

## Michele Oka Doner

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Michele is an internationally acclaimed artist whose career spans over 40 years. She is a native South Floridian who grew up on Miami Beach where her father, Kenneth Oka was a judge and Mayor. This is where it all started, back in the hey-day of Miami Beach. The treasures that washed upon the beach fascinated and nurtured Michele as she was growing up. The colorful sunsets, the hurricanes, thunderstorms, tides, the flora and fauna all captivated her. Her childhood walks along the beach would help shape and mold her indelible and inimitable artistic style. She is a versatile artist and is at ease whether she is creating sculpture, furniture, jewelry or utilitarian art. She has completed numerous public art commissions, including the aquatic terrazzo flooring of the Miami International Airport. There are very few artists today whose work and style seamlessly cross the multiple boundaries between art, design and architecture.



Her sculptures and utilitarian art objects are in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Miami Art Museum and the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum. Our multifaceted artistic diva has even written several publications including *Natural Seduction* (2003), *Workbook* (2004) and *Human Nature* (2008).

Michele's current exhibition *Exhaling Gnosis* was organized by the Miami Biennale. The Miami Biennale was founded by Milagros Maldonado. Their main mission is to promote art and culture by advocating creative dialogues and by stimulating public/private initiatives in Miami. Kudos to Milagros for inviting Michele to exhibit during this year's ABMB. Milagros, a renowned curator and gallerist from Venezuela, has a keen eye for gifted talent. *Exhaling Gnosis* opened during ABMB and is currently on view at the Miami Print Shop Gallery located at 3000 North Miami Avenue, Miami, Florida 33127. The gallery is open free to the public from Thursday through Saturday from 10:00 am – 4:00 pm. The exhibition closes on April 29, 2012.

This is Michele's first major show of works on paper. The exhibition includes sixteen 40 x 60 inch handmade abaca paper, seven totemic relief prints made from organic materials and a series of prints. When I first walked into the gallery, I stopped dead in my tracks and gazed at all of the captivating drawings of plants and animals along the wall. This set of works on paper was the mockup used for the Miami International Airport project. Michelle graciously donated the entire collection of works on paper to the Miami Art Museum. A generous and wise move on Michelle's part as the museum has a team of savvy registrars who are up to the challenge of protecting this paper treasure trove from Miami's humid climate. Local art collector Peter Menéndez did a fabulous job of curating the exhibition. Private group tours can be arranged by contacting [events@miamibiennale.org](mailto:events@miamibiennale.org).

Michele's unique works of art aptly capture the spirit and form of the flora and fauna of our natural world and of South Florida in particular. What a wonderful opportunity to witness the works on paper that were used to create the amazing terrazzo floors at the Airport. On your next travels abroad make sure you stop by Terminal D, Level 2 and check out her three installations; *A Walk on the Beach*, 1995 – 1998, *The Galaxy*, 2008 and *From Seashore to Tropical Garden*. Make sure you visit local artist Carlos Betancourt's installation *About the Temporal and Universal Substance II*, Maria Martinez-Cañas *Años Continuos*, 1996 and Donal Lipski's *Got Any Jacks?* **Yolanda Sanchez**, Director of the Airports' **Mia Galleries** does an outstanding job of welcoming our visiting tourists with museum quality art installations.

By Tina Cornely

**Read more here:** <http://artmiami.tv/articles-2/michele-oka-doner-draft/>

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