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SURFACE TREATMENT

What: *Homecoming 2016*
Where: Art Basel Miami, Miami Beach
When: Dec 1-4, 2016
Info: Ma. Elena Macias at 956-665-3480

African Diaspora

Art Basel Miami will include a work from the Rio Grande Valley for its 2016 show! UTRGV art professor, Lorenzo Pace, was invited to participate with his collaborative work, "Homecoming 2016". Under his creative direction, the large installation has been completed and sent to its exhibition destination in Miami. The installation celebrates the opening of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture and will be a part of Art Basel's *Afrotopia: African Diaspora and Politics of Representation*. Art Basel is a mega art fair hosting the world's preeminent Modern and Contemporary art shows, and rotates annually among Basel, Hong Kong, and Miami Beach. This fair will feature art from 269 galleries representing 29 countries, and include about 4,000 artists.

"Homecoming 2016" is a mixed media mural installation manifesting the spirit of collaboration and unity, and references the African dispersion to the New World. Its creation included UTRGV staff, faculty, and students, as well as drawings by Betts Elementary School children. The mural's narrative is based on Pace's book, *Jalani and the Lock*, which detailed the enslavement and passage of Steven Pace – Lorenzo's ancestor - to America. Inspired by the book, Betts Elementary School students created

drawings that are included in the boat section of the mural. The elementary school is named after Melissa Dodson Betts, the first African American teacher in the Rio Grande Valley.

The mural installation consists of four parts: Africa, the celebration in DC for the opening of the new museum, passage to the New World, and the new museum that officially recognizes the African American experience. Colorfully painted palm fronds that take on the aura of exotic feathers/stylized foliage border the work. Strands of holiday lights are strung across the work in celebration of its theme. "The art installation could have been extremely difficult without the help and assistance of some of the most creative minds here in our school of art," confessed Pace. "I must give credit to my colleagues: Susan Fitzsimmons – Director, School of Art, Robert Axtell, Julietta Rivera, Donna Sweigart, Tim Gonchoroff, Carl Vestweber, Marilyn Carren, Thomas Murray, Corinne Whittemore, Douglas Clark, Jonathan Hernandez, Yazmine De Leon, Estefania Mongrell, Gloria Reyes, Maritza Munoz, Vilma Flores, and Lorena Pena."

Pace elaborated on the concept of Afrotopia: "It's a new paradigm for deciphering African American art history as being part of American history, not separate," he said. "Leaving the traditional European paradigm, "Afrotopia" is the African diaspora: the whole aspect of Africans coming from abroad into the New World - just the whole diaspora. This will be the term that incorporates the African American experience in the Americas."

Included in the recently published volume, *African-American Art: A Visual and Cultural History* by Lisa Farrington, Pace is classified as a Postmodernist, best known for his Afro-centric performances and installations incorporating live and recorded music and oration, recycled objects, wood sculptures, and found materials. He is noted for his "Triumph of the Human Spirit" sculpture in Foley Square, Manhattan, the world's largest monument dedicated to the African-American.

"Homecoming 2016" is truly a phenomenon of art by committee.

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