

Green Space Miami / UNVEILING POWER: Examining Influence

2024 Open Call

<https://greenspacemiami.org/unveiling-power/>

How does your submission respond to the 2024 open call theme "Unveiling Power: Examining Influence"?

***No Coffee Table* by John DeFaro**

My instinctive creative drive will help represent this submission just as it did during the initial months after my HIV+ diagnosis in 1987. In my early twenties, as a self-taught Queer artist, I could not fully grasp the depth of the shock. Life alternated between agonizingly slow and overwhelmingly fast. I possess a defining account of HIV/AIDS, illness, and the experience of disability in a culture of powerful repressive heteronormativity and compulsory ablebodiedness.

In 1996, I moved to Miami, drawn to the year-round green. Gardening became a source of healing and a new lifeline, leading me to discover my "green religion." This eco-spirited belief is not about traditional theocracy but finding divine guidance through connecting with nature. I view green religion as reframing spirituality, enabling both secular and religious individuals to recognize the sacredness of the natural world.

"No Coffee Table" is an installation consisting of two artworks. These pieces, crafted with a depth of narrative, symbolize eco-consciousness and the influence of banned books. Book bans often signal the significance and perceived threat of worldviews. Examining banned books provides insight into free speech, intellectual freedom, and the evolving social and political landscape. Recently, book bans have targeted works addressing race, LGBTQ issues, and now, climate change.

In 2024, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed legislation removing the term "climate change" from state statutes and altering the state's energy policy, extending censorship to educational materials. Books, especially coffee table books, carry irony. "No Coffee Table" challenges validating a coffee table adorned with 'acceptable' books, questioning whether these books give depth and soul to a table—or a space. A traditional table is rendered obsolete and transformed into influential 3D art.

"No Coffee Table" spans the populace, science, and politics, asserting the power to connect in a home. The artworks satirically comment on the invalidation of a communal coffee table and how a suggestive object of design and reason can become an art form. Presented free, "No Coffee Table" relies on art-making to attract and engage supporters. It fights for the places we love: our biodiverse ecosystems on Earth and within our minds.

Description of work

No Coffee Table No. 1 and No. 2 / Installation by John DeFaro

Phase 1: Creation of drawings, maquettes, and tests.

Phase 2: *No Coffee Table No. 1.* Hands-on fabrication. 3D sculpture. To be realized and exhibited.

Image files: 01,02,03,04 / Smaller version created and photographed for this submission for reference.

Materials:

One larger custom hand-fabricated 40 by 60 by 6-inch birch wood art panel will be secured to the board with two 16-inch-high wood corner supports (legs). Measured rows of thicker natural jute rope will also be secured to the panel.

3 to 4 gallons of satin acrylic paint, artist's human hair, dried Royal Poinciana tree seed pod coat (skin).

Thirty-eight (38) coats will be amply applied to the artwork surface (38 years HIV+), with each coat numbered in ink on the rear/bottom of the artwork. Multiple paint layers will create a thick, monochromatic, leathery surface with a unique texture.

Two hand-fabricated wood composite forty-five-degree corner supports (legs) will be hand-embellished with pencil, oil pastel, and paint to suggest a whimsical folkloric wood grain texture.

Phase 3: *No Coffee Table No. 2.* 3D Maquette. 2024.

(maquette)

10 by 10 by 1.5-inch cotton gallery wrap canvas. It has the same paint application as *No Coffee Table No. 1*. Four 2.25-inch salvaged repurposed American Black Walnut wood corner supports (legs) are secured to the canvas wood stretcher. Turning the painting on its side alludes to a classic 2D artwork, and in this case, suggesting a coffee table rendered obsolete and awkward and becoming a 3D art with an abstract motive.

NOTE: Space permitting, I would consider omitting the maquette and fabricating a full-scale 40 by 40inch *No Coffee Table No. 2* artwork for either a floor display or a wall display, with the painted canvas floating 3 to 4 inches off the wall—a wise investment of funds.

Notes:

Rope, as a bonding material, can serve as a metaphor for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. It can also honor sacred spaces and speak to constraint.

Adding the artist's hair to the painting identifies and symbolizes authenticity and promise

Adding Royal Poinciana seedpod skin to the paint incorporates Florida-sourced organic materials, referencing a seed's purpose and protecting the life within.

The American Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*) tree is relatively rare in the wild and threatened by climate change, disease, and urbanization. The corner legs are this repurposed salvaged wood.

///

These smaller versions below were fabricated for my submission. *No Coffee Table No. 2* will remain small and exhibited on a pedestal.



No Coffee Table No. 1 (on floor) and No Coffee Table No. 2 (Pedestal) These are smaller versions fabricated for my submission.



No Coffee Table No. 1 (smaller version / detail floor angle)
Larger 42 by 62 by 18-inches to be fabricated for exhibition



No Coffee Table No. 1 (smaller version detail for my submission. Corner leg. Colored pencil on birch wood.



No Coffee Table No. 2 / front and back'

This will remain the smaller version for the exhibit. Pedestal display.