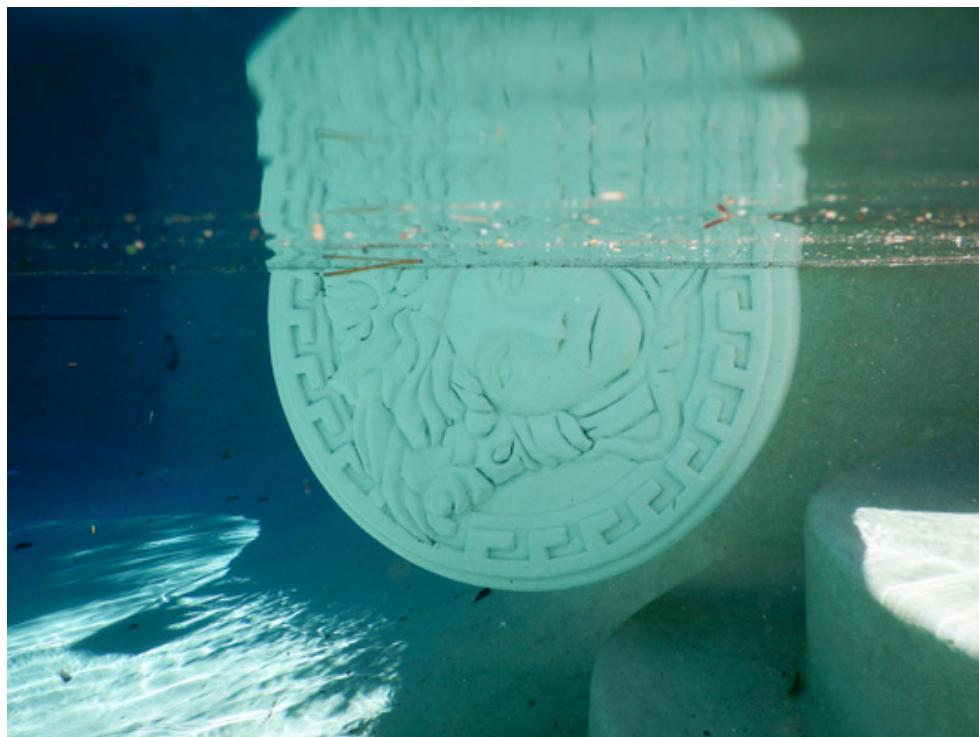


Meet Nicolas Lobo: The Artist Who Creates Versace-Branded Sculptures Using a Swimming Pool

Allyson Shiffman

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Most artists' studios look more or less the same (larger or smaller, more or less light/assistants depending on their level of success). But for the past few months, Nicolas Lobo's "studio" strayed far from the norm. To realize The Leisure Pit, the Miami-based artist turned his friends' Titanic-themed pool into a makeshift industrial factory. The output of Lobo's experimental process was, of course, art, which goes on view at Pérez Art Museum Miami tomorrow.

While pools are typically instruments of leisure, Lobo's childhood pool memories are hardly idyllic. "One year after a hurricane, I was roped into snorkeling in my friend's stepfather's ruined pool to fish out all the debris," he says. "It turned into an industrial nightmare of diving in a soup of fiberglass, tarpaper and jagged metal."

But it was a less disturbing memory that served as an early influence for The Leisure Pit. "I spent a lot of time at this place called Venetian pool, which is an old rock quarry turned into a Venice-themed public pool. It had caves, waterfalls, diving cliffs – things like that," Lobo says. "Instead of turning an industrial place into a pool, I turned a pool into an industrial place."

The artist's one-of-a-kind process involves filling a mold with concrete, encasing it in spandex and submerging it in the stereotypical backyard swimming pool. Once removed, the sculptures are left to harden on the pool deck. Both sculptures and molds make up the resulting exhibit. "What I wanted was to make something that related very much to the extremely well made, poured concrete building on the edge of the water that is PAMM and also make you reconsider your own relation to the work, the

building, the water and the city,” says Lobo.

Among his mad scientist creations is a sculpture emblazoned with the iconic Versace medusa head – the defining symbol of Miami opulence. “The story goes that [Gianni Versace] drew a lot of the inspiration for the brand from Viscaya, one of Miami’s first mansions, now a museum,” Lobo explains. “He apparently used to visit every week and kind of soaked up the place.” (Get it? Soaked?). That same medusa head appears on another “designer” item: ecstasy, the latest accessory for Miami’s rich and decadent. “South Beach is hilarious,” Lobo says. “It’s like Hollywood but instead of actors everyone is a DJ/promoter... but really is a bartender/waiter.”

While swimming pools may be the ultimate manmade embodiment of leisure, Lobo, ironically, prefers the ocean. “North Miami beach on a weekday in March is the best.”