

### PAMM is our other children's museum



Franklin Sirmans and I are both Upper Eastside dads transplanted from major, culturally rich cities. Our first-graders attend school and play soccer together. And we both want our kids immersed in the warm waters of Miami's creative community. I'm a working artist. Sirmans is the new director of the Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM).

A successful museum creates spaces where hearts and imaginations catch fire, and the handsome, soft-spoken Sirmans is laser-focused on just that.

"I think there's a level of optimism that goes along with the museum environment that should be part of our children's upbringing," he says. "It's a place where kids can come together from different places and be in that open space that only kids can understand -- where it's visceral, it's atmospheric."

Sirmans rightly sees part of PAMM's mission is to be a desperately needed "bridge" our children require in light of the decimation of art programs in the public schools.

I intend to make PAMM an integral part of my family life, where I regularly meditate or bring my kids for a few hours to get lost in whatever exhibition and educational program is current. A place where they're encouraged to interact and indulge their creative whims.

## A for Art, A for Effort

Written by Stuart Sheldon, BT Contributor  
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Sirmans' eyes light up when describing a recent museum show he visited in Brazil. "It was a show about childhood," he recalls. "And they literally had a Van Gogh hung at 48-inches, so that our kids would walk in and the eyes of the Van Gogh portrait are looking at them. There was this idea of creating a space that was truly just for the kids."

Clearly, with kids in a museum, there must be respect for the environment. They can't be running wild. But at the same time, how do we make them feel at home?

Sirmans doesn't hesitate. "Why can't we have both?" he asks. "A lot of people make work that can be interacted with, touched, listened to. There are so many different ways to hit the senses that we forget sometimes. Sure, we want you to come to the museum and see something that's precious. We also want you to come and have an interaction with things that are not in a precious way."

Watch for a new Sirmans-driven program where eight to ten artists populate and ring the museum with different stations, where they'll make art in various media while visitors engage.

As the museum-goers engage in different forms of creating, they'll enter into "some sort of conversation around what it means to make something," says Sirmans. That notion of "what it means to make something" represents the type of wisdom I dream of passing along to my kids.

As someone who spends the workweek in a studio, I love when my kids visit. I seek to erase the sanctity of art-making and replace it with an everyday normalcy, where they can draw on the walls and chase their imaginative impulses. Any of you reading this are invited to join me with your kids to see how a professional artist functions day to day. Contact me at the e-mail below to schedule a visit.

Now that we have a world-class museum, begin to weave it into your family's daily life. At the front desk, PAMM offers the Daily Family Pack, with puzzles, a scavenger hunt, and other playful games that help kids connect to the collection.

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Every Thursday “Made at PAMM” features tables for kids to draw and collage in relation to the current show. Every second Saturday is free, with an arts and crafts show from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., inspired by the current exhibit. There is monthly story time for kids as well. The PAMM Teen Arts Council welcomes your interested teenagers, with docent and other programs available. Learn more about all these programs at [pamm.org/learn/families](http://pamm.org/learn/families).

Art delivers its messages without the burden of language or social interaction. Kids get that. And the PAMM team works hard to make the museum available to all children, regardless of economic status.

Gianna Riccardi is one of PAMM’s many bright-eyed, front-desk visitor services assistants. “I personally love kids,” she says. “So if I see a kid, I’m gonna say, ‘Try to find this, or show me what your favorite piece is.’”

An artist himself, Sirmans sees the big picture about creativity’s higher purpose. He describes PAMM’s recent, breathtaking Doris Salcedo show as “an exhibition that talks about histories of violence in Colombia...but not really. It’s really about humans and how they treat each other all over the world at any given point in time.”

Let’s all bring our children to our stunning neighborhood museum. Add a picnic in Museum Park. A perfect start is the Basquiat show opening August 11. For details call 305-375-3000 or visit [pamm.org](http://pamm.org).

*Stuart Sheldon is an artist, author, and Miami native. Follow his blog at [stuartsheldon.com](http://stuartsheldon.com) and [@stuart\\_sheldon](https://twitter.com/stuart_sheldon).*

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