

How Miami Book Fair's latest partnership was design-hacked by a fourth grader



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Miami Book Fair (<http://miamibookfair.com>) has always been about more than words. Now, they've enlisted the help of local makerspace, **Moonlighter** (<http://moonlighter.co>), for a special design-thinking project to help more Miamians enjoy a reading break wherever they are.

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The best part? The winning designer behind the project is 9-year-old Allen Hesbun, an incoming fourth-grader and Moonlighter vet who will see his work built and installed at this year's Book Fair. After a month of production time, his portable book-sharing pod will be revealed at Wynwood Yard this Saturday, August 19.

"I love Moonlighter and what they are doing there. I think this is a perfect combination," said Lissette Mendez, program director for the Miami Book Fair.

The innovative partnership grew from the fair's longtime commitment to community programming. While thousands of book lovers flock to the fair every year, Miami Book Fair **works year-round** (<https://www.miamibookfair.com/events/>) to offer word nerds spaces to workshop their writing and wax poetic at open mics and literary events. To keep their activities fresh and accessible, they seek out opportunities to forge new relationships with different organizations and Miamians, Mendez said.



“We always have a section [at the Book Fair] that’s dedicated to science, engineering, and design, and teaching children to use their imagination,” said Mendez. “I’m happy this is coming into fruition in a way that brings different kinds of organizations in the

community together.”

As a part of its educational summer programming, Moonlighter challenges its students with week-long, hypothetical design-thinking exercises, but this was their first opportunity to present a real client to the kids, said Daisy Nodal, co-founder of Moonlighter.

“We basically proposed the three functions of the space: An area for sitting, an area for storing books, and an area to read,” Nodal said. “And after that, we gave them the freedom to design with Legos.”

During the next five days, the 6- to 12-year-olds used 3D design tools and problem-solving skills to figure out the scale, cost, and materials they would use to convert their Lego prototype into a life-sized gathering space.

“We introduced a lot of new vocabulary. It was really funny to see children figure out budgets and cost analysis,” Nodal said.

Part of the challenge was helping the student designers think about designing a space



for kids who were used to digital. Allen imagined a portable pod where kids could hang out and read physical books that also could be moved to different neighborhoods.

The pod was cut out of plywood at Moonlighter with a CNC machine, and assembled in two halves for easy transportation. Its debut at the Wynwood Yard will be its first test-drive as a traveling installation and community bookshelf.

“Part of what I would like to do is stock the bookshelves with books that represent the variety of things that are happening at Book Fair,” said Mendez. “We would love to have it at our building at the Freedom Tower, and then be able to use it in other locations to give away free books.”

You can check out the pod at Wynwood Yard through the month of August. Meet Hesbun and the Moonlighter and Miami Book Fair teams at Wynwood Yard at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 19, when the pod will be unveiled.



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