

## MOAD ART INSTALLATION 'BLACK POWER NAPS' BRINGS SLEEP DIVIDE TO LIGHT

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At the front entrance of the interactive installation, “Black Power Naps/Siestas Negras,” there’s a notice: “When You See a Black Person Sleeping, Don’t Call the Cops.” It elicits laughs from some, which isn’t troublesome to artists Navild Acosta and Fannie Sosa, as long as it gets visitors to reflect.

“One of the things that happens with black rest is that it is very policed,” says Sosa. “A black person resting or sleeping in a public space is seen as a public annoyance or loitering. It is a remnant of slavery, when the idea of seeing a black person idle was that they were rebelling.”

The interactive installation, which opened Oct. 24, is part of the ongoing “Where the Oceans Meet” exhibition at the Museum of Art and Design at Miami Dade College in the Freedom Tower. Set up as a series of embellished beds, the art is meant to make a statement about the sleep gap disparity between white and black Americans, while providing relief from what the duo calls “fatiguing systems of inequality.”

The two describe the installation as an intersection of art and politics.

“This is an art project, but it has a strong political statement of policy in public space,” Acosta says.

Citing history, Sosa says sleep deprivation was used as a tool during slavery: “When you are sleep-deprived, you cannot imagine. They could not scheme if they were sleep-deprived. This is still operating today.”

The Afro-Latinx artists/activists cite studies that found black Americans are five times more likely to get less sleep than white Americans, because of factors such as discriminatory housing policies and income inequality.

The beds are meant to encourage participants not only to relax but to consider this sleep divide.

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Approximate Visitors Per Month: 10,444

“The art world is where we can garner momentum to call attention to the racial sleep disparity, which is not going anywhere,” Sosa says. “It has been active for centuries, and we need to do something about it.”

The central piece in the exhibition is the “Polycrastination Station,” a giant bed that is four times the size of a full-sized mattress and has a hanging mirror above it. The idea is for participants to lie back and look at themselves.

There are ports and outlets for charging cell phones. The charging station has many uses: Charge your device; charge yourself; take selfies; recharge your social media.

The “Black Bean Bed,” a pit full of uncooked black beans that can hold seven people at one time, is meant to be physically restorative. The artists discovered research that beans can help alleviate pressure and swelling in the body.

The “Pelvic Floor” is a trampoline bed. A vibrating waterbed serves as a meditative space.



A trampoline bed is part of the interactive , “Black Power Naps/Siestas Negras” installation. Photo courtesy of Navild Acosta and Fannie Sosa

“The pieces all have their personalities. People are drawn to one or another because everyone has a different proposal for the body at rest,” Acosta says.

During the run of the show, there will be live events including guided nap meditations led by the artists and live deeJay soundscapes performed from bed.

On Dec. 5, Acosta and Sosa will conduct a Platonic Play Party, which the pair have been workshopping.

“We have found that actual touch is one of the key components to good rest,” Sosa says.

The event will explore platonic touch. “For so many people, touch comes from traumatized touch, or through sexual interactions, clinical touch, or violent touch,” Acosta adds. Their hope is that one day there is a space in society that promotes safe and reassuring touch.

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“Black Power Naps/Siestas Negras” debuted in Madrid in 2018, and was on exhibit at the Performance Space New York in January and February 2019. Immediately before its Miami debut, it was at Red Bull Arts Detroit.

With the installation on display through Miami Art Week and the influx of crowds expected to arrive in the city for Art Basel 2019, the artists are interested in studying how the convergence of many different types of people will impact the installation.

“Art Basel is a platform for what is a marketplace in many ways for art. What we are offering is a place to simply just recover from everything that you are going to be absorbing during a heightened marketplace situation,” Sosa says, adding that their installation is not for sale. “At least not at this time.”

In fact, their work is the antithesis of marketplace art. “‘Black Power Naps’ is a space where you don’t have to be producing in terms of capitalistic work,” Sosa says. “You can come and imagine, dream and take a break.”

*“Black Power Naps/Siestas Negras” is on view through Jan. 12, 2020, at the Museum of Art and Design at MDC in the Freedom Tower, 600 Biscayne Blvd., Miami. Hours: 1-6 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays-Sundays, and 1-8 p.m. Thursdays. Admission: \$12, \$8, \$5. Free admission for MOAD members, MDC students, faculty and staff, and children age 12 and younger. Information: [mdcmoad.org](http://mdcmoad.org); 305-237-7700.*

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