



NATIVE FLAGS

Xavier Cortada

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"Native Flags" is a participatory eco-art project that asks its participants to help upland native habitats for plants and animals in urban areas, an evolution of Cortada's ongoing "Reclamation Project" which addresses coastal deforestation.

The project was initiated on June 29, 2008, when Cortada planted a green flag at the North Pole in an effort to "reclaim it for nature," a performance which inspired the participatory aspects of the project. This action taken by the artist was in direct response to modern nations vying for control of Arctic resources that lay below the ice. By planting the flag at this specific location, Cortada is making a literal declaration of war against climate change, as well as making a symbolic gesture of reclamation by nature.

In an effort to take legitimate action against climate change, Cortada developed a participatory project based on this initial performance, instructing his audience to plant native trees in hopes of combating the melting of Arctic ice. Through the planting of a native tree alongside an easily identifiable green project flag, Cortada invites his participants to state "I hereby reclaim this land for nature."

The act of planting the green flag effectively provides a catalyst for conversation, all while participants' statements of reclamation include them as an integral part of a large-scale performance. This is where the project is most effective, as it not only aims to spark change in the urban environment, but to initiate conversation within the community around this change.

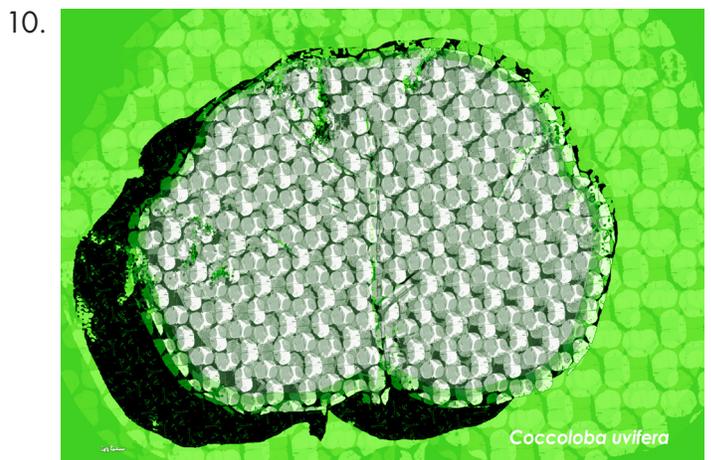
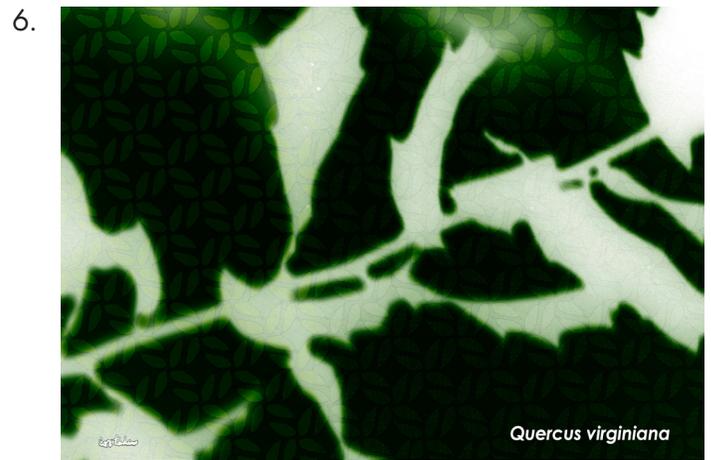
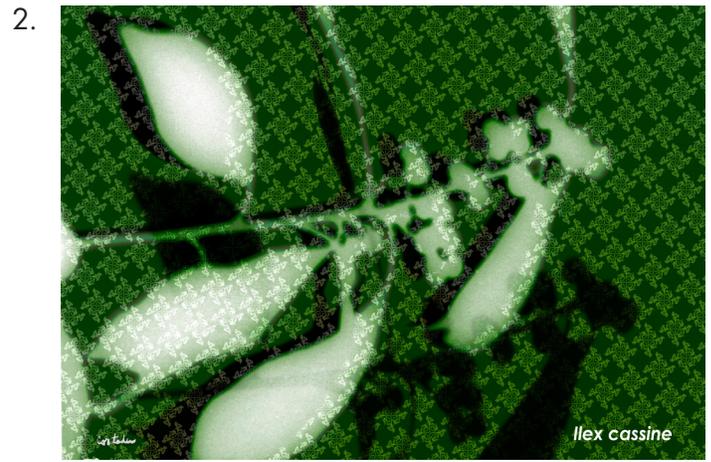
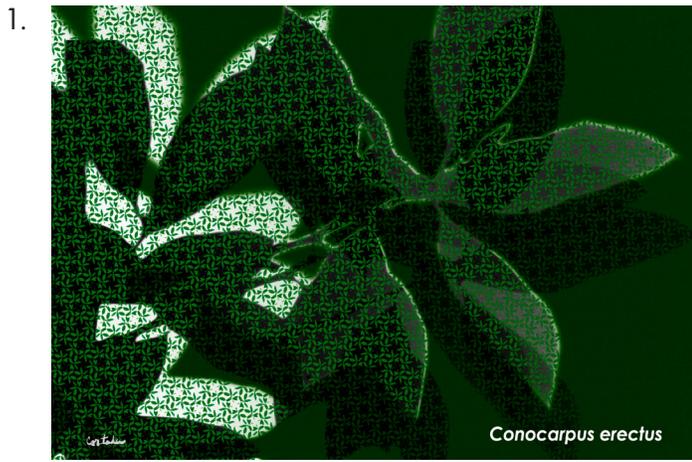
Cortada approaches this project similar to large-scale performance art, at first guiding the audience in their actions, then leaving them to lead it on their own. This transference of the project's autonomy unto various individuals allows for these individuals to take the project further than what Cortada originally prompts; a continuous eco-art performance.

