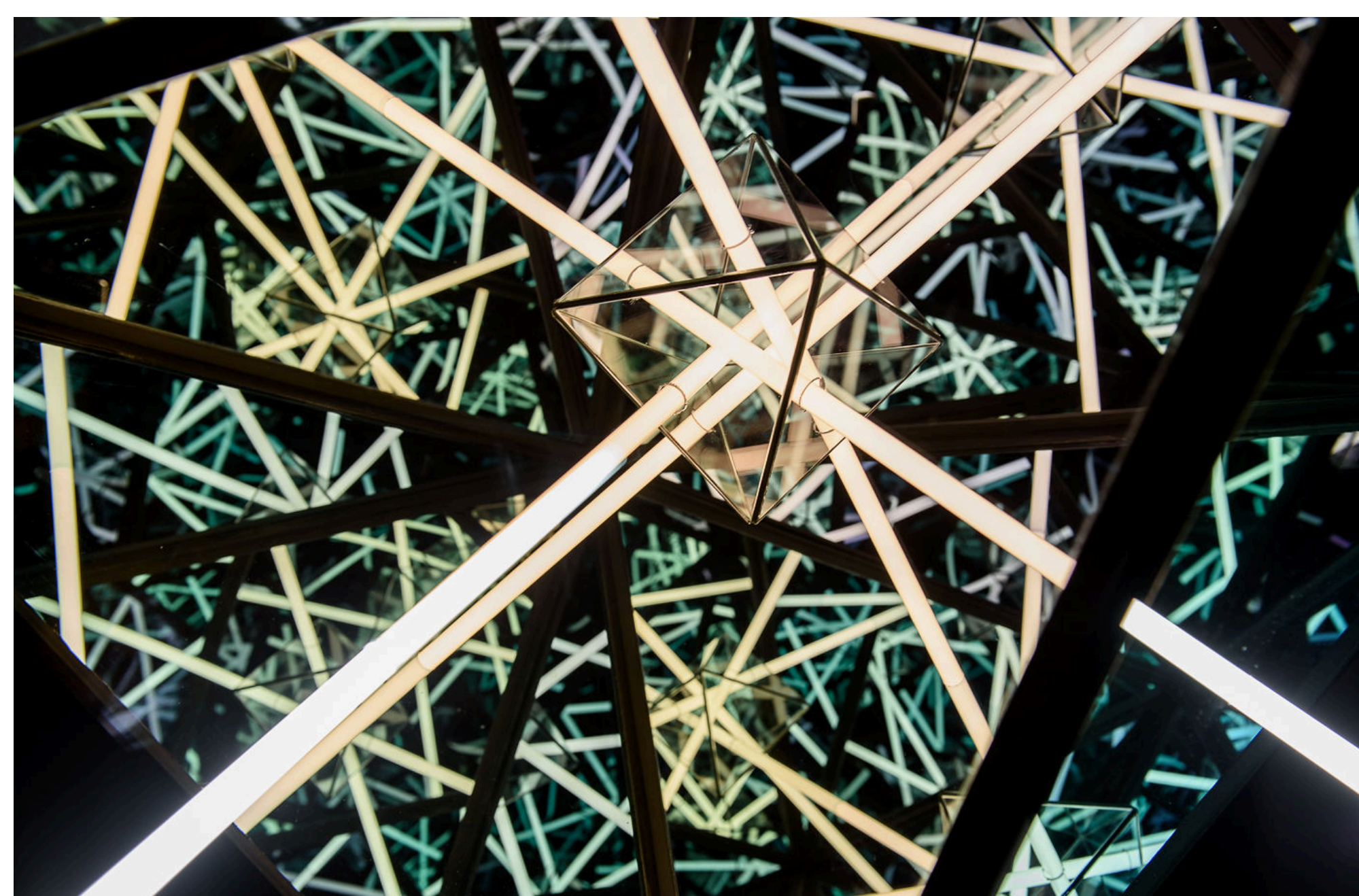


Janis, by Frank Hyder.

This is *Janis*, Frank Hyder's installation, and the title is a play on the word "Janus"— the Roman god of beginnings and endings, which the artist changed to the word "Janis" to remove any suggestion of sexism.

These heads may be colorful and engaging, but their intent is not to entertain. Instead, Hyder created them as a way to express his opposition to racism after he was inspired by the monumental heads he saw on Easter Island.

