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Beatriz Milhazes
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ART + AUCTIONS

Beatriz Milhazes's Healing, Kaleidoscopic Artwork Finds a Permanent Home

Famous for her imaginative use of shape and color, the Brazilian artist is making a remarkable impact in NYC

By Gay Gassmann

July 16, 2018

Above the reception desk of the ambulatory-care center is *Paquetá*, a wall painting 30 feet high by 24 feet long. Before Milhazes headed off to London from Brazil, *AD* spoke with the artist about this ambitious commission. “I wanted to construct an imaginary landscape with horizontal lines to express different geometric landscape dreams. It is very detailed, despite the very large scale,” says Milhazes. “The title is the name of an island in the Rio de Janeiro Bay I used to visit as a child with my family—very romantic.”

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Paquetá, a wall painting, hangs above the reception desk of the ambulatory-care center at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital David H. Koch Center. Photo: Brett Moen / Image courtesy of the artist and James Cohan, New York

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Along the interior driveway of the hospital is a 136-foot-long ceramic mosaic, the largest work Milhazes has done to date. As the artist explains, “*Tuiuti* is based on a musical score. I thought about movement and rhythm, dancing. Ceramic is a recently discovered material for me, and I just love the very organic texture. The title is the name of a school of samba in Rio which I follow. *Tuiuti* and *Paquetá* are poetic names and bring me good memories—perfect feelings for a hospital and for me, a unique experience to take my art to a place that is also about life and belongs to people.”



Milhazes working on the designs for *Tuiuti* at her studio. Photo: Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan, New York

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Milhazes shares the building with over 30 other artists from around the world. “For this project, we were brought in at the very beginning to conceive the art program for the entire building,” says David Fierman, director of art advisory services at Salon 94, with partner Alissa Friedman. “They were interested specifically in a global group of artists to reflect the viewpoint of the hospital’s staff and patient base.” Fierman and Friedman went through a large list of major international contemporary artists, particularly those who had not done a major public work in New York. Milhazes was invited to submit a proposal for either the big lobby wall or the driveway space. The artist chose to go for both locations. “I decided to present two proposals, one for each site, as the walls dialogue together,” she says. All agreed, her thinking was spot-on and she was selected for both areas. Fierman adds: “We originally thought of having two different artists, but the ceramic mural was distinct from the painting surface that we liked the idea of having the same artist for both works since they can be viewed simultaneously.” With a recent exhibition in London and the release of a monograph of her work, *Tropical Abstraction* (Taschen, \$1,000), the artist has a full plate and is certain to make her colorful mark elsewhere in the coming months.