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Artist Michael Kagan Wants to Get Miami Fairgoers Amped About Space Travel With This Floating, 400-Pound Space Capsule

By Sarah Cascone, December 2, 2021



Michael Kagan, *APOLLO 2021*, (2021).

© Courtesy of the artist and Half Gallery.

One of the stranger sights in Miami this week is an Apollo space capsule floating in Biscayne Bay as if just returned from a lunar voyage.

But this isn't some wormhole into the heyday of the U.S. Space program, but an art project from artist Michael Kagan and New York's Half Gallery.

The piece comes as NASA prepares for a return to the moon with the Artemis mission, now planned for no earlier than 2025. Kagan and Half Gallery owner Bill Powers share interest in space travel, and wish that the general public was more excited about plans for humankind to explore the solar system.

"The first moon missions in the beginning, it was all about spectacle. That's why the Apollo missions died off—people lost interest. This is about keeping it relevant, with a little bit of fun hype," Kagan said.

The artist also harbors ambitions of heading to space himself. Yusaku Maezawa, the Japanese billionaire art collector who has promised to take a group of artists with him to the moon aboard one of Elon Musk's SpaceX rockets, is one of his collectors, and Kagan is angling for a seat. "He's very supportive of me. He's going up in the next week or two with Russian cosmonauts to the Space Station. I asked him if I'm on the list, and he's like 'it's a list, but you're on the list,'" Kagan said.

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His pitch for why he deserves to go? “To be there and come back would transform the work—and I feel like I could spread the good word with my art,” he said.

APOLLO 2021 is for sale for \$175,000, and the artist was already fielding offers at last’s night unveiling from Meredith and Brother Rudder, collectors from his hometown of Virginia Beach.

“I would tow it around Virginia Beach! It would be the greatest conversation piece,” Brother told Kagan. (The work also comes with a stand if you are interested in a more conventional, indoor display.)

Kagan has long made paintings of astronauts, but sculptures are a new extension of his practice. He unveiled his first one, a life-size bronze astronaut based on a figure from a painting, at the amfAR Gala in Cannes in July, where it was auctioned off for €400,000 (\$452,000). A second version was on offer at the fair from Almine Rech, where it sold for \$250,000.

“I worked with a team of 3-D designers, and we made a file to represent my brush strokes. It took like two years,” Kagan said.



Michael Kagan, *APOLLO 2021*, (2021).
© Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Sarah Cascone.



Michael Kagan, *Astronaut* (2021) with Almine Rech at Art Basel Miami Beach. Photo courtesy of the artist.
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Kagan worked with Fatum Arte foundry in Madrid to fabricate the sculptures, which was something of a challenge, given that the capsule needed to be able to float.

“KAWS does those big floating inflatables, but I wanted to do something that has weight. It is 408 pounds and it’s floating perfectly. You use cranes to move it around, but then you put it in the water and it just starts bobbing around,” Kagan explained. “It took some engineering to do it.”