

# Forbes

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## A Vision In Red: Ruby City Opens In San Antonio



Ruby City, San Antonio, Texas, exterior at dusk. DROR BALDINGER FAIA; COURTESY OF RUBY CITY AND ADJAYE ASSOCIATES.

Linda Pace will never see [Ruby City](#) with her own eyes. She did see it clearly in her mind.

Thanks to that vision, Ruby City opened in San Antonio, Texas on October 13<sup>th</sup>. The contemporary art museum showcases Pace's collection, including selections of her own work.

Pace succumbed to breast cancer in 2007 at 62. Shortly before passing, the vision of a home for her world-class contemporary art collection came to her in a dream. In red.

The color red was a through line in [Pace's life](#), from the Pace Picante sauce developed by her father which created the family fortune, to the rich, vibrant reds defining her own artwork.

"I think she would be so thrilled," Kelly O'Connor, a former studio assistant for Pace and an employee of the Linda Pace Foundation for almost 14 years, said of the completed project.

Ruby City has 14,472-square-feet dedicated to providing a space for the city's thriving creative community to experience works by both local and internationally acclaimed artists. More than 900 paintings, sculptures, installations and video pieces are on view with free admission to the public.



Installation view of 'Waking Dream,' featuring Marina Abramovic, 'Chair for Man and His Spirit,' 1993. Iron. 197 x 16 x 16 in.  
© MARINA ABRAMOVIC, COURTESY SEAN KELLY GALLERY, NEW YORK. PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK MENJIVAR,  
COURTESY OF RUBY CITY, LINDA PACE FOUNDATION.

The artistry of the building equals what's displayed inside.

Designed by renowned architect Sir David Adjaye OBE, who is also responsible for the design of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African-American History and Culture, the exterior skin consists of a precast concrete fabricated in Mexico City and imbued with a rich red color. The interior entrance and lobby have also been constructed in the same crimson hue, preserving Pace's original vision of a "ruby city."

The first ten feet from the ground up has concrete with a polished finish, smooth to the touch; above, the concrete wall is rough, sharp, encrusted with two hues of red glass. The building appears to be an angular, sparkling rock sheared at the level of human interaction.

"My goal was to translate Linda's idea into a building that will do justice to her legacy," Adjaye said. "It is a tremendous responsibility and one that is dear to my heart."

Ruby City becomes the most recent of Pace's many contributions to San Antonio's arts community.

In 1993, she founded [Artpace San Antonio](#), a nonprofit residency program which supports regional, national and international artists in the creation of new art to this day. Her foundation was formed in 2003, guided by Pace's conviction that contemporary art is essential to a dynamic society. The Foundation continues acquiring new work echoing the themes and character of Pace's own collecting, reflecting a feminist perspective, engaging in social issues and considering aspects of spirituality and beauty.

"What was really interesting about her as a collector, it wasn't about collecting these objects, there was a lot about nurturing relationships with the artist, so there's several artists in her collection that she could call her friend," O'Connor said.

Isaac Julien and Wangechi Mutu are two of the many artists who fall into this category with work on view at Ruby City.

Along with Pace's own work.

"Linda really didn't find her voice as an artist until age 55," O'Connor said. "That's when she created her first really iconic work, 2001, and I think that's really inspiring; a lot of us think our 30s are our peak, but really, she was most prolific later in her life."



Installation view of 'Waking Dream,' featuring Linda Pace, 'Red Project,' 2001. Red found objects on wooden panels. 96 x 96 in.  
© LINDA PACE FOUNDATION. PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK MENJIVAR, COURTESY OF RUBY CITY, LINDA PACE FOUNDATION.

Now may be the best time to explore San Antonio's surprisingly robust arts scene. In addition to the opening of Ruby City, Day of the Dead San Antonio presented by H-E-B makes its debut this fall as a citywide celebration.

Building on traditional Día de los Muertos celebrations, Day of the Dead San Antonio will fill the city with an artful take on the Day of the Dead from ancient symbology to contemporary art. Nowhere will this be more visible than along Houston Street which will be lined with *craneos*, or decorated, sculptural skulls.

"Mictlán," a public art exhibition running from October 15 through November 15 features more than 50 *craneos* created by artists in Mexico, plus, a special series of *craneos* decorated by local San Antonio artists on display in La Villita, an historic arts village located along the city's downtown River Walk.



Day of the Dead San Antonio, craneo from Mexico. DAY OF THE DEAD SAN ANTONIO.

Additionally, *alebrijes*, whimsical carvings depicting animals, people, objects and imaginary creatures painted with intense colors and intricate patterns, will take over The Witte Museum in a temporary exhibition from October 24 through November 14.

*Almas Creativas: A Tribute to Mexican Huichol Art*, an incredible collection of artwork handcrafted by the Huichol people, can be seen at the Briscoe Western Art Museum October 28 through November 8. The works on display represent the craftsmanship and talents of the Huichol, descendants of the Aztec who live in the mountains of the Mexican states of Jalisco and Nayarit. Each piece in the collection was handcrafted, bead-by-bead by Huichol artisans, with most pieces featuring more than two million beads.



An acrobat performs at Luminaria in 2017. MIKE FARQUHAR.

San Antonio doesn't slow down with [Lumineria](#), a contemporary night arts festival, taking place November 9 and 10. What started as a grassroots, multi-genre festival has evolved into a showcase for an exploding home-grown arts culture.

Featuring over 50 predominantly San Antonio and Texas-based artists of all genres—visual art, sculpture, dance, music, theatre and more—Lumineria is the only multidisciplinary arts festival of its kind in the U.S.

The festival makes its home at the re-envisioned Hemisfair Park, a culturally rich, public park in the heart of downtown inaugurated in 1968 for the World's Fair. Hemisfair is located near the [trendy Pearl neighborhood](#) and within walking distance to some of the city's best hotels and restaurants along with the Alamo and River Walk.

Finally, no trip to San Antonio can be considered complete without a visit to the breathtaking McNay Art Museum, Texas' first modern art museum. Specializing in 19th and 20th century European and American art—from Monet and Van Gogh, to Hopper and Pollock—all housed in a 24-room Spanish Colonial Revival Mansion. The McNay dazzles with a permanent collection that would distinguish a much larger museum in any city around the world.

In symmetry with Ruby City, the McNay was also founded by a woman, [Marion Koogler](#), who shared Pace's exquisite taste, bold vision and desire to better her community through contemporary art.



Ruby City exterior.  
DROR BALDINGER FAIA

Any city would be fortunate to have one such benefactor. San Antonio having two plays no small part in the vibrant, artistic, much-loved by residents and visitors alike city it has become.

“(Pace) was very generous and really focused on supporting artists and our local community, but she didn't have a pretentious bone in her body,” O'Connor said. “Somebody was joking (about) one of the artists in our collection (who) she remembers one time hanging out with (Linda) and drinking Lone Star beer next to a Hans Hoffman, that gives you a little insight to the dynamic she had with the artists.”