

Bal Harbour's second "Unscripted" public art commission debuts



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BAL HARBOUR, FLA.- As the next iteration of its ongoing support for the arts in South Florida, Bal Harbour has unveiled "Self Portrait As a Barefoot Mailman," by artist Christy Gast as part of the destination's public art program, "Unscripted." Gast's 12-foot high sculptural installation, will be showcased in the center of Collins Avenue, on Bal Harbour's Founder Circle through the summer. Installed headfirst in the ground, as if blown-over, the faux bronze sculpture made of fiberglass is a testament to the area's legendary barefoot mailman, a real historic figure who delivered mail on the first U.S. mail route between Palm Beach and Miami in the 1880's before there were major roads. Drawing on the history of South Florida as well as Miami Dade's history of public sculpture, Gast has created a playful alternative to the traditionally overstated and masculinized civic monument.

Past artworks by sculptor and video artist Christy Gast often feature herself in costume as the central character, making it natural for Gast to transform this mailman figure into her likeness. Gast had a laser scan taken of herself dressed up as the legendary mailman assuming a monument-like posture, and used this as the basis for the sculpture. In doing so, she presents a subterfuge - an impersonation of the character of the mailman, infused with her female persona. Gast also adds another dimension of humor and unexpected subversion by having "Self Portrait As A Barefoot Mailman" upside-down and partially buried as if having been blown over by a strong storm and landing head-first, a witty gesture to having one's head quite literally "buried in the sand."

The program is supported by the Unscripted Art Chat series that features chats this season. On Thursday, July 11, Unscripted will feature "The Economics of Public Art: A conversation with Christine Y. Kim, and Michael Spring". Public Art Commissions are notoriously expensive and logistically difficult but the art world views these public projects as important. Ms. Kim, the Associate Curator of Contemporary Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Mr. Spring, director of the Department of Cultural Affairs for Miami-Dade County will discuss their public art partnerships and how they have ensured the economic viability and sustainability of their projects.

Art enthusiasts can take home a piece of Unscripted, Bal Harbour's art installation by purchasing a one-off limited-edition print created by Christy Gast for this project. This special edition of 50 prints is available through artsy.net, the premier online platform for discovering, discussing and collecting art. Profits from all sales will go directly back to fund future "Unscripted" commissions.

Gast has exhibited her past work in the U.S. and internationally, including at the Miami Art Museum in Miami, MoMA PS1 in New York, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions in California, Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich and Centro Cultural Matucana 100 in Santiago, Chile.

Created to support and challenge the artistic talents in South Florida, "Unscripted" was launched in November 2012 with "Pax Americana" by first winning artist George Sanchez-Calderon. His two iconic art installations, "Americana" and "Levittown House" were also inspired by Bal Harbour's storied history, both as one of the first planned communities in South Florida as well as home of the original Americana hotel that hosted many presidents and political events.

"Unscripted" is curated by Claire Breukel, who consulted with contemporary art and public art experts including Yvonne Force Villareal, President and Co-Founder of the Art Production Fund; Solita Mishan, a Bal Harbour resident, collector and member of the International Council for TATE London; and celebrated artists Hernan Bas and Hank Willis Thomas on the selection of the winning artists.