Seen throughout Cortada's work is a focus on developing signifiers within communities. In Native Flags, the green project flag that accompanies the project behaves as a statement of reclamation and a point of departure for participants to initiate new action.

In turn, the environmental impact of Native Flags is amphibolic, as it not only terraforms the urban landscape, an action against climate change through the initiation of a natural tree canopy, it also spurs conversation throughout various communities for other actions to be taken.

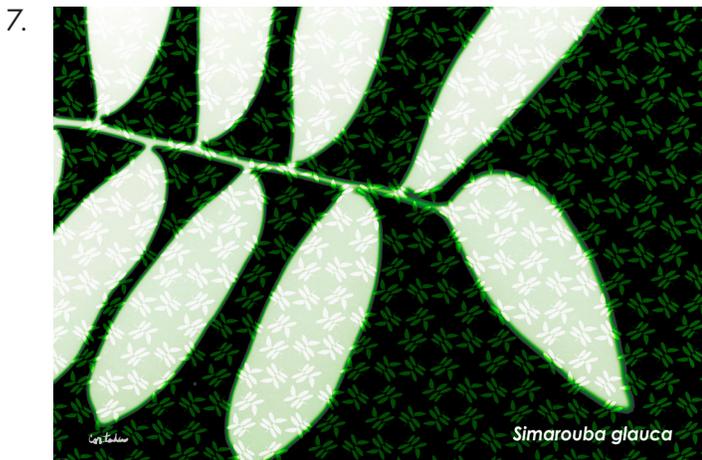
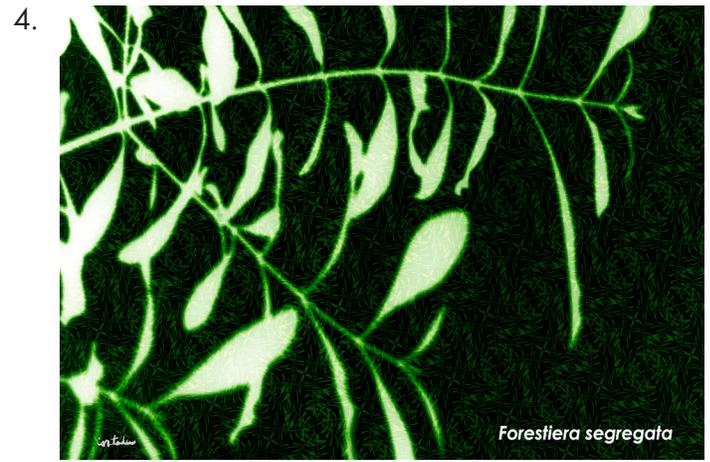
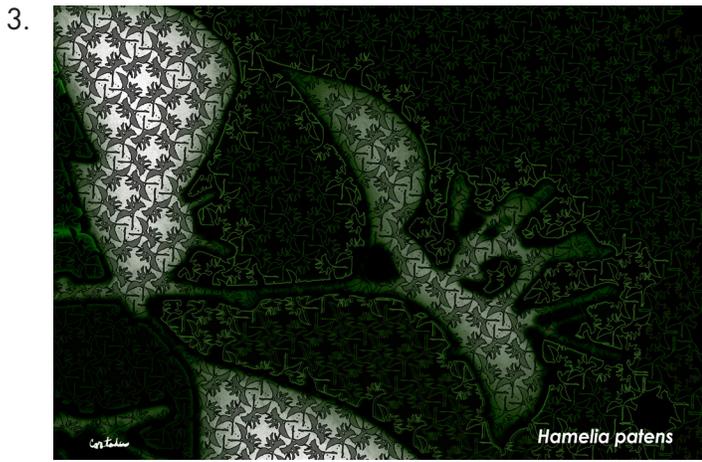


