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## CityCenter and Its Groundbreaking Art Collection: Part II

January 4, 2010 Andrew Myers



Second part of this article, a Q&A with Michelle Quinn, the curatorial advisor responsible for the management of the CityCenter art collection, is followed by a detailed look at the collection itself.

1. At what point were you brought on as curator?

I FIRST SUBMITTED A PROPOSAL IN LATE 2005 AND WAS HIRED IN JANUARY 2006.

2. Did you realize immediately the size, scope and possibility of the job and the prospective collection?

YES—THE SCOPE WAS ALWAYS OBVIOUS THAT THIS WAS AS BIG, IF NOT BIGGER, THAN SAY MILLENIUM PARK.

3. Had you worked with/consulted for MGM/Mirage before (i.e., how did you get this incredible charge)?

I FIRST MET JIM MURREN [Chairman of the Board and CEO of MGM MIRAGE] IN 2003 THROUGH THE FORMER PRESIDENT AND CFO OF MANDALAY RESORT GROUP—WHICH WAS MY FIRST HOTEL PROJECT (WE HAVE A FANTASTIC ARTURO HERRERA WALL DRAWING ALONG WITH SOME OTHER CONTEMPORARY WORKS INSTALLED THERE. THIS PROPERTY WAS SUBSEQUENTLY ACQUIRED THROUGH THE MERGER OF MGM AND MIRAGE).

4. What catalyzed the formation of the collection? What was its original mandate and your initial instructions? What were the original parameters, and did that change/evolve?

THE PROJECT ITSELF SET THE PARAMETERS—SIZE AND SCALE NEEDED TO BE ACCOMPLISHED SO THAT THE WORKS WERE NOW DWARFED BY THE MONUMENTAL ARCHITECTURE. WE SET OUT TO CREATE A STRONG COLLECTION OF WORKS, PREDOMINANTLY SCULPTURE, THAT WOULD STAND THE TEST OF TIME AND REACH SEVERAL GENERATIONS AND AUDIENCES. WE ALWAYS STAYED TRUE TO THESE ULTIMATE GOALS.

5. How many pieces are currently in the collection? How much was spent?

WE HAVE 15 MAJOR INSTALLATIONS AND APPROXIMATELY 10-15 INTERIORS WORKS. THE FINE ART PROGRAM HAD A COST OF APPROXIMATELY \$40 MILLION (THIS INCLUDED EXPENSES).

6. Will the collection continue to expand, or is it considered complete?

SOME INTERIOR WORKS WILL MOST LIKELY BE ADDED IN THE FUTURE—BUT IS UNKNOWN AS TO WHERE AND WHEN THIS MIGHT HAPPEN.

7. On our tour, you spoke of how this collection is different from other corporate collections, in terms of the pieces represented and their display, and in its origins and conceit. Could you please expand on this?

THIS IS THE ONLY CORPORATE ART PROGRAM THAT CAN ALSO BE CONSIDERED AS A PUBLIC ART INSTALLATION AND WHERE THE ENTIRE COLLECTION IS AVAILABLE TO BE SEEN 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK—WITHOUT ANY ADMISSION FEES.

8. What is your favorite piece?

PROBABLY A TOSS UP BETWEEN JENNY HOLZER AND NANCY RUBINS—BECAUSE EACH HAS SUCH AN INCREDIBLE PRESENCE.

**Following is description of the major pieces in the CityCenter collection. If a picture is not provided, that means I couldn't get close to the work in question:**

**Mandarin Oriental, Walkway**

• **Claes Oldenburg (b. 1929) and Coosje van Bruggen (b. 1942; d. 2009)** – **“Typewriter Eraser, Scale X”** 1998-1999, Stainless steel, fiberglass and acrylic polyurethane paint, 19 x 11 x 11 feet, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition with one Artist’s Proof – Crystals Place

