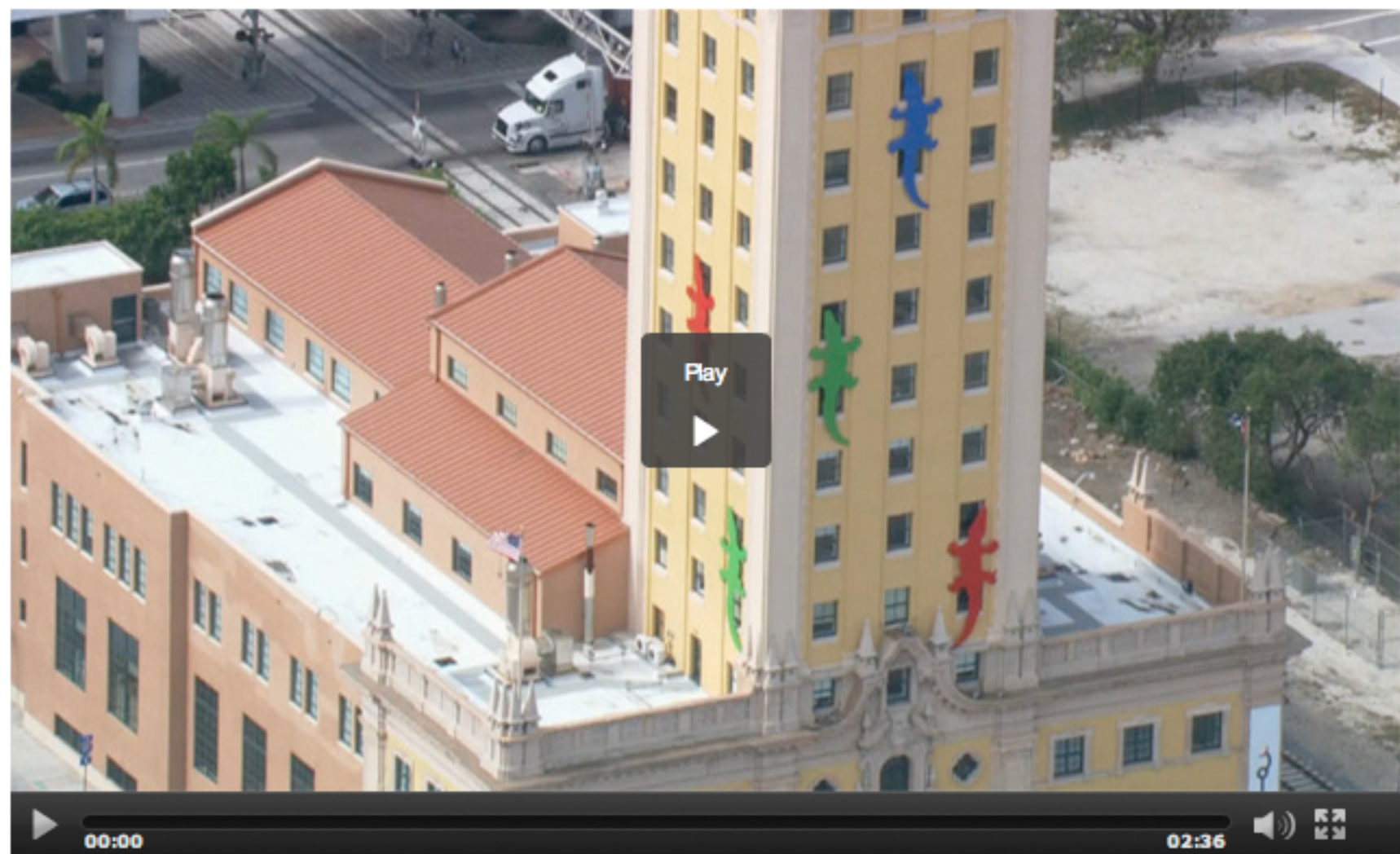


# Animals surround Freedom Tower

FOREVERGLADES exhibit opens

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Gators, crocs surround Freedom Tower

**MIAMI** - Gators, crocodiles, lizards, rabbits, and turtles are surrounding the historic Freedom Tower in downtown Miami.

**FOREVERGLADES** opened Friday at the Freedom Tower.

"The open door plus the crocodile looking salamanders, they've enticed me to come on in," said one man.

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"That's a huge alligator outside. That's a huge hare, and I was like, 'Let's go in and see,'" said a woman.

Belgian artist William Sweetlove, part of the Cracking Art Group, created the exhibit, which features large-scale recyclable plastic alligators, sea turtles, frogs, and rabbits.

"They researched South Florida animals, they researched the Everglades," said event director

Jeremy Mikolajczak. "Singular, they're very interesting, but when you put them all together and they're looking at you, it creates this other picture."

The exhibit is meant to be about environmental protection, sustainability and advocacy of South Florida's National Parks and Preserves. The same group brought giant pink snails to South Florida in 2010.

Mikolajczak said the Freedom Tower was picked for a reason.

"It was almost a perfect fit because they're looking beyond the objects that you see," said Mikolajczak.

"When you make art with a sense of humor, it makes you smile," said Staci Sweden. "It's a very important subject and they've treated it with both respect and humor."

FOREVERGLADES runs through Saturday, Jan. 26, 2013. Exhibition and events are free and open to the public.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, from noon to 5 p.m.