Xavier Cortada, "Native Flags: North Pole," 2008



SOUTH FLORIDA NATIVE TREES

Cortada created images of the twelve native trees he encouraged his South Florida neighbors to plant alongside the project's conspicuous green flags to serve as a catalyst for conversations with neighbors. As a result, more neighbors will be encouraged to join the effort and help rebuild their native tree canopy one yard at a time. Ideally, as they watch each tree grow, their interest in the environment will also grow.



Xavier Cortada, "Native Flags: South Florida Native Trees," 2008

- [1] Buttonwood (*Conocarpus erectus*)
- [2] Dahoon Holly (*Ilex cassine*)
- [3] Firebush (*Hamelia patens*)
- [4] Florida Privet (*Forestiera segregata*)
- [5] Gumbo Limbo (*Bursera simaruba*)
- [6] Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*)

- [7] Paradise Tree (*Simarouba glauca*)
- [8] Pigeon Plum (*Coccoloba diversifolia*)
- [9] Satinleaf (*Chrysophyllum oliviforme*)
- [10] Sea Grape (*Coccoloba uvifera*)
- [11] Wild Coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*)
- [12] Wild Tamarind (*Lysiloma latisiliquum*)



Since 2009, local students have annually planted a native tree and flag in every single one of Miami-Dade County's 336 public schools.



In 2011, Taiwan's Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts commissioned Cortada to engage hundreds of participants in an eco-art reforestation campaign.



Participants of the project planting a flag next to a native tree. The green flag acts as a catalyst for conversation, prompting passersby to inquire about the project. The tree functions symbolically, as it grows, so does the participant's interest in the environment.



As part of a 2009 public art commission at Florida Botanical Gardens, Cortada partnered with the Florida Native Plant Society to distribute the native flags and trees to 750 residents of Pinellas County.



Eco-art by Xavier Cortada

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

1. Purchase a native tree at your local nursery.
2. Make your own native flag by attaching a green cloth to a pole and, using white paint, drawing a leaf on the flag and writing "I hereby reclaim this land for nature." (You may instead purchase a flag online at **cortadaprojects.org/nativeflags**)
3. Plant the tree in your front lawn alongside the green project flag and state: **"I hereby reclaim this land for nature."**
4. Take a photo of the tree and flag, post it on Instagram or Facebook, and tag us **@cortadaprojects** alongside **#nativeflags**.
5. Ask your neighbor to do the same.



Weeks before launching Native Flags at the North Pole, Cortada prompted Congress to address climate change by asking every member to plant a native tree and native flag in each of their home districts.

