

SAN ANTONIO
CURRENT

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By Bryan Rindfuss

Curator Kathryn Kanjo Sheds Light on the Inaugural Exhibition at San Antonio's Ruby City



Photo by Bryan Rindfuss. Linda Pace's poppy *Red Project* welcomes visitors into Ruby City's inaugural exhibition "Waking Dream."

In her 2003 memoir *Dreaming Red: Creating ArtPace*, late San Antonio icon Linda Pace (1945-2007) explained that in 1998, she decided the artist residency program she'd founded just five years prior was in need of a new director. Her ideal candidate? "A young woman with a strong background in contemporary art."

Working with an executive search firm, Pace eventually found someone who met all her criteria: Kathryn Kanjo, a California native then working in Oregon as a curator of contemporary art at the Portland Art Museum.

Kanjo, who succeeded inaugural director Laurence Miller, took the Artpace reins in 1999 and led the nonprofit for seven years, furthering its international recognition, establishing a board of directors and helping conceptualize Chris Park, a quaint urban oasis dedicated to Pace's late son Chris Goldsbury.

Following her Artpace tenure, Kanjo returned to her California roots, first directing the University Art Museum at UC Santa Barbara and then rising from deputy director to director and CEO of the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. However, she still maintains close ties to Pace's legacy as a Linda Pace Foundation trustee and curator of "Waking Dream," the inaugural exhibition at Ruby City, the contemporary art center Pace conceived in a dream.

What can you share about selecting the artwork for the inaugural exhibition? Did the space call for anything that surprised you?

Dreams were important to Linda. The fantastical image of a Ruby City came to Linda in a dream. For the inaugural exhibition, I wanted to capture a spirit of the fantastical, as well, by highlighting the surreal quality of much of the work Linda collected. In “Waking Dream,” many of the pieces hover between the recognizable and the otherworldly, often suggesting themes of vulnerability and resilience.



Photo by Bryan Rindfuss. Marina Abramovic's *Chair for a Man and His Spirit* draws attention to Ruby City's architecture.

From my understanding, Linda Pace was quite humble about her own artwork. Can you imagine what her reaction might be to see it hanging at Ruby City alongside the work of artists she collected?

Although Linda didn't display her own work in her home, she was always honored to see her creations in exhibitions and in others' collections. In many ways, “Waking Dream” is a kind of portrait of Linda Pace, both as a collector and as an artist. Her interests and passions are reflected in the art she admired as well as the work she made.

I've heard that Linda Pace wasn't fond of the term “museum.” With Ruby City now a reality, is it important that we make a distinction between it being a museum or a contemporary art space or another designation?

Even as Linda wanted Ruby City to be a gift to the public — to San Antonio — she was resistant to name it a “museum.” She felt the term carried associations of formality, authority and bureaucracy. Instead, Linda was keen to offer visitors the opportunity for a direct encounter with the art objects that affected her so strongly.

I'd imagine the Linda Pace Foundation's acquisition process is fairly involved, but are there specific works or artists out there that you think Linda Pace would want shown at Ruby City if they became accessible?

“Waking Dream” debuts several new acquisitions that build upon Linda's interests and sensibilities. We are honored to present a recent work by Joyce J. Scott, an early Artpace resident and MacArthur Fellow. The blown-glass sculpture presents a crimson figure, suggestive of both a seated Buddha and African sculpture, birthing a clear glass infant. The fantastic scene links the power of motherhood to spiritual and elemental references.



Photo by Bryan Rindfuss. Joyce J. Scott's Murano glass sculpture *Breathe* is among the Linda Pace Foundation's recent acquisitions.