Christmas came early for Miami’s flagship art museum.

The Pérez Art Museum Miami received a $25 million donation from Jorge Pérez, the museum’s namesake, art collector and real estate developer. The donation was announced Saturday night during PAMM’s Art of the Party gala, the museum’s biggest annual fundraiser where Pérez and his wife Darlene were honored.

The museum also announced the recipient of the Pérez Prize. Christopher Cozier, a Trinidadian-based writer, curator and artist who focuses on the Caribbean, won the $50,000 unrestricted award.

Franklin Sirmans, the PAMM director, thanked Pérez for his leadership and philanthropy in Miami’s arts community. It’s hard to imagine any local arts organization that hasn’t benefited from the Pérez family’s contributions, Sirmans said.
“It’s a rare person to have a commitment to an institution and to a place as much as he has,” Sirmans said. “He’s also somebody who’s just been incredibly passionate about this institution for almost 30 years and passionate about art and artists and the power of art in our community.”

The gift, which will go into PAMM’s endowment, will “allow us to plan for the future,” Sirmans said. The donation can help grow the museum’s art collection, expand its educational outreach and even prepare its building for the effects of climate change.

“It transforms the endowment and transforms the institution once again,” he said. “It’s going to do a lot. It’s going to do a little bit of everything.”
Pérez said it is extremely important to make sure the museum has enough funding “for a rainy day,” especially when the economy can be unpredictable.

“An endowment allows you to weather the storms, the times that are even tougher than it typically is for arts institutions to survive and thrive,” he said.

He hopes his contribution will inspire others to support PAMM as well.

“We’re a very young city, and if people don’t step up like they’ve done in New York and San Francisco and Chicago, then we won’t have great cultural institutions,” he said. “So I always hope that the gifts that I do are catalysts for other people making contributions to the art world.”
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