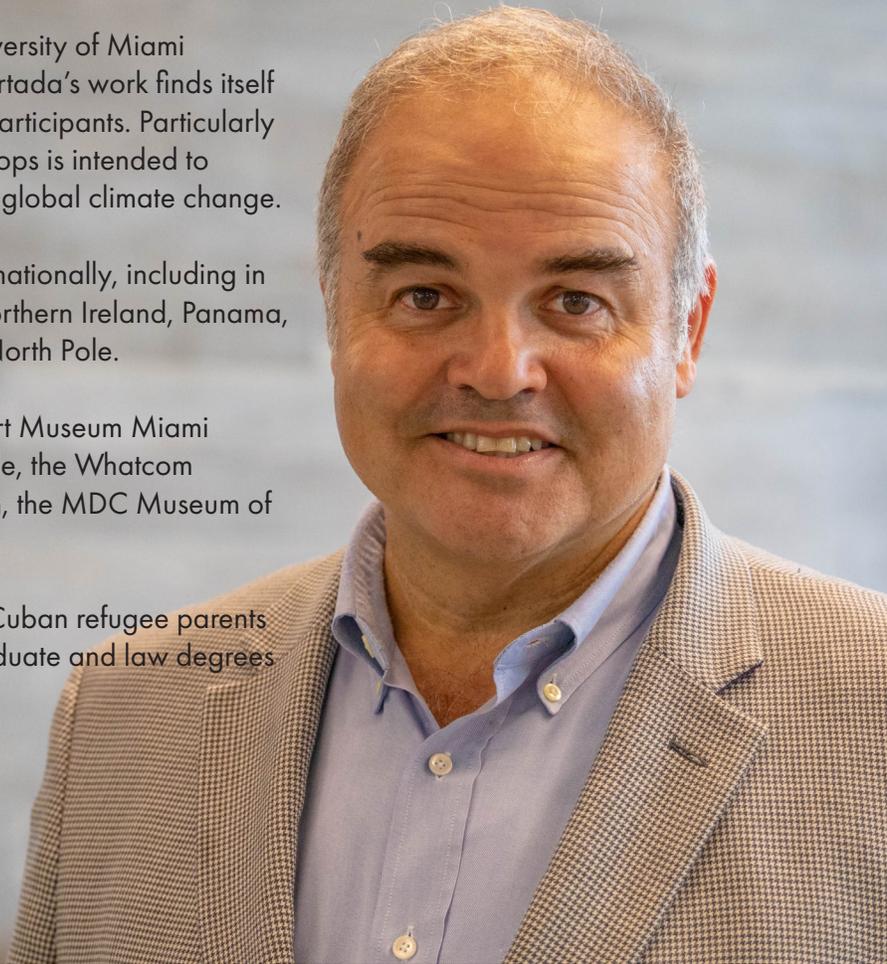
Xavier Cortada is Professor of Practice at the University of Miami Department of Art and Art History. The crux of Cortada's work finds itself rooted in a deep conceptual engagement of his participants. Particularly environmentally focused, the work Cortada develops is intended to generate awareness and action towards issues of global climate change.

The artist has exhibited and produced works internationally, including in Antarctica, Bolivia, Canada, Cyprus, Holland, Northern Ireland, Panama, Peru, South Africa, Switzerland, Taiwan and the North Pole.

Cortada's work is in the collections of the Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), the NSU Museum of Art in Ft. Lauderdale, the Whatcom Museum, the Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum, the MDC Museum of Art + Design and the World Bank.

Cortada, who was born in Albany, New York of Cuban refugee parents and grew up in Miami, holds undergraduate, graduate and law degrees from the University of Miami.

To learn more, visit www.cortada.com.



CORTADA PROJECTS

Artist **Xavier Cortada** implements his participatory art practice through Cortada Projects at Pinecrest Gardens in Miami, Florida. Cortada Projects uses the power of art to engage the community in learning about and addressing important ecological concerns including climate change, sea-level rise, and biodiversity loss. By using art's elasticity to reach across disciplines, the organization aims to build a community and transform citizens into stewards of the environment.

Through exhibitions at the Pinecrest Gardens Hibiscus Gallery, installations along the colonnade, and programming at the weekly Farmer's Market, **Cortada Projects** uses the power of art to engage the public in learning about and addressing environmental concerns. Learn more at www.cortadaprojects.org.



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