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DECO PORTALS BRINGS A NEW GENERATION OF DESIGN TO LINCOLN ROAD, HONORING THE LEGACY OF ARCHITECT MORRIS LAPIDUS

Student-designed public art installation transforms an iconic Lincoln Road folly through Art Deco-inspired architecture, light, advanced manufacturing, and placemaking

MIAMI BEACH, FL — August 29, 2026 — A new series of illuminated archways has arrived on Miami Beach's historic Lincoln Road, inviting visitors to experience one of the pedestrian street's iconic Morris Lapidus follies from an entirely new perspective.

Deco Portals of Lincoln Road, designed by participants in Moonlighter FabLab's NSF-funded Maker Cities workforce development program, in partnership with The City of Miami Beach and The Lincoln Rd. BID, transforms the historic folly into a contemporary public art experience through a series of sculptural, Art Deco-inspired portals.

The installation pays homage to Morris Lapidus, the influential architect whose redesign of Lincoln Road helped establish the pedestrian promenade as one of Miami Beach's most distinctive public spaces. Lapidus envisioned public environments as places of theater, discovery, and delight, punctuating Lincoln Road with architectural follies that encouraged visitors to gather, wander, and experience the street as more than simply a commercial corridor.

Deco Portals builds upon that philosophy.

Drawing inspiration from the geometric forms, repetition, symmetry, curves, ornamentation, and architectural details found throughout Miami Beach's historic Art Deco District, the installation creates a sequence of portals leading visitors toward and through the existing Lapidus folly. Rather than treating the historic structure simply as an object to observe, the project encourages people to actively engage with it — walking through the arches, framing views, gathering beneath them, taking photographs, and discovering the space differently throughout the day.

By day, the sculptural forms frame views of Lincoln Road while creating a visual dialogue between the folly and the architectural language of Miami Beach. By night, integrated lighting transforms the portals into an illuminated landmark, creating moments of discovery, play, and connection along the pedestrian street.

The result is a project positioned between architecture, public art, advanced manufacturing, technology, and storytelling — simultaneously celebrating the history of Lincoln Road and reinterpreting that history for a new generation.

Morris Lapidus famously said, *"If you create the stage setting and it is grand, everyone who enters will play their part."*

Deco Portals embraces that idea by creating a new stage around one of his original Lincoln Road interventions. Each visitor becomes part of the installation simply by moving through it.

The project serves as a gateway between past and present: honoring the architectural identity that made Miami Beach internationally recognizable while demonstrating how emerging designers and makers can contribute new ideas to an historic public realm.

Designed by the Next Generation

What makes Deco Portals particularly distinctive is not only what was created, but who designed and built it.

The project was conceived through Maker Cities, Moonlighter FabLab's experiential workforce development initiative funded by the National Science Foundation, in partnership with The City of Miami Beach, The Lincoln Rd. BID, and 8 Industry partners (listed below). Participants were challenged to approach Lincoln Road as professional designers, researchers, fabricators, and civic collaborators.

Over the course of the program, participants studied the site and its history, engaged community stakeholders, explored the architectural language of Miami Beach, and considered how a temporary intervention could strengthen Lincoln Road as both a cultural destination and gathering place.

Five interdisciplinary student teams developed competing proposals for the site. Their concepts were presented to a panel of professional designers, architects, urbanists, artists, industry mentors, and civic representatives. Following the design review, one proposal was selected to advance from concept to a fully fabricated public installation.

The participants then confronted the same questions faced by professional design teams: How does an idea move from a drawing into something people can physically inhabit? How is it engineered, fabricated, transported, permitted, assembled, illuminated, and installed within an active public space?

Deco Portals became the answer.

Through that process, students were able to move beyond classroom exercises and add a significant real-world public project to their professional portfolios — one experienced by the thousands of residents and visitors who travel through Lincoln Road.

About Maker Cities

Maker Cities is a National Science Foundation-funded workforce development and placemaking initiative led by Moonlighter FabLab that expands access to careers and opportunities in advanced manufacturing, emerging technologies, design, and creative entrepreneurship.