- Designed with the pair’s approach to creating large-scale outdoor sculptures of popular commercial objects, the four-ton, 19-foot stainless steel and fiberglass sculpture depicts a giant blue and red typewriter eraser with the bristles of the brush turned upward in a graceful, dynamic gesture. This edition is the largest of three sculptures created of the form, beginning in the 1970s. Oldenburg is most widely associated with the beginnings of the Pop Art movement of the 1960s. His capricious and – at times – deconstructed forms of everyday objects transform the notion of how sculpture is viewed and made. Throughout his career, he collaborated with his wife Coosje on more than 40 monumental projects throughout Europe, Asia and the United States. As Quinn pointed out during our “art walk,” an added layer of meaning, interpretation and irony is that many of the work’s younger viewers—and we’re not talking kids but people under 30—may have no idea what a typewriter eraser is, or at least will not be able to readily identify it.



**Masatoshi Izumi (Japanese, b. 1938)** – **“Untitled”** 2007-2008, Basalt, 17 x 6 feet, approximately 8 tons – Mandarin Oriental, Las Vegas’ entrance

- Izumi’s work celebrates harmony with nature by taking existing forms and altering them slightly to reveal an even more beautiful state. The sculpture, made of large pieces of intricately carved basalt (cooled lava), stands more than 16 feet tall and weighs approximately 8 tons. Born into a family of stone carvers in the town of Mure on the Japanese island of Shikoku, Izumi began working with stone in 1953. In 1964, he co-founded the Stone Atelier in Kagawa Prefecture, dedicated to new architectural and artistic uses of traditional stone cutting techniques. Izumi and his colleagues have realized some of the most ambitious architectural stone projects in Japan.



**Jun Kaneko (Japanese, b. 1942)** – **“Untitled, Triangle Dango”** 1996, Glazed ceramics, 86 x 29 x

22 inches; **“Untitled, Dango”** 2002, Hand-built glazed ceramics, 67 x 63 x 14 inches; and **“Untitled, Dango”** 1992, Glazed ceramics, 73 x 52 x 35 inches – Mandarin Oriental, Las Vegas’ lobby



- Born in Nagoya, Japan in 1942, and now living and working in Omaha, Nebraska, Jun Kaneko has continually experimented with the technical aspects of the ceramic medium. His enormous dango forms, which soar as high as 11 feet, challenge the physical limitations of the material and are fired in giant kilns. Kaneko’s sculptures, “Untitled, Triangle Dango,” 1996; “Untitled, Dango,” 2002; and “Untitled, Dango,” 1992, are boldly glazed, monumental rounded monoliths displayed within Mandarin Oriental’s lobby. The tallest of the three sculptures measures 7 feet tall. The name ‘Dango’ is whimsical yet descriptive, meaning “Japanese dumpling.” Additional works by Kaneko can also be seen on the second floor of Aria. Kaneko’s sculptures have resulted in high-profile public sculpture commissions, among them the Phoenix Airport, a station for the Boston Subway, the Detroit People Mover and the Waikiki Aquarium and more. His work also has been featured in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, De Young Museum in San Francisco, the Shigaraki Museum, and more than 30 others.

**Jack Goldstein (American, b. 1945; d. 2003)** – **“Untitled”** (Volcano) 1983, Acrylic on canvas, 96 x 96 inches – Mandarin Oriental, Las Vegas’ Tea Lounge

- An influential postmodern artists of the 1970s and ‘80s, Jack Goldstein is recognized for his pioneering work in sound, film and

painting. His highly polished paintings are based on photos of natural phenomena, focused on capturing the “spectacular instant.” “Untitled” (Volcano), 1983, which measures 8 feet tall by 8 feet wide, hangs in the Mandarin Oriental’s Tea Lounge in the 23<sup>rd</sup>-floor sky lobby. The painting depicts an explosive and vibrant image of an erupting volcano. Goldstein received his training at Chouinard Art Institute and was a member of the inaugural class of California Institute of the Arts, where he worked in post-studio art under John Baldessari, receiving a Master of Fine Arts in 1972. Goldstein’s paintings have received numerous grants and awards, including the Pollock-Krasner Foundation (1992); The American Institute of Architecture (1990); the National Endowment of the Arts, Visual Arts (1983); the New York State Council of the Arts (1975); the Canada Council Grant, Visual Arts Award (1974); and the National Endowment for the Arts, Visual Arts (1973).

## Crystals

**Les Lalanne (François-Xavier, b. 1927; d. 2008; Claude, b. 1925) – “Tourterelle” 1997,**  
Aluminum and wood, 53 x 47 x 26 inches, 88 lbs, 8<sup>th</sup> edition – Crystals’ main entrance off Las Vegas Boulevard

- Since the 1960s, French husband and wife team François-Xavier and Claude Lalanne have ranked among the world’s most original and collectible designer-sculptors—at least judging from the astounding prices their works received at last year’s Saint Laurent-Bergé February and December at Christie’s as well as in Sotheby’s December auction. Due to construction, I wasn’t able to get at François-Xavier’s edition of “Tourterelle,” 1997, which is three large-scale turtledoves crafted from aluminum and wood with a seat carved into their body and wings, each measuring approximately 4.5 feet high by 3.5 feet wide and weighs just over 88 pounds. François-Xavier, who died December 14, 2008, is best known for animal sculptures, most often cast in bronze, such as the sheep chairs that brought the Lalannes into the spotlight. Claude is famous for nature-inspired furniture, such as chandeliers inspired by tree branches, and small-scale objects with exceptional detail such as flatware cast from natural leaves, shells and twigs. Since their first show at Gallery J in Paris in 1964, Les Lalanne’s sculptures have appeared in numerous exhibitions and now belong to several international collections including the Cooper-Hewitt; National Design Museum, New York; the Musée national d’art moderne; Centre George Pompidou, Paris; and the cities of Paris, Santa Monica and Jerusalem.

## The Park



**Henry Moore (British, b. 1898; d. 1986) - “Reclining Connected Forms” 1969-1974,** Roman travertine marble, 10 x 17 x 7 feet – The Park between ARIA Resort & Casino and Crystals

- “Reclining Connected Forms,” 1969-1974, a sculpture by English artist Henry Moore, is inspired by the fundamentals of the human experience – the primary theme of Moore’s life’s work. The sculpture measures approximately 10 feet tall and 17 feet long by 7 feet deep, and is an abstraction of a baby wrapped in its mother’s embrace. The outer shell of the sculpture depicts the changing shape of a pregnant figure as it protects the new life growing within. Moore’s work was traditionally inspired by the human body, organic shapes found in nature and the sculpture of ancient and exotic cultures such as Egypt, Sumeria, Africa and pre-Columbian Mexico. Surrealism, the modern European art and literary movement with a tendency toward abstract forms, also was a major influence. Moore was given his first major retrospective abroad in 1946 by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He won the International Prize for Sculpture at the Venice *Biennale* in 1948.

**Vdara Hotel & Spa**

**Nancy Rubins (American, b. 1952) – “Big Edge” 2009,**  
Stainless steel and aluminum water vessels, 51 x 75 x 57 feet –  
Presented in Vdara’s main drive

- A sculptor and artisan known for her grandiose works created from salvaged and industrial consumer goods, Nancy Rubins created one of the most visually stunning commissions at CityCenter with a large-scale installation: “Big Edge.” Cantilevered over Vdara’s main drive and measuring approximately 57 feet wide and 75 feet long, Rubins’ work of art at CityCenter is a composition of numerous aluminum rowboats, canoes and other small river and ocean vessels finessed into an eye-catching, gravity-defying form the artist calls “a blooming flower.” The boats are connected with thousands of pounds of stainless steel wire cable forming a web-like structure, where compression and tension create what Buckminster Fuller referred to as *tensegrity*, making the whole stronger than the parts. Each boat was precisely placed according to Rubins’ direction based on its color, shape and structural contribution to the whole. Rubins maintains the look, shape and feel of her chosen objects, so each reclaimed craft showcased in the piece is exactly as originally found. The commission is located on the exterior of Vdara Hotel & Spa and is one of Rubins’ few works with a permanent home. Rubins has designed works of art from mattresses, trailers, hot water heaters, airplanes and small appliances since the 1970s. For more than 25 years, Rubins has exhibited extensively around the world in major solo and group exhibitions.



**Frank Stella (American, b. 1936) – “Damascus Gate Variation I” 1969,** Fluorescent alkyd resin on canvas, 8 x 32 feet – Suspended over Vdara’s reception desk



- American painter Frank Stella began his “Protractor Series” in 1967, in which arcs, sometimes overlapping within square borders, are arranged side-by-side to produce full and half circles painted in rings of concentric color. Both Stella’s “Irregular Polygon” canvases (1965-67) and “Protractor Series” (1967-71) further extended the concept of the shaped canvas. For the reception desk at Vdara, CityCenter purchased one of artist Frank Stella’s most prominent works: “Damascus Gate Variation I,” named for the ancient circular Islamic city in Asia Minor. Created in 1969, Stella’s work features a design of interlaced semicircles made of luminous colors of blue, red, orange yellow and white alkyd resin on an 8-foot-high, 32-foot-long canvas. Recognized for more than 45 years for his contributions to the forms of abstract expressionism, sculpture and the concept of the shaped canvas, Stella’s work has been the subject of several retrospectives in the United States, Europe and Japan. In 1970, The Museum of Modern Art in New York presented a retrospective of Stella’s work. An authority and critic in his own right, Stella presided over the Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard University from 1983-1984, which were published by Harvard University Press in 1986.

**Peter Wegner (American, b. 1963) – “Day for Night, Night for Day” 2009,** Colored paper, die cut and suspended from steel compression frame, West wall – 34 x 10 feet, East wall – 45 x 10 feet – Vdara’s concierge lobby

- American artist Peter Wegner often comments on the notion of physicality through a fusion of art and architecture by creating towering sculptures from the most ordinary object: a sheet of paper. The physicality of paper is brought a step further, nestled into the facing walls of Vdara’s concierge lobby. “Day for Night, Night for Day” is comprised of two wall pieces: one solar-themed and one lunar-themed, represented on the east and west walls in the lobby to correspond with the rising and setting of the sun. A hanging light sculpture designed by the Wegner is suspended between the pieces to encourage “dialogue” between them. “Day for Night” (above) soars to approximately 45 feet while “Night for Day” (below) reaches approximately 34 feet high.





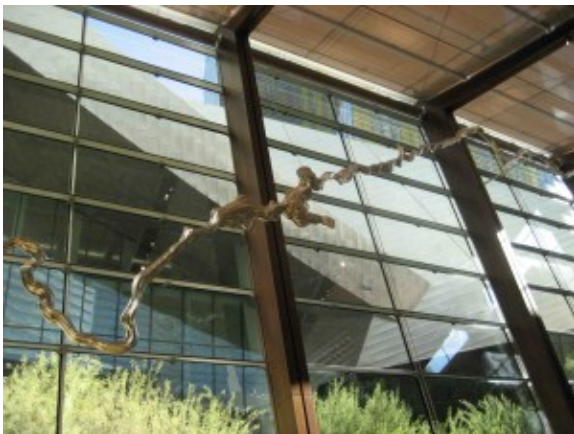
This commission is Wegner's largest work of art to date. Wegner's work has been displayed in exhibitions on both coasts and internationally and he has been the subject of solo exhibitions at The Bohlen Foundation and Lever House, New York. His work is in the permanent collections of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, among others. Wegner received a Bachelor of Arts from Yale University.

**Robert Rauschenberg (American, b. 1925; d. 2008) – “Lucky Dream” 1999, Vegetable dye transfer on polylamine, 8.5 x 14 feet – Vdara’s lobby, adjacent to Bar Vdara**



- On loan from Bellagio, LLC is “Lucky Dream’ by Robert Rauschenberg displayed within Vdara’s lobby. “Lucky Dream” features found images such as a trophy, Asian cranes and tigers and the Sistine Chapel. Rauschenberg’s early works helped open the tracts of Pop Art in 1953 when he began his famous “combines” that incorporated everyday objects as sculptural elements into his work. In 1962 Rauschenberg made his first lithographs and silkscreens and was at the forefront of innovative print making thereafter. Rauschenberg, also a noted photographer, utilized his own photography in these silkscreen works, taken during a lifetime of travels. His technique of juxtaposing disconnected images with distinctive character presents what the artist has self-described as working with the “gap between art and life.” Retrospective or survey exhibitions of Rauschenberg’s art have been organized by many museums, including Amsterdam’s Stedelijk Museum (1968), the Menil Collection (1991) and the National Gallery of Art (1991). In 1998, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York had a comprehensive retrospective of the artist’s works, including 400 drawings, paintings and limited edition prints. His artwork spiraled up all the main floors of the museum and was touted as the largest retrospective to date for any artist at the Guggenheim.

**ARIA Resort & Casino**



**Maya Lin (American, b. 1959) – “Silver River” 2009, Cast reclaimed silver, 84 feet long, approximately 3,700 lbs – Suspended over ARIA’s registration desk**

- Maya Lin’s body of work maintains a careful balance between art and architecture, including large-scale, site-specific installations, intimate studio artworks and architectural works and memorials. Suspended high above ARIA’s reception desk against a panoramic window is Lin’s first work of art in Las Vegas: “Silver River,” inspired by the boundaries and topography of the Colorado River as it carves the desert landscape of the United States. As Quinn explained, in the spirit of CityCenter’s commitment to sustainability and in light of Nevada’s standing as “The Silver State,” Lin used reclaimed silver to develop her creation. Lin’s work reflects a strong interest in the environment; she has made many works of art inspired by waterways and natural forms sculpted by

the presence of water, including other river works. She also created a pin river, which hangs in the U.S. Embassy in China. Lin, whose acclaimed body of work includes the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., also has become a celebrated architect. Her life and work were detailed in the Academy Award-winning documentary, *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*. Lin is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and was inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame in 2005.

**Tony Cragg (British, b. 1950) – “Bolt,”** 2007, Stainless steel, 129 x 45 x 45 inches; **“Bent of Mind”** 2008, Stainless steel, 78 x 39 x 39 inches; **“Untitled” (Tall Column)** 2008, Stainless steel, 181 x 47 x 47 inches – ARIA’s southern entry atrium

- Located within ARIA’s southern entry atrium are Cragg’s three towering columns – “Bolt,” “Bent of Mind” and “Untitled.” “Bolt,” a 10-foot-high stainless steel sculpture, swirls upward from its narrow base in an imaginative bolt of lightning; “Bent of Mind” gives the illusion of an elegant silhouette of a face, as do many of his other works; and “Untitled” (tall column) presents a smooth, curving dialogue. Cragg has been the recipient of numerous distinguished awards, including the Turner Prize (1988), Shakespeare Prize (2001) and Piepenbrock Prize for Sculpture (2002). His biomorphic, sculptural forms investigate the physics of materials, and spark a dialogue between man, material and the world.



**Antony Gormley (British, b. 1950) – “Feeling Material XXVIII”** 2007, 4 mm square section mild steel bar, 8 feet tall, approximately 150 lbs – Suspended within ARIA’s second level

- The human form has long been the theme of Antony Gormley’s sculptural work, and “Feeling Material” is a further exploration in his continually developing series. Gormley’s sculpture hangs suspended over ARIA’s Promenade oculus, interacting with the architecture of the space on multiple levels. Using spiraling steel, Gormley aims not only to represent the silhouette of the human body but to visually convey the physical space it occupies; a still place at the center of an orbiting energy field. Gormley’s works to date include “Field,” “The Angel of the North,” and “Quantum Cloud” for the Millennium Dome in Greenwich, England. He was awarded the Turner Prize in 1994 and the South Bank Prize for Visual Art in 1999 and was made an Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1997.



