



# Museum Profile

## **MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART NORTH MIAMI**

MIAMI-DADE, FLORIDA

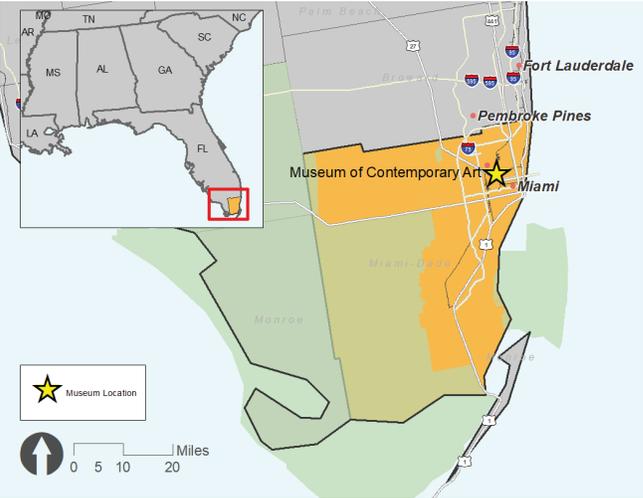
# Museum Profile: Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami



## MIAMI-DADE, FLORIDA

The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) North Miami is located in the city of North Miami in Miami-Dade County, Florida. North Miami is a small but dense community approximately 11 miles north of downtown Miami. The city is home to a large Haitian population, and in 2014–2018, more than half of the city’s 61,000 residents were foreign born.

The museum building sits in the center of town, along the city’s main commercial corridor and adjacent to City Hall. MOCA generates roughly \$1.7 million in annual revenue, supporting approximately 15 full-time staff members. The building houses a gallery of contemporary art exhibitions as well as studio space for education and community programming. MOCA’s mission is to make “contemporary art accessible to diverse audiences—especially underserved populations—through the collection, preservation, and exhibition of the best of contemporary art and its art historical influences.” The institution supports social wellbeing in North Miami by using art to empower residents, provide educational opportunities, and enrich the town square.



## MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Miami-Dade County, located in Southeast Florida, is the most populous county in the state of Florida. The county is home to more than 2.5 million residents and has seen substantial population growth since 2000. The residents of

Miami-Dade County are diverse, with 66 percent identifying as Hispanic. Median incomes in the county were \$44,224, nearly \$10,000 below the national average, and nearly 16 percent of families were in poverty.

	Population	% Change in Population (2000–2016)	% White	% Black	% Hispanic	% Asian	% Other	Median Household Income	% Families in Poverty
United States	318,558,162	13.2	62.0	12.3	17.3	5.2	3.3	\$55,322	11.0
Miami-Dade County	2,664,418	18.2	14.5	16.6	66.4	1.5	0.9	\$44,224	16.3

Compared to other urban counties across the country, Miami-Dade residents enjoy elevated levels of community health care, and K–12 students in the county perform well across a range of publicly available measures of success. Miami-Dade County fell in the top quartile on

the Community Health and School Effectiveness Indexes.<sup>1</sup> Health Care & Social Assistance and Retail Trade are the two largest employment sectors in the county, employing 14 and 13 percent of workers, respectively.

	Total Labor Force	% Health Care & Social Assistance	% Retail Trade	% Accommodation & Food Service	% Education Services
United States*	131,362,978	14.5	10.9	8.9	9.2
Miami-Dade County	1,060,013	14.0	13.0	11.0	8.0

Data Sources: 2012–16 American Community Survey five-year estimates; U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), 2017.

\*Continental figures for total labor force include the 48 lower states and Washington, DC.

<sup>1</sup> Data elements included in the Community Health and School Effectiveness Indexes, along with measures for Miami-Dade County, can be found at the beginning of Appendix II.

## SITE VISIT PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION

In January 2020, the study team conducted interviews with four museum staff members and representatives from five different partner organizations. Site visit interviews conducted with staff and partners focused on understanding the institution's programming and partnerships that support education and health in Miami-Dade County as well as MOCA's institutional approaches to assessment and sustainability.

In addition, the following data were used to create the network map included in this profile:

- MOCA's 2017 Form 990
- Program evaluations for several MOCA programs
- Interview notes and related materials collected by the case study team

This site profile includes the following:

- A summary of key programs and partnerships that support social wellbeing and connect MOCA to the broader community
- A descriptive network map that illustrates the scope and variety of connections MOCA maintains with local partners throughout the county and beyond

## KEY MOCA PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS CONNECT DIVERSE COMMUNITIES TO EACH OTHER AND THE CITY

MOCA contributes to social wellbeing in North Miami through its exhibitions as well as partnerships and outreach initiatives that support education and social inclusion by empowering traditionally disadvantaged populations. The programs and activities observed at MOCA were largely focused on achieving three interrelated goals: to provide new perspectives and empowerment through arts education, to create new opportunities for residents to have educational and therapeutic experiences, and to enrich the town square and social fabric of the community.

