



Students performing in Belgian artist Lieven De Boeck's parade, *What's Going On?* There were two parade performances, one at Sarasota Art Museum and the other at Miami's Untitled Art Fair, hosted alongside Art Basel.



Hélio Oiticica, *Parangolé P4 Cape 1*, acrylic on canvas, fabric, nylon, rope and plastic, 93 × 160 × 10 cm (MAM Rio Collection)

De Boeck's participatory performance was inspired by the late Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica's wearable artwork *Parangolés*, a series of capes and banners adorned with political and poetic messages worn while dancing to Samba. In De Boeck's project, Ringling students sewed capes of their own and choreographed a parade/performance that spoke to queer and gender-fluid identity politics.

That's What's Going On

By Tom Winchester

Two-hundred-and-forty miles south of the Ringling College of Art and Design campus, in Miami Beach, a cohort of Ringling students participated in a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Led by Belgian artist Lieven De Boeck, the students, about 12 in total, paraded through the Untitled Art fair and performed dances in the fair's main thoroughway.

As they danced in zig-zags and figure-eights, the students, who wore unique garments they'd made themselves, pulled in on-lookers and passers-by to engage even the shyest of art-fair goers. The piece developed such palpable joy that it passed by in an instant, despite lasting nearly 30 minutes. A saxophonist's tacitness signaled an ending to the celebration, so the crowd, which had gathered 100 strong, cheered and clapped.

The project was created in collaboration with the INDEX Center and had guidance from Fine Arts faculty Marina Shaltout and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of Undergraduate Studies Jeff Schwartz.

A week before the performance, De Boeck and the students rehearsed the piece for the first time in its totality, but not before running through a few team-building exercises. The students were gathered in a circle, and, in the middle guiding the exercises would be either De Boeck, or a member of his team, former student and assistant Emma Revest, and curator and collaborator Kurt Vanbelleghem. "We just saw some exercises meant for people to start to feel comfortable with the costume they made themselves," said De Boeck. "And to understand some of the conceptual frameworks which were integrated into the original thinking about this form. It's a growing process."

Titled *What's Going On?*, the performance challenges heteronormative and gender binary traditions by celebrating LGBTQIA2S+ inclusivity. "I think this is a really complete piece," says Revest. "We are engaging the question of gender identity, but also our relationship with our bodies, how we represent our bodies with flags, and the way we feel in our clothes. I live in Belgium, but I understand there are harsh restrictions in Florida when it comes to gender equality, so performing this piece was incredibly poignant and topical."

One of the students who participated in the piece, Noa Walker '27, Illustration, said they wanted to be part of the performance because it celebrated, "Costumes, gender identity, and performing—and I love all those things. Everyone handmade their own costumes, and it's meant to be a representation of your identity. So, it's important that we make the costumes. For me, I chose the trans flag, all the colors are the colors of the trans flag. It's nicer than a flag; it's a couture flag."

After only a few hours in the hustle and bustle of Miami Beach, the Ringling cohort made the journey back to campus with a perspective few artists achieve: They'd performed in a piece by an internationally recognized artist that took place where the entire art world was looking, and, in doing so, spread a message of love. So, if anyone ever asks you, "What's going on at Ringling College?" Tell them *that's what's going on*.