

Instant Messaging

Paula Crown seeks uplifting messages from the public to propel her artistic installation on El Paseo in Palm Desert as part of Intersect 21.

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Drive by or stop, view, and contribute to Paula Crown’s art installation, which took over the Presage retail store at 73-811 El Paseo. PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY PAULA CROWN

The first prayer wheels were driven by wind.

Paula Crown wants uplifting messages from the public to propel her artistic interpretation of that ancient meditation practice in her installation called *Emanare, 2021*. Just head to El Paseo in Palm Desert and look for the Presage retail store between Portola and San Luis Rey, and you’ll see how Crown has reimaged the storefront windows to project messages.

Her installation is a live, interactive element of Intersect 21, a week-long virtual platform starting Feb. 16 that brings together 21 galleries showing 21 artworks each from Southern California including three in Palm Desert, North Africa, and the Middle East. Intersect 21 also includes gallery tours and a series of panel discussions including several tapping into the desert art scene.

Visit Intersect2021.com. to participate. The art fair will also be hosted by Artsy through March 15.

As you walk up to Crown’s work, in addition to taking in the messaging and thematic lighting, you’ll be promoted with a QR code to upload your own message to be displayed on the scrolling screens. Crown says there is a filtering process in place for obvious reasons, so don’t expect the message to appear right away. But you can walk away knowing your message has contributed to a positive outlook during a time when the pandemic is bombarding us with negativity.



Daytime shot of the installation, which is part of Intersect 21, a virtual art fair that runs Feb. 16-22.

“It’s almost just like the prayer wheel,” says Crown, who was first exposed to the Coachella Valley by her parents owning a home here and now calls the desert home herself.

“When you put a prayer in it, you never know when it’s going to go up. And in this project, you pause, you have an intention, and then you have an action. The process is what’s important right there, not so much that it shows up but that we’ve taken time to get out of ourselves to think about good things that can happen in the world. And it starts with us.”

Crown chats more with *Palm Springs Life* about the installation and how it fits into her path as an artist.

Give me some context to this installation and its inspiration?

When the music stopped just a year ago, I was here in the valley. I was here without any of my supplies. And I just knew as part of my routine, I had to start making art and I used copy paper. I was exploring this idea of these Tibetan prayer wheels, and the idea that you put positive affirmations in these wheels and you walk along them and rotate them as sort of meditational act. And the top is open until all of the positive thoughts, prayers, go up into the world. So that was one. It’s how do you change the mindset into something positive and starting every day with what’s not wrong. I’ve been working on these paintings based on a Japanese epigram. And the idea is you rotate this object — there’s going to be dark, there’s going to be light, and there’s going to be a cycle.

How did you pick Presage as the site?

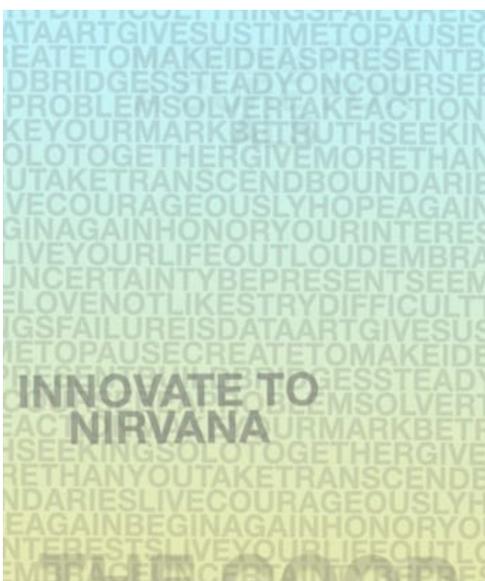
I started looking around, and the owner of the store, Micheal Corliss, and I started talking and I said, “I don’t need this much space, but if I could use it I will make sure and put all sorts of protective materials and just start working.” There are mannequins out in the front, there are old signs, and in the center of this store is a pink column. And I thought, I’m going to start with that lit pink column. And the project evolves where I’m wrapping these lenses around the columns. And then I thought, let’s make this an interactive project.

Do you like this installation creating a conversation with your audience?

I’m not presenting anything absolute, I’m posing questions. You know, what is this? What’s the process by which it comes about? And so I think early on realizing that it is a conversation, and when someone looks at something I’ve done, they are going to see it in their own way. And so often it’s a curiosity that adds to the artwork. And I love that, that we’re listening.

Was there someone or something that led you to your artistic path or did it just kind of happen?

So I would say it was a confidence and a realization that I, from the earliest moments, was making art. And some of those were good and bad. I always like to ask the question, what did you do before you knew anyone was looking? And as a small child I was drawing on my wallpaper.



I was carrying it off. I was taking my dad’s classical records on the turntable and using the needle to make designs. All of those good things that were not reinforced, but it was, it was just something that I became more certain that this is the way I understood the world.

Are you surprised to be where you are now with this? Or did you foresee this would be your destiny?

I think about this “Negative Capability” quote from John Keats which is even though you’re in uncertainty, you lean toward the things that you like, that you’re collecting, that you’re drawn to. And I just use COVID as a perfect example, even there’s so many reasons why I couldn’t make art during that time, it just started with pencil, pen, and copy paper. That leads to something else, even though I didn’t know where it would go.

Paula Crown says she will be on site and currently expects the installation to remain into March. Visit atelierpaulacrown.com.