### **The Arts Provide Opportunities for New Perspectives and Empowerment**

As an arts institution, MOCA has a strong focus on using its collection to expose visitors to new perspectives through art and to use its exhibits and collections to empower traditionally disadvantaged communities.

MOCA's art collection covers a wide range of modern and contemporary art. Curatorial staff at the institution are deliberate in their efforts to exhibit work that reflects the diverse of the community. There is also a focus on creating new scholarship around underexplored artists. At the time of the site visit, for example, the museum had recently completed an exhibit of contemporary Haitian artists. Although there are many other art institutions in Miami-Dade, few have exhibited Haitian artists, and fewer still have exhibited contemporary artists from the island nation. The Haitian community that makes up a large portion of North Miami's population is rarely able to see their culture examined and celebrated at an artistic institution. MOCA's leadership believes that by taking diversity into account and highlighting new voices, the museum can create a platform for the community, leading to empowerment and connectivity.

MOCA also works to support the local community through partnerships and educational programs intended to empower residents through conversations about art that introduce them to new ideas and perspectives. The institution's Women on the Rise! program is one example of the ways that MOCA is using art education to improve social wellbeing by empowering a marginalized community. The program is a long-standing partnership between MOCA and URBAN, Inc., a youth empowerment organization in North Miami, and it brings young middle and high school-age women together to meet contemporary female artists and create their own art. The conversations that emerge from the program help participants develop their own voice and feel more confident, assured, and fulfilled.

MOCA's expertise in contemporary art helps make these conversations accessible and opens doors for organizations like URBAN, Inc. that do not have connections to the artists working with MOCA. In the words of one stakeholder, "It's therapeutic for a lot of the girls, to feel like they're finally being heard."

A recent iteration of the program explored an artist whose work focused on the objectification of women's bodies. The conversation helped the participants think critically about how the media and cultural portrayals of women can be harmful and about the long history of the objectification of Black women's bodies.

The conversations with artists are always a highlight for participants, but the leadership at URBAN, Inc. believes that MOCA's facilitated art classes are also a critical component. One stakeholder explained, "Girls love the conversation more than making the art, but the art is a great catalyst. It helps them add their voice to the issue." MOCA's expertise in art education helps make lessons accessible to young women who often do not have an artistic background.

### **Engagement with the Arts Creates Educational and Therapeutic Opportunities**

In addition to exhibiting art, MOCA offers art education classes. The institution's classes are another example of how MOCA impacts the educational wellbeing of its community. MOCA's Teen Art Force, for example, is a free weekly art class for middle and high school-age students in North Miami. The program takes place after school in the museum, which is within walking distance of North Miami Senior High School. Some students find the program through MOCA's summer, winter, and spring art camps. MOCA's close collaboration with the local high school has also created a pipeline between the local high school art instructor, who used to work at MOCA, and the program.

The program is an important community resource where young students can have their passion for art nurtured. Participants in the program receive professional-level studio art instruction, a hands-on introduction to the art world, and a behind-the-scenes look at museums and galleries. The introduction to arts education has also helped inspire some students to pursue a college degree who otherwise never would have considered it. MOCA staff are proud of the many students of the program who have gone on to become professional artists.

MOCA's long-standing partnership with Jewish Community Services (JCS) is another example of how the institution is using arts education to support social wellbeing through social inclusion. JCS, which is located across the street from MOCA, provides daily nonresidential services to developmentally disabled individuals in the North Miami community. JCS clients travel to MOCA once a week for art therapy classes where they learn a new artistic technique, creating multiple projects over the course of a nine-month program.

Many of JCS's clients struggle with communication, and the staff at JCS strongly believe that creating art gives its clients a new and powerful way to express themselves. At the end of the program, MOCA puts on a gallery

show to display the art that participants have created. The showings draw in families and caregivers and provide a dynamic way for participants to connect with their loved ones.

## **MOCA'S PHYSICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL LOCATION ENRICHES THE TOWN SQUARE AND LOCAL NETWORKS**

From its conception, MOCA was intended to act as a cultural asset that could help enrich the North Miami community. The institution was founded in 1981 as the Center for Contemporary Art. In 1996, the institution secured funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under a grant program that supported arts and culture in underserved communities. The funding allowed the city to build the facility and space that MOCA occupies today.

