

MIAMI BOOK FAIR'S WYNWOOD MURAL INSPIRES "READING, WRITING, AND EMPOWERMENT"

BY DANA DE GREFF

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2015 | 24 HOURS AGO



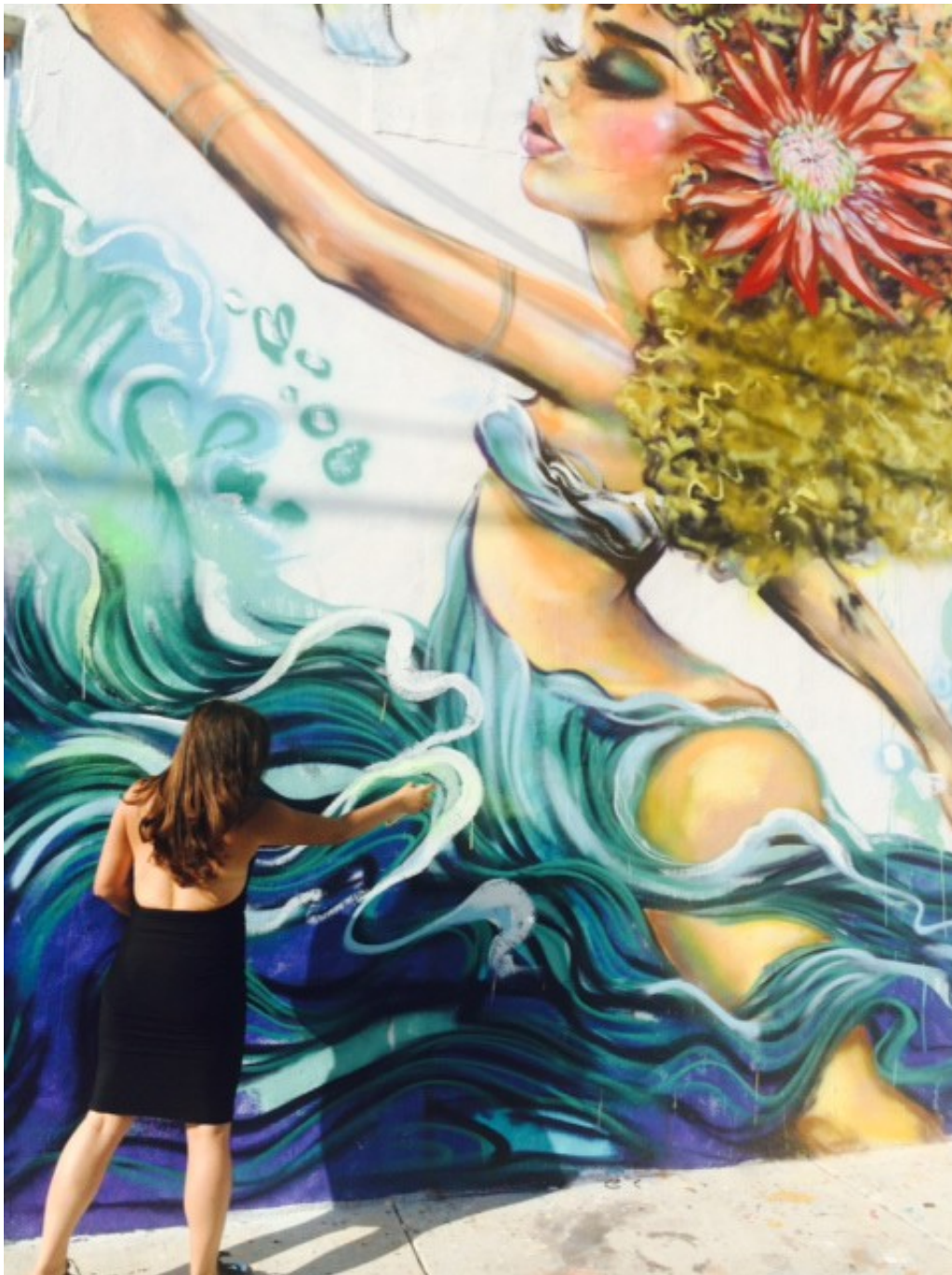
Scene from *Three Muses*

Photo by Dana De Greff

On Saturday afternoon, hundreds flocked to Wynwood for the Miami Book Fair International's mural unveiling party. The MBFI departed from their traditional poster format to do something a bit more edgy this year, turning to the streets of Miami for inspiration. The commissioned mural, entitled *Three Muses*, was painted by Miami Dade College alumna and internationally acclaimed artist Diana "Didi" Contreras.

"I had done a previous mural of a woman with this flowing dress, and when the book fair people were looking for designs, that's the piece from my portfolio that they loved and they wanted to do something based off of that," said Contreras.

Peruvian-born Contreras not only paints murals, she also exhibits in various galleries and her work has been shown in exhibitions and private collections around the world. Although she's a classically trained painter, she's self-taught when it comes to spray painting.



Contreras with *Three Muses*

Photo by Dana De Greff

“For the mural, I came up with three different muses,” she said. “One is African-American, one is Latina, and one is Caucasian – they’re all coming out of the South Beach waters and they’re all surrounded by books. The muses are supposed to inspire reading, knowledge, and empowerment.”

Located at the corner of NW 25th Street and Second Avenue, the mural was photographed by the *Miami Herald*'s Carl Juste and viewers were encouraged to take pictures and selfies with the wall and post it with the hashtag #MiamiReads. To combat the heat, there were popsicles

and vouchers for Jugofresh cold-pressed juices.

Like many people working in the arts, Contreras works a day job as an elementary school teacher. “We haven’t been able to go to the book fair in the past. Usually, it’s so crazy because they have to do testing and field trips, but I really want to take them this year,” she says about wanting to take her school children to the book fair. Contreras worked around her busy schedule to finish the mural, coming after work, spray painting on weekends, and balancing her teaching gig to finish in time for the unveiling.

“*Three Muses* is going to be the official book fair poster this year and it’s the first time the Miami Book Fair doing something like this,” said Contreras. “I’m so honored to have been chosen to be the first person to do a poster like this. It feels amazing.”

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