



LETTER TO THE COMMISSION

LTC No: 26-023

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the Fort Lauderdale City Commission
FROM: Rickelle Williams, City Manager *RW*
DATE: January 23, 2026
SUBJECT: Installation of the Manolo Valdés' Sculpture Titled, *Cabeza con Mariposas*
(*Head with Butterflies*) at Huizenga Park

The purpose of this Letter to the Commission (LTC) is to provide the City Commission with an update on the installation of the Manolo Valdés' Sculpture titled, *Cabeza con Mariposas* (*Head with Butterflies*) at Huizenga Park.

On May 21, 2024, the City Commission approved the acquisition of Manolo Valdés' *Cabeza con Mariposas* through the James Winder Laird Estate's donation to the City of Fort Lauderdale. In 2022, the Laird Estate donated \$5,000,000 to fund the acquisition, installation, and maintenance of public art throughout the City. The Valdés sculpture was purchased by the Laird Estate for \$800,000 with the intent of displaying it within Huizenga Park.

Cabeza con Mariposas was installed in Huizenga Park on Thursday, January 22, 2026, and will be highlighted during the Downtown Development Authority's (DDA) Huizenga Park Grand Reopening Celebration on Saturday, January 24, 2026, beginning at 10:00 a.m. at 32 East Las Olas Boulevard. On February 17, 2026, the City Commission will be asked to consider approval of the Huizenga Park Art Sculpture Agreement that outlines the ongoing roles and responsibilities of the City and the DDA as it relates to the sculpture. This agreement will include terms related to insurance, indemnification, and termination as well as accountability for the ongoing care and maintenance of the sculpture.

The newly installed *Cabeza con Mariposas* by Manolo Valdés transforms Huizenga Park into a space where art, nature, and urban life converge. Cast at monumental scale in aluminum, the sculpture presents an elegantly stylized female head crowned with a constellation of graphic butterflies, their forms poised in dynamic balance above the figure. The composition juxtaposes a refined, classical profile with a lively canopy of wings, creating an ever-changing interplay of light, shadow, and reflection as the sun moves across the sky.

Within the open landscape of Huizenga Park, *Cabeza con Mariposas* becomes a living part of the environment. Its polished surface mirrors Fort Lauderdale's shifting tropical light, catching glimmers of the nearby river and skyline while echoing the organic rhythms of the surrounding trees. The butterflies evoke metamorphosis and renewal, inviting viewers to reflect on the delicate relationship between the natural and the built world and the ways culture can animate public space.

Manolo Valdés (b. 1942, Valencia, Spain) is among the most important figures in contemporary Spanish art. A co-founder of the avant-garde collective Equipo Crónica in the 1960s, he developed a visual language that reinterprets icons from art history through a distinctly modern lens. Working across painting, sculpture, and relief, Valdés is recognized for his masterful use of material including aluminum, bronze, wood, and stone, and for creating monumental works that respond to their surroundings through scale, light, and texture.

Valdés' Mariposas series, often called his "butterfly heads," features dignified, archetypal visages adorned with bold, stylized butterflies that suggest both structure and flight. The series explores themes of transformation, grace, and vitality, using the butterfly as a symbol of change and as an architectural device that modulates light and air. Installed in plazas and parks around the world, these works are conceived to activate public space by offering new perspectives from every angle.

In Huizenga Park, *Cabeza con Mariposas* takes on renewed meaning. The sculpture's silhouette enters dialogue with the park's canopy and the city's skyline, underscoring Valdés' belief that public art should exist in harmony with daily life. Monumental yet serene, *Cabeza con Mariposas* invites passersby to pause, look upward, and experience a moment of wonder and reflection in the heart of downtown Fort Lauderdale.

For additional information, please contact Joshua Carden, Cultural Affairs Officer, at jcarden@fortlauderdale.gov or 954-828-5044.

Attachment:

1. Photo of Cabeza con Mariposas

c: Shari McCartney, City Attorney
David R. Soloman, City Clerk
Patrick Reilly, City Auditor
City Manager's Office
Department Directors

