

# OCEAN DRIVE

*Explore the Anatomy of Happiness at the NSU Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale's Latest Showcase*

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*The NSU Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale explores the fine art of good cheer.*



*"Ladybug" by Alake Shilling*

Of all the feelings evoked by today's contemporary artists, happiness is not only one of the least common emotions, it's often viewed by art critics as downright frivolous— even suspect. So credit Miami with bucking a national trend.

"In the late 1990s and early 2000s in Miami," explains NSU Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale director and chief curator Bonnie Clearwater; "a number of young artists that I had been working with had a very purposeful philosophy; that through their art they could give the viewer a sense of well-being, which they would then carry out into the world and, in essence, make the world a better place. I thought this was such an interesting approach, particularly at a time when so much art was about irony and cynicism." Several of those homegrown talents, including Friends With You, Jorge Pantoja and Frances



Trombly, are all part of the museum's new Clearwatercurated exhibition, Happy! Indeed, many of the show's artworks hail from figures associated with a sense of whimsy—the cartoonlike designs of Keith Haring, the balloon sculptures of animals by Jeff Koons, the “Cosmic Cavern” installation by Kenny Scharf whose riot of Day-Glo colors creates a sense of sensory overload.

Yet other works in the show purposely recast key contemporary artists in a new light. Conceptualist Felix Gonzalez-Torres, whose art is often thought of as suffused with a sense of tragedy and loss, is represented by two of his pieces that focus on a spirit of generosity. Andy Warhol, most immediately known for his wry takes on pop culture, receives his own room for a restaging of his 1966 “Silver Clouds” installation—pillowlike clouds that float midair as museumgoers wade through them, often leaving people giddy (and offering what is certain to be this art season's selfie bait du jour).'

“Warhol specifically wanted you to experience a sense of euphoria and bliss,” notes Clearwater about the pillows. “Being surrounded by them gives a sense of how important play is.” All of which is very serious business, she adds. “Nothing is simple here. The subject of this show is the pursuit of happiness. It doesn't mean anybody's achieved it, but we are going to keep trying.” Opening Oct. 27, NSU Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale.