



## **Cruise Lines Are Patrons Of The Arts**

By Jane Wooldridge

Each night, a massive video show appears at PortMiami, transporting viewers on a marine journey from shore to mangroves, coral reefs to the depths of the sea. Drivers traveling from downtown to Miami Beach take in the nightly picture show, a complex work by digital artist Danielle Rooney, embedded into the MSC Cruises terminal facade. The \$1 million-plus “Maris” artwork is the result of five years of work, supported by the cruise line.

For emerging and established artists alike, cruise line members of the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) have become meaningful patrons. Across ships of every size – and at terminals too – contemporary art has evolved as a guest amenity that deepens the onboard experience.

“It’s a great conversation starter for our guests,” explains Christopher Prelog, President of Windstar Cruises.

### **Cruise lines meaningfully supporting artists**

When Windstar moved its headquarters from Seattle to Miami in 2022, it partnered with the local nonprofit Fountainhead Arts to commission large-scale murals for three ships, each created by a different emerging artist. The collaboration has been so popular with guests that the company has commissioned three more.

Nice & Easy, a two-person art collaborative of artists Jeffrey Noble and Allison Matherly, painted one of the first murals, a cheerful scene measuring 7 feet by 30 feet, aboard Windstar’s 312-passenger Star Breeze. “It was a unique opportunity,” says Noble. “It’s a very cool idea that our work is out there, sailing around the world.”

A benefit for artists working with cruise lines is they are well compensated, says Fountainhead Arts founder Kathryn Mikesell, noting that cruise companies do not expect emerging artists to just work for exposure.

### **Encouraging creativity**

While some cruise lines purchase existing works for their public spaces, several cruise lines work with art advisors to commission new works that underscore a ship's particular sensibility.

For Seabourn's 264-passenger expedition ship, Seabourn Pursuit, the design team at Adam D. Tihany worked with art curators at London-based Double Decker to commission works reflecting the remote places the ship visits, such as Antarctica. The ship's artwork includes a landscape of glass panels by South Korean-born Sogon Kim and a Double Decker designed geode-like sphere sculpture evoking an inky sky filled with stars and planets.

For brands such as Celebrity Cruises, Royal Caribbean International, and Silversea Cruises, among others, the firm International Corporate Art commissions pieces based on each ship's individual theme. On Silversea's Silver Nova, for instance, artworks use textures and materials to explore hidden meaning. What looks like a tapestry by Federico Miró, for instance, turns out to be a detailed acrylic painting; and "mosaics" by MarieAndrée Côté's are in fact delicate porcelains.

On Royal Caribbean's 5,600-passenger Icon of the Seas, which debuted in 2024 as the world's largest cruise ship, nearly 14,000 artworks subtly reflect a theme of multiculturalism. They include Daniel Arsham's massive archeological-style head with a bi-colored face; and Thandi Wemuriu's colorful pattern-on-pattern photographs. The 4,000 works on sister line Celebrity Cruises' Celebrity Apex include "The Hidden Forrest," a mirrored maze by Kohei Nawa that both calms and confounds. To help guests make the most of the onboard art experience, these brands and others offer guests onboard art tours, whether guided or digitally accessible.

### **Art education onboard ships**

In addition to admiring art, cruise ship guests may have opportunity to create art. On select Oceania Cruises ships, for instance, amidst an extensive multi-million-dollar collection featuring artists such as Eduardo Arranz-Bravo and Joan Miró, art-loving guests may visit the Artist Loft to interact with an artist-in-residence. Sessions may include watercolor painting, collage, and drawing. Artist participants have included Cuban-born Noel Suarez, a dancer-turned-visual artist; Dorothy Simpson Krause, a painter, collage artist, and printmaker; and Annie Marsters, a textile sculptor inspired by African textiles and motifs.

The Artist loft experiences is about discovery and reflection, says Brennan Quesnele, Oceania Cruises' Senior Vice President of Sales, noting that today's consumers "look to collect experiences rather than things."

### **Public art**

When it comes to cruise line-commissioned art, Mooney's "Maris" for the MSC Terminal in Miami takes "unique" to new depths. Her artwork imports live data from sensors on marine

buoys, then converts them into moving images that adjust in scale in real time – with 18 rear projectors showing the work on the building in 365 million pixels.

The result enables Rooney to visually convey a story focused on the cruise line’s commitment to ocean preservation. Says Rooney, “It’s actually communicating something very meaningful and beautiful and poetic but in a tangible way.”

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