



NIKIGATOR ON VACATION AT LIBERTY STATION!

Mingei International Museum and NTC Foundation Art in Public Places Committee Join Forces to Bring the Museum's Beloved Sculpture *Nikigator* to ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station

August 6, 6:30 am: Arrival at ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station (Media Only Event)
August 10, 10 am - 6 pm: Official Opening in conjunction with ArtWalk @ Liberty Station (Public Invited)
2640 Historic Decatur Road, Point Loma (Across from Ingram Plaza)

SAN DIEGO, CA, JULY 15, 2019 - Mingei International Museum and NTC Foundation Art in Public Places Committee bring the Museum's beloved large-scale sculpture *Nikigator* to ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station for an extended "vacation" from her Balboa Park home. Early Tuesday morning on August 6, the colorful, iconic sculpture will arrive via flatbed truck where she is being transported from a storage facility in Santee. She will be craned into place to stand sentry in front of the Dick Laub NTC Command Center, 2640 Historic Decatur Road, outside Shop Mingei and Café Mingei. The sculpture will provide an interactive experience for visitors, contributing to the thriving arts and culture destination. Special activities are being planned to take place during ArtWalk @ Liberty Station to celebrate the return of *Nikigator* including a collaborative mosaic project inspired by Saint Phalle's whimsical designs. Together, families will create a colorful gator-shaped mosaic using gemstones, tiles and other recycled materials.

The public artwork was originally located outside the Museum's Balboa Park location, currently under renovation. Since the construction would have placed *Nikigator* at risk, the Museum took the time to transport the artwork to storage last October, allowing for much needed rest and repairs before transport to a new home.

The work was created by the late French-American self-taught artist, Niki de Saint Phalle (1930-2002), who spent her final years in La Jolla, making large-scale sculptures covered with mirrors, glass and polished stones not unlike *Nikigator*. Mingei also continues its longstanding relationship with the Niki de Saint Phalle Foundation, given its numerous accessions over the years by the artist.

NTC Foundation Executive Director Alan Ziter remarked, "We continue to encourage and support public art and its transformative power to add beauty, attract visitors, stimulate walking traffic and promote pride in place.

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We are thrilled to have such an iconic work debut at the ARTS DISTRICT and provide a haven for this high-profile sculpture by Niki de Saint Phalle. We invite San Diegans familiar with the signature piece to visit it at her new home and explore the entire ARTS DISTRICT.”

Mingei Executive Director and CEO Rob Sidner said, “*Nikigator* is now ready to be unleashed to the public. We’re thrilled that once again she can be a beacon for the Museum and a fun destination for all families enjoying Liberty Station, until she can return to her native habitat in Balboa Park.”

Mingei Deputy Director and Chief Advancement Officer Jessica York states, “Mingei champions human creativity, and this project is a wonderful way to pay homage to a familiar artist and reflect our mission. We’re excited by the vision we share with the NTC Foundation to grow community engagement around *Nikigator*, a destination for kids and grownups alike.”

Saint Phalle’s longtime assistant Lech Juretko will be transporting *Nikigator* to the installation site. Juretko was also the one to salvage the distressed areas of *Nikigator*. After nearly 20 years of being exposed to the elements, the adhesive attaching the mosaic elements to skin of the sculpture had become compromised, making it easy for vandals to remove her marbles and stones. Several areas where she was mirrored had been cracked and needed to be replaced. The repair by Juretko should reduce annual conservation costs for years to come.

Catch Nikigator while you can! On view August 10 through mid-2020 outside Shop Mingei at the Dick Laub NTC Command Center, 2640 Historic Decatur Road, ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station.

#nikigator #explorelibertystation #findart

<https://libertystation.com/post/nikigator>

About Mingei International Museum

Mingei International Museum collects, preserves and exhibits “art of the world, art of the people,” including folk art, craft and design from all eras and cultures. A non-profit institution funded by individuals and community support, the Museum offers inspiring exhibitions and diverse educational programs to more than 100,000 visitors a year. Institutional support for Mingei International Museum is provided by the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture. At the heart of Mingei are stunning exhibitions of folk art, design and craft that exude human creativity and spirit. While our Balboa Park museum is temporarily closed for a major renovation, Mingei remains open for business with pop-up exhibitions, maker events and installations happening across the region, expanding the Museum's potential for collaboration and adding new perspectives. www.mingei.org.

About ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station

ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station is San Diego’s largest Arts & Cultural District located in historic buildings at the former Naval Training Center in the Liberty Station neighborhood, near Downtown on San Diego Bay. With 100 park-like acres, the ARTS DISTRICT is home to nearly 145 museums and galleries, artist studios, dance companies, fine dining, creative retail and other organizations that showcase San Diego’s creative community and provide innovative experiences for the public. www.artsdistrictlibertystation.com

About NTC Foundation

NTC Foundation was established in 2000 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit to enrich the lives of San Diegans by renovating this signature community asset and creating, facilitating, and operating ARTS DISTRICT as a 100-acre creative district. Visitors experience the arts, culture, creativity, and cuisine that are the hallmarks of the San Diego region and enjoy innovative experiences in a historic setting at Liberty Station that inspire lives for generations to come.
www.ntcfoundation.org

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