Multiple respondents referred to MOCA as part of the city's town square. The building's large plaza opens to North Miami's main commercial corridor and is a gathering spot for adults and teenagers as well as a bus transit hub. In many ways, the institution has helped create and define a shared identity for the community. MOCA's exhibits and events, like the institution's monthly Jazz at MOCA series, are a point of pride among staff and residents and help to attract visitors to downtown North Miami. Beyond the economic benefits of attracting visitors to the city, the institution's presence and activities support wellbeing in the community by enhancing the community's shared identity.

MOCA is deeply tied into the network of cultural and educational institutions working in North Miami. The institution's position in the community helps bring new audiences into the museum and also helps reach audiences who are unable or unwilling to come to MOCA. Interview participants saw MOCA as a leader in the community: The institution is active in developing its own programming and seeking out partnerships to expand its network and reach new audiences and venues.

Most of the institution's programs are grant funded, and MOCA is the leader and initiator of most of its partnerships. This is one of the many ways that MOCA's relationship with the city is beneficial. Because the institution is part of city government, MOCA can use the programming and relationships developed by other complementary departments to identify and reach new audiences in the community. For example, MOCA works with the city's public library to teach an art class at the library branch, with the goal of finding new students who might be interested in after-school programming at the museum.

The Parks and Recreation Department of North Miami is another frequent collaborator. MOCA can utilize the transportation that the Parks and Recreation Department provides to take campers and other program participants on field trips to cultural institutions in the area that they might otherwise never have been able to attend. The Parks and Recreation Department also provides community space in recreation centers for MOCA's programming and outreach. MOCA Inc.'s Board of Trustees has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the city of North Miami. An agreement usually solidifies collaborations with other departments.

MOCA staff are aware that museums can often be an intimidating and unwelcoming space for underrepresented communities, and they deliberately engage partners that will help them make the museum a more welcoming space for residents. MOCA's partnerships with other city departments, like Parks and Recreation and the library, are a conscious approach to

welcoming residents who might not otherwise be comfortable visiting a museum. Through its connection in the public sector and its relationships with diverse local communities,

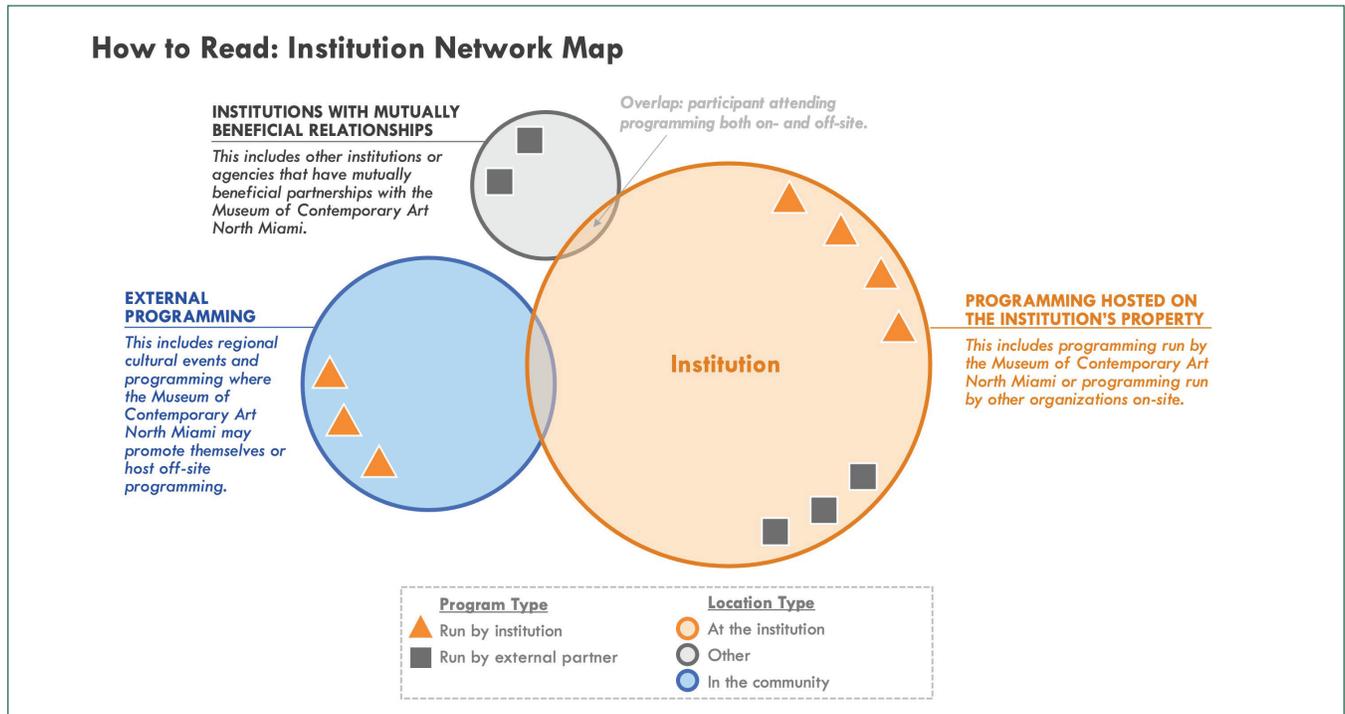
MOCA provides a bridge for residents to meet and to learn from each other through shared cultural experiences.

