



PANDEMIC PERSPECTIVES

Life amid the coronavirus reveals itself in a variety of ways through the creative lens of talented artists throughout South Florida

By Kevin Kaminski

PANDEMIA

By Claudia Echeverría

About the piece: The Miami-based artist (known as CLoD in the art world) started this ambitious 6-foot-by-13-foot canvas (acrylic and oil pigment) at the beginning of the quarantine. "Back then, we were a mess; there was so much misinformation and fear. This large-format piece became alive, speaking back to me about vulnerability, fear and inner peace. You can find yourself in there if you look close enough."

For more on the artist: clodclod.com



DEEP IN THOUGHT

By Chen H. Bitton

About the piece: The South Florida artist (originally from Israel) is curator of the Q.U.A.R.A.N.T.I.N.E. online exhibition/auction (see sidebar). Bitton also contributed her own creative expression about the pandemic. The 4-foot-by-3-foot acrylic work touches on the question, what is life about? "Caught between Earth and heaven, the soul and body are one—yet forever suspended in midair between one another in deep contemplation and awe."

For more on the artist: bittonart.com; paintingpicnik.com



THOSE WHO GO TO WORK GREET YOU

By Carlos Joao Alvz

About the piece: This intriguing visual, part of the Q.U.A.R.A.N.T.I.N.E. project, depicts a town of people, some who need the work (the "seen"), while others don't (the "unseen"). The unseen "can afford to hide away, while the others can't."

For more on the artist: [@carlosjalvz](https://www.instagram.com/carlosjalvz) (Instagram)



LOVE CAN BEAT 6 FEET

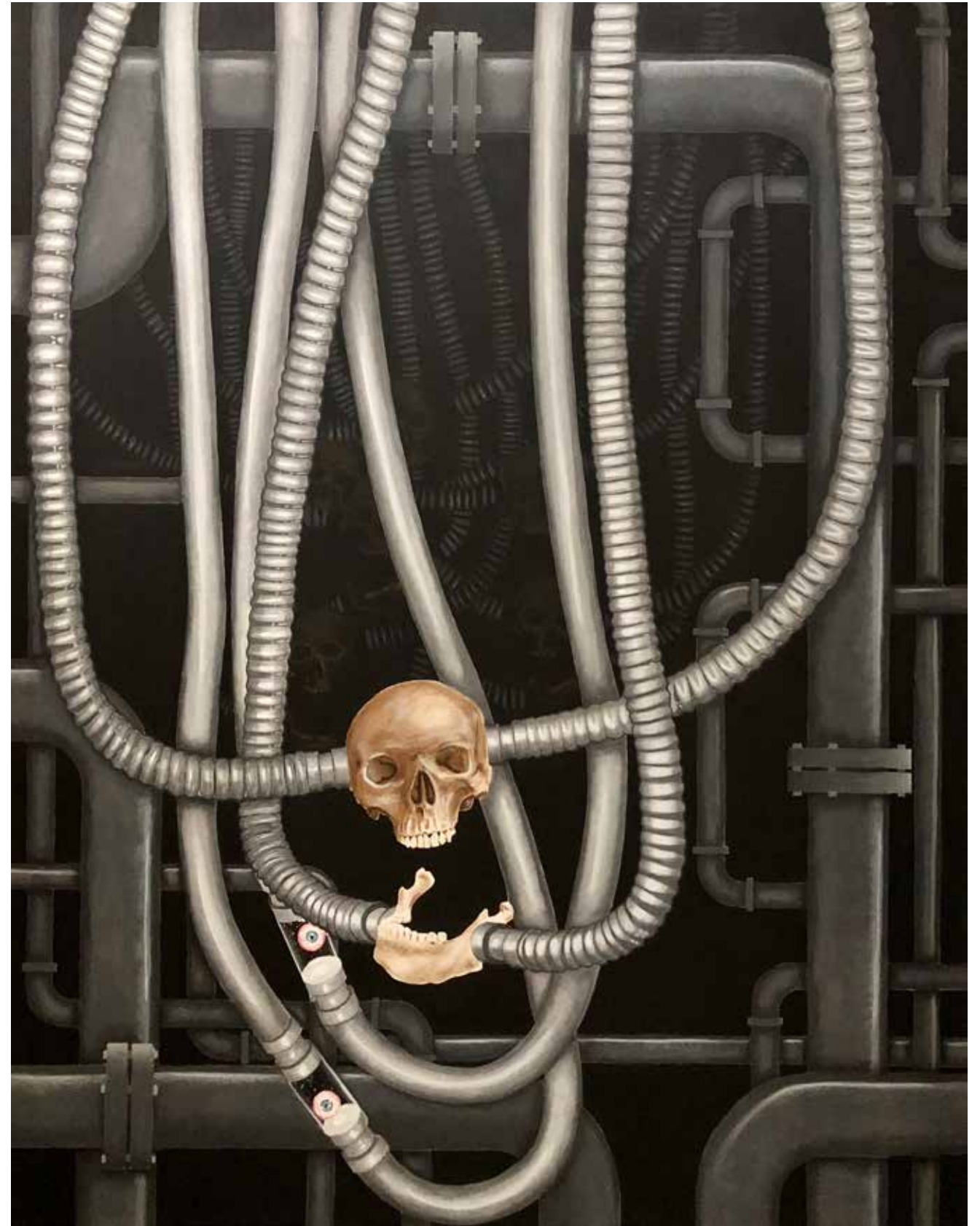
By Stephanie Leyden

About the piece: The part-painting, part-drawing (fused together in Photoshop) touches on social distancing—and global kindness. "Love is a universal language, and the two cats depict this in such a neutral and simplistic way. It shows our unique ability as humans to overcome and triumph over hardships with something as simple as love and companionship."