Participants take part in a six-month, studio-based learning experience combining technical training with real-world project development. The program introduces participants to CAD/CAM design, 3D printing, laser cutting, CNC milling, digital fabrication, design thinking, entrepreneurship, and civic innovation, while connecting them with industry professionals, mentors, and community stakeholders.

Rather than learning these technologies exclusively through isolated exercises, participants apply their skills to a real civic design challenge. For the inaugural Maker Cities project, Lincoln Road became the classroom.

Through a partnership between Moonlighter FabLab, the Lincoln Road Business Improvement District, and the City of Miami Beach, participants researched the district, developed proposals, presented their ideas through a professional design review process, and ultimately fabricated a full-scale intervention for one of Miami Beach's most important public spaces.

The initiative demonstrates a model in which workforce development, advanced manufacturing, cultural placemaking, and civic engagement can reinforce one another — allowing emerging talent not only to learn new technologies, but to use those technologies to meaningfully shape their community.

The Maker Cities Student Cohort

The Deco Portals project represents the collective learning, research, design, and fabrication efforts of the inaugural Maker Cities cohort:

Alejandra Balsells • Billy Jean Louis • Camille-Elise Aldabe • Daniel Pina • Genesis Gallardo-Aliaga • Jessica Perez • Kayla Jenkins • Leyla Morris • Linda Torres • Malcolm Jackson • Margaret Miranda • Mercedes Perera • Mikeya Brown • Nicholas Diaz • Noah Tyler Usher • Osse Laborde • Rocky K Raoni • Sarahi Lovo

About Moonlighter FabLab

Moonlighter FabLab is a Miami Beach-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit fabrication lab, STEAM learning center, and community innovation hub dedicated to expanding access to creative technologies, digital fabrication, and workforce development opportunities.

Through hands-on educational programs, workforce initiatives, public workshops, artist collaborations, and community-driven projects, Moonlighter empowers people to transform ideas into tangible solutions using technologies including 3D printing, laser cutting, CNC fabrication, electronics, robotics, and emerging digital tools.

As a cultural anchor and STEAM education partner in Miami Beach, Moonlighter works alongside schools, community organizations, artists, businesses, universities, and government agencies to connect art, design, science, technology, education, and civic engagement. Its mission is to democratize access to technology, create pathways into the creative economy, inspire the next generation of makers and problem-solvers, and demonstrate how design and fabrication can be used as tools for positive community impact.

Partners, Mentors & Community Stakeholders

Deco Portals and the Maker Cities initiative were made possible through the collaboration of students, educators, designers, researchers, civic leaders, mentors, volunteers, and community partners.

Program & Community Partners
The National Science Foundation • City of Miami Beach • Lincoln Road Business Improvement District • Anabel Llopis, Lincoln Road BID • Lissette Arrogante, City of Miami Beach Tourism + Culture • Eli Tucker-Raymond, Boston University • Idaykis Rodriguez, Florida International University • The Jorge M. Pérez Family Foundation

Industry Mentors
Sherryl Muriente • Melissa Hege, MHCP Colab • Cassiopea McDonald, Street Plans Collaborative • James Brazil, Studio Brazil • David Rifkind • Alie Gonzalez-Guyon • Abel Bajuelo • Gustavo Grande

Moonlighter FabLab Team
Tom Pupo • Daisy Nodal • Emil Rodriguez-Torres • Augusto Vanegas • Jadayne Smith • Jonathan de Souza • Eva Langen • Mitchel Corteguera • Karim Nishida • Sandra Tejada • Ethan Inoh

Special Thanks to Project Volunteers:
Alex Demarco • Ali Abraham • Domenika Solis • Edgar Diaz • Fatima Valbuena • Harsh Baid • Isabella Dotres • Jake Creber • Jordan Gonzalez • Katherine Burge • Kristian Reverol • Leonardo Segura • Liah Jimenez • Luna Araujo • Maria Paula Cevallos • Melanie Bello • Muntaser Syed • Nicholas Olavarrieta • Paola Cruz • Patricio Pichling • Robin Gattis • Samuel Aquil • Santiago Delgado • Sebastian Eslava • Steven Sandler • Tomas Casella • Valentina Acua • Valeria Barbery • Victoria Gonzalez