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SITE-SPECIFIC DANCE TAKES ROOT AT ASPEN IDEAS: CLIMATE IN MIAMI BEACH

Written By Taima Hervas
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- The inaugural Aspen Ideas: Climate in Miami Beach incorporated visual and performing arts as part of the conversation. Miami Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs' Arts Resilient 305 Initiative and the City of Miami Beach mobilized Miami's arts community to create site specific art experiences for attendees and featured three Miami choreographers and their dance collectives performing work focused on nature, humanity, place and issues of climate change.

The activations were presented outdoors at the Miami Beach Botanical Garden and at Collins Canal Park. The conference took place May 9 through 12 and is expected to become an annual event.

“Such Rooted Things,” by Dale Andree, choreographer, dance artist, filmmaker and educator, presented the final performance day on May 11 at the Collins Canal Park. Andree is the founder and director of the National Water Dance (NWD), an expansive state and nationwide collaborative dance project which connects nature, dancers, and audiences simultaneously through water and dance.

Originally created by Andree for the mangroves of Miami's Matheson Hammock Park, “Such Rooted Things” was adapted to the site of the Collins Canal Park, a long narrow park designed to adapt to climate change and sea-level rise.



Dancers Sunyoung Park, Deja Darbonne, Diane Cano and Stephanie Franco in Dale Andree's "Such Rooted Things" at Collins Canal Park as part of Aspen Ideas: Climate in Miami Beach. (Photo courtesy of: Mateo Serna Zapata)

On Andree's canal pathway stage, birds both real and created opened the performance. A group of three performance artists Kael Baez, Luciano Cortes, and Jacabel Guerra became wholly birdlike as they emulated, wielded, and propelled their paper-mâché birds made by local sixth-graders from Carver Middle School. The bird-dancers moved together harmoniously with their birds, they lifted, arched, spun, glided and dropped their arms, and they gave the students' creations the power to fly virtually unfettered, and occasionally they even flushed out a real bird which took flight up into the sky.

National Water Dance Project dancers Sunyoung Park, Deja Darbonne, Dianne Cano, Stephanie Franco, Flavie Audibert and Mary Spring, all costumed in hand painted natural tones rooted themselves in the living beauty of the oaks, scrub palms, ferns, mangrove trees, birds and butterflies. They moved together down the path to the live music of Miami's AfroBeta lyricist/vocalist Cuci Amador and synth-centric producer/arranger Tony "Smurphio."

As dancer Park crawled close to the ground on all fours, she dug into the dirt with hands and fingers and reached out towards dancer Franco, who in turn crawled toward Park in the same way. They reached toward each other and the space between them closed in as they formed a visceral connection to each other through the earth. In this way, dirtied but determined they connected through an impactful, improvised, and emotive dance movement.



Jacabel Guerra and Flavie Audibert in Dale Andree's "Such Rooted Things," a site-specific performance in Collins Canal Park, Miami Beach. (Photo courtesy of Mateo Serna Zapata)

Nearby, in another space in the park, next to one of the huge aluminum sculptures from Dutch artist Joep van Lieshout's "Humanoids," dancer Spring unrolled herself upwards, from bent to standing she unfurled her body upwards through the air and unraveled.

With her fingers bent inwards like claws, her arms circled each other one over the next, she grasped at the thin air between herself and the tree as if there was something there that she had to find even though it was invisible. Her progress was less beautiful than painful, her face determined, her movements relentless to reach out and find something tangible in the air.

Spring has been with Andree for 30 years and after the performance said, "For me, it's really about imagining or envisioning myself as an element in nature, as a human being in nature, not outside of it. And I think that is part of Dale's message, that we have to remind ourselves to remember that we are a part of nature. We don't stand outside of it."