For more on the artist:

[@StephLeydenArts](https://www.facebook.com/StephLeydenArts) (Facebook);

[@Steph.LeydenArt](https://www.instagram.com/Steph.LeydenArt) (Instagram)



PIPELINES LEADING TOWARD THE UNKNOWN

By Joe Bondanella

About the piece and artist: The artist, photographer and cartoonist—born and raised in Fort Lauderdale—produced this acrylic piece (on a 3-foot-by-4-foot canvas) for Chen Bitton's Q.U.A.R.A.N.T.I.N.E. project. It illustrates our detachment resulting from the "deprivation of our lifestyle and connectedness of society" and the idea of "contemplating an unknown future as we hang onto the hopes of not falling into the perils of a dystopian economy."

LOVE PREVAILS

By Chen H. Bitton and
Joey Ace

About the piece: In this pop art computer image, Mickey and Minnie share a COVID-era kiss against the backdrop of Alfred Eisenstaedt's iconic World War II-era photograph from V-J Day in New York's Times Square.

For more on the artists: bittonart.com,
paintingpicnik.com;
aceartmovement.com



I=US

By Anat Ronen

About the piece: Another contribution to the Q.U.A.R.A.N.T.I.N.E. project, this computer-generated piece speaks for itself.
For more on the artist: anatronen.com



U ARE NOT THE ONLY ONE

By Dorvilier Olivier

About the piece: The self-taught artist, born in Brooklyn (where his sister and mother are registered nurses), is known for his abstract and realism canvas paintings. This acrylic and spray-paint creation, part of the Q.U.A.R.A.N.T.I.N.E. project, points to the shortage of masks, testing kits and medical supplies across the country, and suggests that "no one is facing this matter of shortages alone."

For more on the artist: [@dorvilier.art](https://www.instagram.com/dorvilier.art) (Instagram)



1972

By Kristin M. Beck

About the piece: The mixed media effort (paper, collage and thread) is about missing people during the quarantine; it includes a photo of Beck and her father in 1972. "As I [complete] my 48th circle around the sun [her birthday was in May], I'm thinking of how thread binds so many things, how permanent photographs seem, and how fleeting time is."