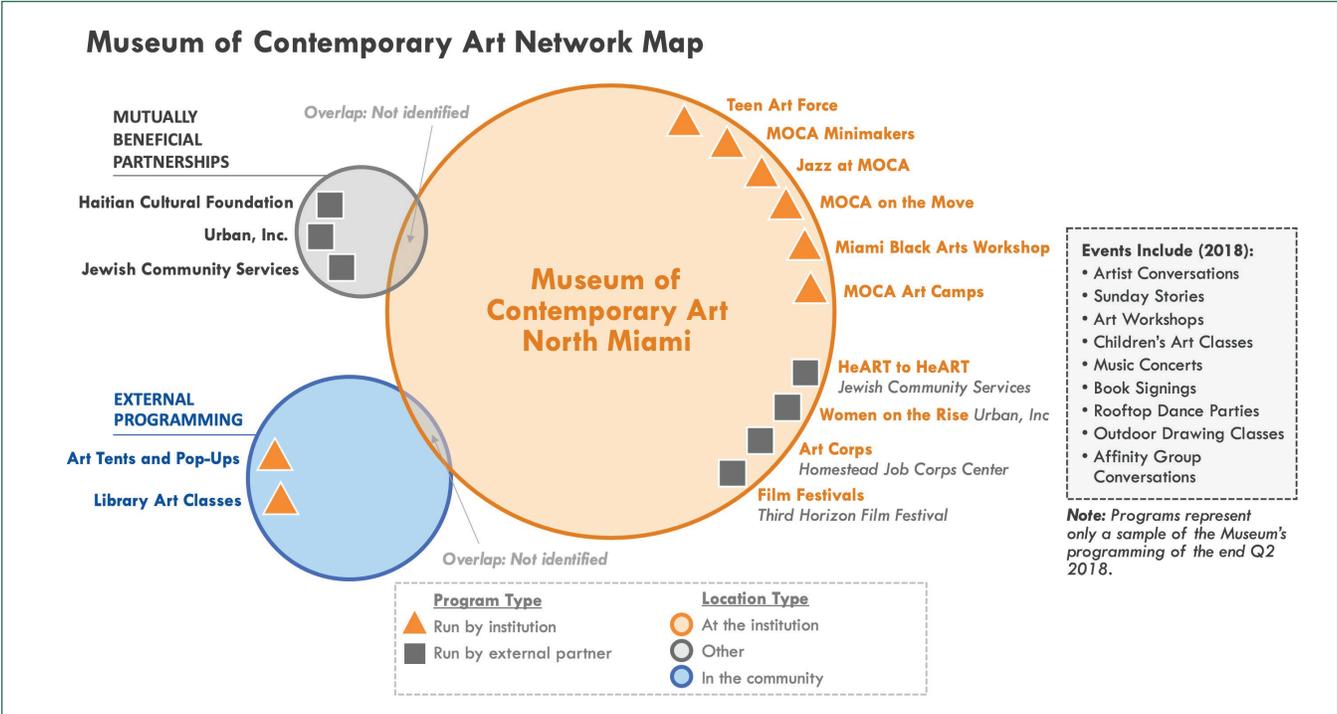
## MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART NETWORK MAP

Using data provided by MOCA, the study team developed a descriptive network map to highlight the different types of connections MOCA maintains with other institutions in the local community. The map illustrates the relationships between MOCA and those entities that offer programming at the museum itself and

those that support cross-marketing efforts or have reciprocal relationships with the museum, and it includes examples of off-site, MOCA-led programming. The map does not provide an exhaustive list of the museum’s programs but attempts to illustrate a subset of the relationships that the museum maintains.

*NOTE: The network map is purely descriptive. The connections represented on the map do not necessarily, and are not intended to, provide estimates of the duration, durability, intensity, or broader economic impact of the relationships between MOCA and any single entity, or the broader network itself. The goal of the network map is to represent the range and diversity of different types of institutions that connect to the museum in different ways.*





The figure above illustrates a *sample* of the connections of the many programs offered across MOCA's network. Within the orange circle is a small sample of programs organized in terms of key program areas identified by MOCA and conducted on the physical property of the institution—both programs produced by the institution and those produced by others. Within the blue circle is a sample of programs produced by MOCA and offered off-site in the community. The gray circle represents a sample of MOCA's connections with other regional organizations.