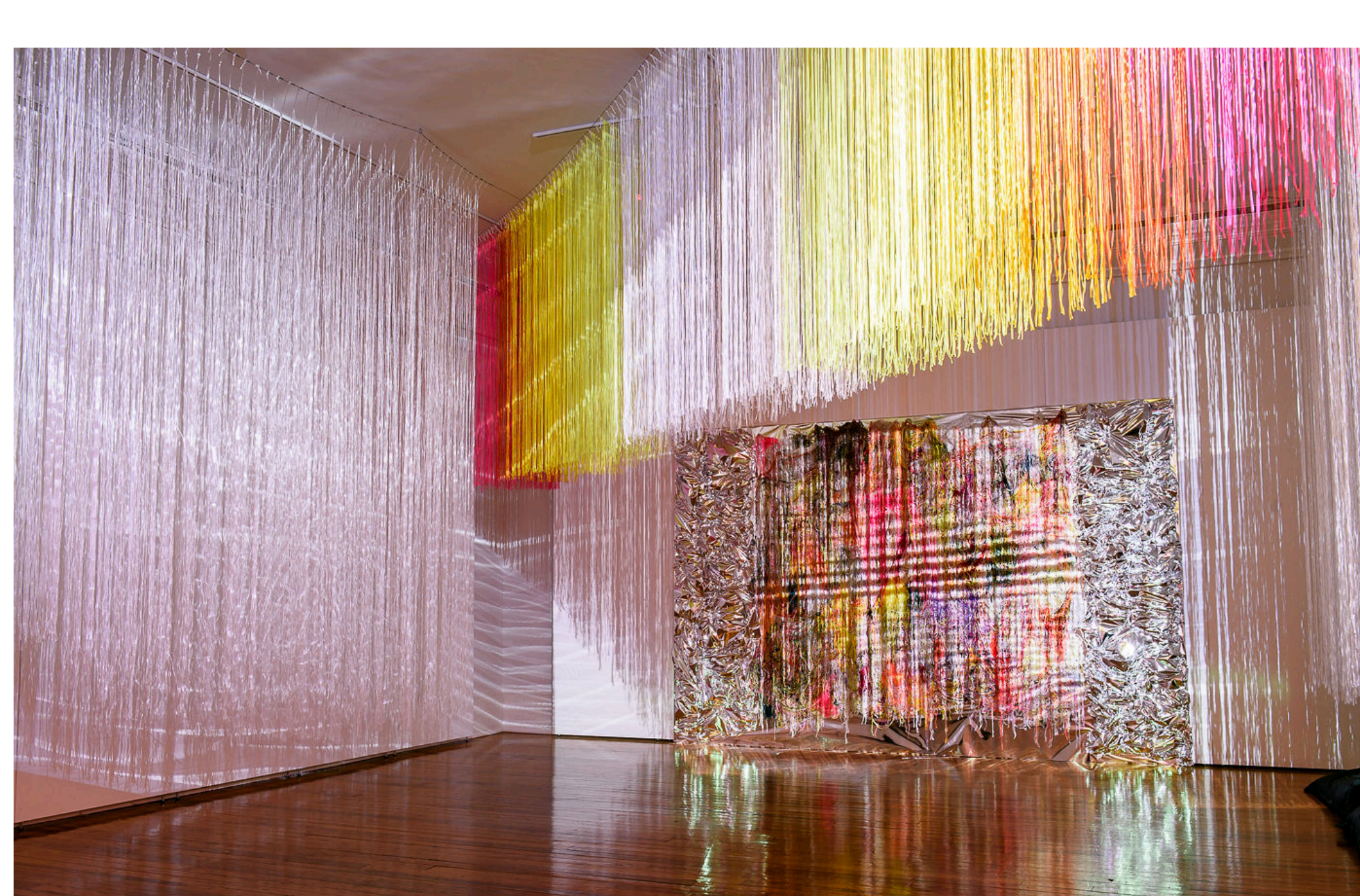
"I realized I could make heads that had two personalities," he says. "I could put a skin color or gender on one side, and then a different one on the other side." In this way, Hyder could convey his convictions about the multiplicity of humanity and his conviction that "You can't see what's inside a person from the outside."



Saturn Rings the Sunrise Bells, by Brookhart Jonquil.

On the second floor are three more installations. In *Saturn Rings the Sunrise Bells*, Brookhart Jonquil has created a striking celestial environment that is awe-inspiring. The room is as dark as a desert night, and his geometric sculpture, made of metal and fluorescent lights, glitters so brightly it's almost impossible to view these pieces for very long at one time. It's almost as if some magic hand brought planets and stars right down to earth. These pieces echo the look of some of Dan Flavin's work from the '1960s, but they tell a different story.

The most romantic installation is nearby: Jacob M. Fisher's *To hold, in time, your eyes forever*. It's a roomful of long plastic streamers, rivers of light, hanging from the ceiling, that shimmer like waterfalls as their colors change.



To hold, in time, your eyes forever, by Jacob M. Fisher.

The whole room is so relaxing that many visitors are almost hypnotized into plopping down on bean bag pillows on the floor. They relax, chat, and seem to be contemplating pleasant memories, which may be exactly what the artist was hoping for.

Finally, visitors arrive at the seventh installation: *Heaven, Earth and Land*, a peaceful, light-filled room. There, South Korean artist Shinduk Kang has created a central enclosure out of goldenrod-yellow gauze bottomed in red. It is a welcoming refuge, almost a womb, where you can sit on a soft bench and feel secure and loved here; after all, that's the way we all started out.

Heaven, Earth and Land, by Shinduk Kang.

Behind the tower against the windows, Kang has placed a giant-sized piece of silk fabric composed of abstract squares and rectangles that billows falling onto the back floor. The design resembles geometric paintings of Piet Mondrian. But the colors are totally different and typically Korean — warm mustard yellow, red and teal — not Western. They blend in perfectly with the color of the tent, and the effect is much more soothing than the primary reds, blues and yellows of Mondrian.

All seven pieces somehow combine into perfect harmony. It's hard to know why. But whatever the reason, the installations allow the visitor to be immersed in messages of the artists, while still coming up with their own interpretations.

This participatory element gives *Seven Solos* a rare sort of staying power — a kind of mystique that can draw visitors back again and again, as it did me, each time experiencing something a little different and deeper.

Seven Solos runs through Oct. 6 at the Cornell Museum on the grounds of Old School Square in Delray Beach. Hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10 am-5 pm. Closed Sundays, Mondays and holidays. Admission: \$8, \$5 seniors and students with ID, free for veterans, children under 12, and Old School Square members. Call 561-243-7922 or visit www.oldschoolsquare.org for more information.

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