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By Nicholas Frank

A Vision in Red: SA Collector's Ruby City Dream Unveils This Weekend



BONNIE ARBITTIER / RIVARD REPORT. Linda Pace's collection opens to the public Sunday at Ruby City.

An influential San Antonio woman with an avid interest in contemporary art bequeaths her collection of more than 700 works of art to the city, along with an architecturally striking building to house them, and a foundation to manage the project.

The parallels between Marion Koogler McNay, who established the [McNay Art Museum](#) in 1950, and Linda Pace, whose collection opens to the public at [Ruby City](#) on Sunday, are less uncanny than a continuous trend of women collectors establishing major arts institutions.

“These two trailblazing women collectors, collecting in their moment and giving back to their community, there’s a lovely connection there,” said Kathryn Kanjo, a trustee of the Linda Pace Foundation and curator of *Waking Dream*, the first public exhibition of Pace’s collection in the new Ruby City building.

Kanjo, who is also director and CEO of the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, contextualized McNay and Pace alongside Houston collector Dominique de Menil, who established the [Menil Collection](#), and New Yorkers Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney of the [Whitney Museum of American Art](#) and Peggy Guggenheim of the [Guggenheim Museums](#).

[Waking Dream](#), featuring 40 works that include several by Pace herself, opens Oct. 13 alongside [Isaac Julien: Playtime](#) in a special gallery dedicated to Julien, an important friend of Pace, with [Jewels in the Concrete](#) opening at Studio, Pace’s former studio building across Camp Street.

That Pace was an artist gave her particular insight into the artistic process, Kanjo said, and reflected in her approach to the establishment of [Artpace](#), a residency and exhibition program for artists, and in her collection of nearly 800 works by artists from around the world.

“She could move between all the zones of creativity,” Kanjo said, “and I think that comes from being an artist herself, from being respectful to the creative process, and allowing art – not the market – to move her” decisions on what to collect.

The beginnings of her collection coincide with her return to the studio, Kanjo said, after Pace’s [1987 divorce](#) from Kit Goldsbury, who later redeveloped The Pearl. The large, red-themed collage painting *Red Project* completed by Pace in 2001 illuminates the Ruby City lobby with red string lights, but the first artwork visitors will likely see is *Be Amazing* (1999) by Sylvie Fleury, a neon sign work that became a daily mantra for Pace as it hung in her Camp Street apartment just next door to where Ruby City stands today.

The collection and *Waking Dream* also feature numerous former Artpace resident artists, including Julien, Cornelia Parker, Christian Marclay, Teresita Fernandez, Robyn O’Neil, Leonardo Drew, Jesse Amado, Cruz Ortiz, Chuck Ramirez, and Ethel Shipton, the last six of whom were Texas artists at the time of their residency.

“Linda was collecting local artists for both their specificity and familiarity, and for the way they connect and reach out and remind us that we’re all from someplace local,” Kanjo explained. Yet Pace always had an eye toward connecting the local with much larger concerns.



COURTESY / LINDA PACE FOUNDATION. Linda Pace.

“Linda’s collection is at once very personal but it also resonates, because we all are trying to find the way we fit in and move through the world around us, from our mundane world to something greater and more spiritual or global.” The collection “moves between the personal and the profound,” she said.

Pace died of cancer in 2007, leaving her collection in the care of the Linda Pace Foundation, which continues to acquire art. A recent acquisition, *Breathe* (2014) by Joyce J. Scott, also a former Artpace resident, perhaps best personifies Pace’s qualities. Made of ruby red glass, a Buddha-like figure is in the act of giving birth. The piece refers to motherhood, a giving nature, the fragility and resilience of life, ebullience, and pain.

Pace lost her son, Christopher Goldsbury, in 1997, and subsequently memorialized him with the creation of Chris Park, a landscaped garden connecting Studio to the Camp Street lofts and Ruby City across the street.

Another piece by Pace, *Mirror Mirror* of 2006 in the *Jewels in the Concrete* exhibition at Studio, is also a reflection of her desire to connect inner and outer worlds. Viewers can actually enter the igloo-shaped dome, and be surrounded by their reflection, while the piece’s outer surface reflects the work, and world, around it.

The piece is also current in a way Pace might not have predicted. “I think it’s going to be a very Instagrammable piece,” said Kelly O’Connor, head of collections and communications, during a walkthrough of the exhibition. “I took my kids in it the other day and they were just in awe.”

Pace not only adored the color red, and beautiful things, but connected the everyday world to the cosmos surrounding it. Kanjo, who first met Pace in 1999 as director of Artpace, built on their 20-year association to draw themes from the collection that would represent Pace in all her facets. The *Four Suns Videowall* by Diana Thater represents the sun. The waxing and waning of the moon is present in a delicate beeswax wall sculpture by Maya Lin, and a starburst form in glass cubes by Fernandez draws us back to the stars from which we came, Kanjo said.

Meanwhile, the *10mg* series of five felt circles by Amado addresses daily medications, and possibly planetary cycles as well, she said.

The Julien three-screen video *Playtime*, featuring actors James Franco, Maggie Cheung, and Mercedes Cabra, addresses the 2008 global market crash that affected economies worldwide, a collapse that even delayed the construction of Ruby City and required a slightly scaled-down version of architect Sir David Adjaye’s original concept, according to the architect.

Kanjo said people are sometimes surprised that Pace could be interested both in formal and beautiful artwork along with radical, political work that addresses important social concerns.

“The idea that Linda could move between quiet, contemplative, luscious objects, and more urgent, plaintive works is fascinating, and shows the manner of engagement Linda had with the world around her,” Kanjo said.

As curator of the inaugural exhibition, Kanjo saw the show as an opportunity to create a portrait of Pace, particularly her Texan “pride of place,” she said.

“It matters that Linda was an artist, it matters that Linda was a mother, it matters that Linda was a Texan, it matters that Linda was a feminist. All the qualities that shaped Linda shaped her collection.”

After private events Friday and Saturday, Ruby City opens to the public with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 11 a.m. Sunday, followed by walkthroughs of the galleries from noon until 5 p.m. As directed by Pace’s bequest, admission is free.