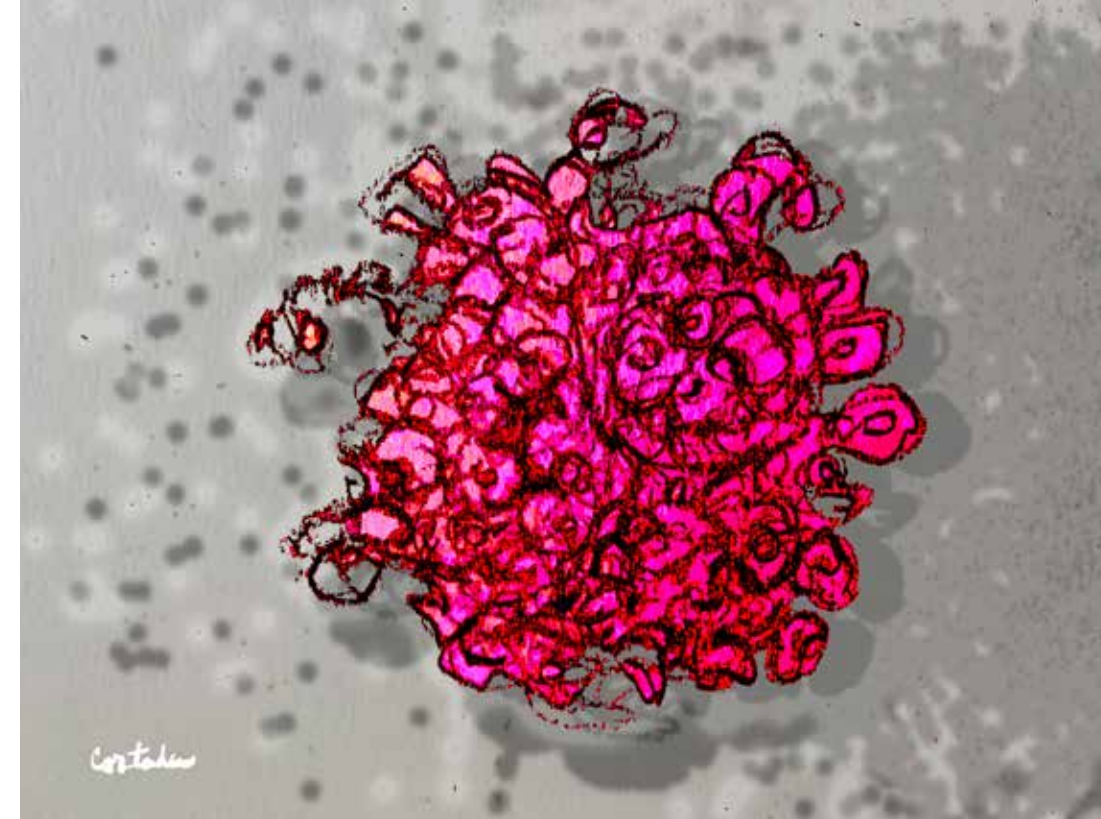
For more on the artist: kristinbeck.com



EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE OK?!

By Jill Lefkowitz

About the piece: Produced for Chen Bitton's Q.U.A.R.A.N.T.I.N.E. project, this acrylic painting (on a 30-inch-by-40-inch canvas) emerged from the artist's happy, meditative state (thus the bright, vibrant colors). "As with most of my work, the painting is spontaneous, revealing a sense of community, inclusivity and warmth with a focus on hope. The figurative abstracts merge ancient and contemporary cultures intertwined to show their strength and unity." **For more on the artist:** jillcreatesart.com



CORONAVIRUS

By Xavier Cortada

About the piece: The University of Miami professor created this digital artwork to launch his "Miami Corona Project," a real-time record—from people communicating through different platforms—of the impact the pandemic has had on Miami-Dade County.

For more on the artist: cortadaprojects.org/corona

STANDING STRONG

By Diana Escamilla

About the piece: The CEO/owner of DXE Studios enjoys painting trees; to her, they represent strength and wisdom. But in this acrylic/ink piece (on canvas), she also incorporated a face mask. "I walked into Publix to [shop on behalf of] my mom. I felt awkward about wearing a mask, but I saw that everyone looked the same. ... I realized that these masks not only were part of our fashion—but part of our history. Behind each mask was a person just like me, with the same fears, on the same mission—to keep each other safe."

For more on the artist: @dxestudios (social media); dxestudios.com



PLAYING WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

By Mindy Shrago

About the piece: Beyond the flamingo's inherent beauty and grace, the CEO/executive director of Young At Art Museum in Davie felt the bird reminded us of a time when social distancing wasn't part of day-to-day conversation. "Flamingos live and feed in groups. They travel in a flock as a safety measure against predators. See this as a symbol that, soon, we will travel together, unified in our fight against what is the COVID-19 predator."

For more on the artist: @minshrago (Facebook and Instagram); youngartmuseum.org

THE Q.U.A.R.A.N.T.I.N.E. PROJECT

South Florida artist Chen H. Bitton has curated an online exhibition, auction and fundraiser that's set for June 6-9. The project brings together artists from different backgrounds and funnels the COVID-19 experience through their creative prisms. The exhibition is merging with Artist Relief Tree, with much of the proceeds going to that foundation's fund for artists affected by cancellations due to the coronavirus. To review the artwork and bid on pieces during the auction, visit artistrelieftree.com/artgallery. Copies of the original works will be available after the auction.

IN TIMES SUCH AS THESE

Poem by Darius V. Daughtry

In times such as these
we see the mettle of men
a woman's worth
we see what you are made of

when we can easily hole up
not just in our homes
but our minds
find those easy things on which to lean
differences
our own devices
fear

good old fear be like riding a bike
muscle memory like a motherf---a
pedaling palpitations
mind racing
like dogs
or dudes on the block chasing

breaking news alerts have made us
forget
forget what we've been through
bush and brush and brush fire
we been in the fire and swallowed the
flame

hallowed be the name
of the reflection in your mirror, sweet boy
strong lady
May we remember
in times such as these
when foundations seem faulty
you thought bedrock
feels more like quicksand

You reach for help
but don't know if his hand gone
pull you up or push you under

Remember who you are
recall the stardust in your fingertips
the middle passage
floods
tsunamis
hurricanes in your veins

your blood is legendary

and it may get scary
it will get scary
words may fail
but wisdom never needed a syllable
wisdom seeped into your cells
centuries ago
wisdom is a prize fighter with
a hell of right hook
just look
listen
in the in-between
in between the noise
in between breaths and deaths
in between the dark spaces in
the firmament
and notice us up there around
Orion's waist

You a star, baby
and a comet
black hole
soul with sinews of gravity
don't fold under your own weight

we done been to the mountaintop and
built the mountain
done danced with the devil and made
luggage of skin

So, then, in times such as these
it's cool to feel all the feels
let them marinate,
but not for too long
We got some living to do.

Darius Daughtry is the founder and artistic director of Art Prevails Project. His recent book of poetry is titled And the Walls Came Tumbling. Visit dariusdaughtry.com to learn more. (Photo by Eduardo Schneider)

