

FORT LAUDERDALE'S CITY MAGAZINE

# GO RIVERWALK

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### LEAH BROWN

TITLE OF WORK: *JUNIOR LEAGUE OF GREATER FORT LAUDERDALE 80TH ANNIVERSARY*


**H**ow do you translate 80 years of service into a visual checklist for building a vibrant city? If you are Leah Brown, (pronounced like the princess in Star Wars), it might begin with imagining how to explain it to your daughter. On International Women's Day March 8th at 10:30, a sculpture will be unveiled in the Historic District along Riverwalk commemorating the 80th anniversary of The Junior League of Greater Fort Lauderdale. This public work of art is an example of how Leah continues to build her career as a self-sustaining artist and an example of how the League has been instrumental in building our vibrant community.

There is no step by step guide to becoming an artist, although coming from an artistic family certainly helps one to see the potential. Leah's father worked out of the home as a luthier, hand building musical instruments and encouraging her curiosity about the tools and methods used to create. Today as a sculptor and installation artist she wields laser cutters, 3D scanners, and all manner of tools in her studio practice. She is also a partner and artist for the public art and design

collaborative, Art+Light+Space. In addition, Leah also takes on fabrication work, teaches, and co-curates the FAT Village Projects spaces with her husband, Peter Symonds. The two met at Rhode Island School of Design where she received her BFA. She went on to finish an MFA at the University of Miami in 2014. This artist's life is forged from courage, commitment, collaborations and creative solutions.

When the Junior League of Greater Fort Lauderdale was founded in 1937, their mission was to provide volunteers in civic and child welfare work. This group of women went on to produce a series of Legacy projects, including Jack & Jill Children's Center, NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale, Museum of Discovery & Science, among many others. Most Fort Lauderdaleans may not be aware of the impact this group has had in our community. Leah began to research the League for a commemorative sculpture and says, "I realized that they had put into play all of the cultural institutions that I hold dear, plus so many of the social organizations that are instrumental to the fabric of the community as well."

When describing the project, JLGFL President Jill Banaszak says the League decided to do something different to commemorate the anniversary with a piece that would be long-lasting, beyond an ephemeral event or gala. In addition, it was decided that the League would self-fund the commemorative work from within the membership. As an example of that support, lead donors Jennifer and Jim Kovach (Jennifer is the incoming president for the 2018-2019 term) expressed, "It's a privilege for us to be a part of this historic project to help recognize the role of developing leaders and vital organizations in our hometown."

Commissioned to describe that story Leah Brown envisioned a narrative carved in panels, "almost like a pop-up book." The lead panel portrays mother and child looking across scenes portraying the cultural, social, and humanitarian missions of the League. In the distance, the foundation of courage, empathy, and strength provided by the women of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Junior League, the skyline of Fort Lauderdale rises above the New River. 

#### To learn more:

Artist Leah Brown's website: [www.leahbrownart.com](http://www.leahbrownart.com)

Junior League of Greater Fort Lauderdale website: [www.juniorleagueftl.org](http://www.juniorleagueftl.org)



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