**Tim Bavington (British, b. 1966) – “Champagne Supernova”** 2009,

synthetic polymer on canvas, 120 x 96 inches – ARIA’s casino

- Inspired by music, Tim Bavington translates chords and notes into visual systems by approximating their equivalent in color and then spraying them with synthetic polymer onto canvas. Along with references to popular music by such musical artists as Paul Weller, REM and Oasis, Bavington’s influences include the desert landscape of the West, neon signage and color field and optical paintings from the 1960s and '90s. He has participated in numerous group shows, including Seeing Songs at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Diaspora at the Las Vegas Art Museum, and Extreme Abstraction at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY. His work is included in numerous public collections, the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, among them.





**Jenny Holzer (American, b. 1950) – “VEGAS” 2009,**  
LED panels with white diodes, 266 x 8 x 18 feet – ARIA’s north  
valet

• Artist Jenny Holzer deftly integrates her work into the architecture of a space, transforming it both physically and atmospherically through the infusion of light. “VEGAS” displays Holzer’s thought-provoking phrases, including some from her famous “Truisms,” scrolling across the LED wall. Because CityCenter attracts visitors from around the world, Holzer included international proverbs as a way to welcome, include and intrigue. Holzer made her mark in 1976 with her first public work, “Truisms,” which made profound statements in the form of anonymous broadsheets pasted on buildings, walls and fences in and around Manhattan. Her text later took the form of posters, monumental and electronic signs, billboards, television and her signature medium: LED signs. Most

recently, Holzer’s work has been seen in Washington D.C. with her collection, “For the Capitol,” which incorporates nighttime projections of quotes by Presidents John F. Kennedy and Theodore Roosevelt about the role of art and culture in American society.

## Veer Towers

**Richard Long (British, b. 1945) - “Circle of Life” 2009,**  
River Avon mud on painted wall (Veer Towers West), 72 x 54  
feet; **“Earth” 2009,** River Avon mud on painted wall (Veer  
Tower East), 72 x 54 feet.

- For sculptor Richard Long, the natural world provides both the palette and the canvas on which he manifests his earthworks. In some cases, he brings the outside in. Veer Towers features two large-scale commissioned works by Long. (As the Veer Towers won’t be finished until later this year, they cannot be seen up close, but only through the towers’ enormous glass walls along the main drive/approach to Aria). Entitled “Circle of Life” (above) and “Earth” (below), the two mud wall drawings each measure 72 feet high by 54 feet wide and are displayed on Veer’s west and east tower walls, respectively. For these works, Long created a viscous paint by diluting mud and then carefully applying it to the walls with his hands, resulting in extraordinary images fashioned from purely mundane materials.
- Long transported the mud to Las Vegas from the River Avon, which runs through his hometown of Bristol, England. Long is one of Britain’s best-known sculptors and conceptual artists. His art showcases his appreciation for nature; the majority of his works are inspired by natural landscapes he has encountered while hiking. During his walks, Long often creates sculptures using natural materials in the environment such as leaves, twigs and stones, and then photographs the end result to forever capture his work. Long is the only artist to be short-listed for the Turner Prize four times. He was nominated in 1984, 1987 and 1988, and won the award in 1989 for “White Water Line.”



## The Harmon Hotel

**Isa Genzken (German, b. 1948) – “Rose II” 2007,** Stainless steel, aluminum and lacquer, 26 feet tall,  
more than 1,000 lbs, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition – The Harmon Hotel’s porte cochere

- One of Isa Genzken’s best known and loved works, “Rose”—a public sculpture of a single long-stemmed rose towering 26 feet above Leipzig, Germany’s museum district—inspired “Rose II,” which stands within The Harmon Hotel’s porte cochere. This work, a single-stem rose frozen in full bloom, weighs more than 1,000 pounds and stands 26 feet tall—meaning that although this hotel won’t be