

MAKING MIAMI:
THE STORY OF AN ART
COMMUNITY

CONTENTS

04	FOREWORD ALBERTO IBARGÜEN
06	A LOVE LETTER TO MIAMI VIVEK & CAROLINA GARCÍA JAYARAM
08	MILESTONES IN MIAMI'S COMING OF AGE SAGA ELISA TURNER
14	MAKING MIAMI KATERINA LLANES
272	IN MEMORIAM
274	INDEX
289	CREDITS

	CONVERSATIONS
18	CARLOS BETANCOURT / KATERINA LLANES
36	DANIEL ARSHAM / VIVEK JAYARAM
40	DAVID ROHN / CAROL JAZZAR
44	CHARO OQUET / DAVID MARSH
48	FRIENDSWITHYOU / SAM & TURY
54	ROBERT CHAMBERS / BHAKTI BAXTER
60	OLIVER SANCHEZ / MAITE URRECHECGA
66	ANTONIA WRIGHT / RUBEN MILLARES
70	CRISTINA LEI RODRIGUEZ / PEPE MAR
74	LORIE MERTES / DEBRA SCHOLL
80	MICHELE OKA DONER / MERA RUBELL
86	JOSÉ DIAZ / NINA ARIAS
90	FRANCES TROMBLY / BONNIE CLEARWATER
94	KEVIN ARROW / ROBERTO BEHAR / ROSARIO MARQUARDT
100	MANNY PRIERES / JEN STARK
104	MARIE VICKLES / MAX PIERRE
108	ADLER GUERRIER / NATALIA BENEDETTI
116	MARIO CADER-FRECH / CHRISTIAN CURIEL
120	KAREN GRIMSON / CRAIG ROBINS
126	WESTEN CHARLES / JON PYLYPCHUK / ELIZABETH WITHSTANDLEY
132	MONTSE GUILLEN / ANTONI MIRALDA
138	ROSA DE LA CRUZ / SILVIA KARMEN CUBIÑÁ / MELISSA WALLEN
144	DINA MITRANI / PEGGY NOLAN
150	NINA JOHNSON / DENNIS SCHOLL
154	BERNICE STEINBAUM / CAROLINA GARCÍA JAYARAM
158	ARAMIS GUTIERREZ / JUSTIN H. LONG
164	DOMINGO CASTILLO / TIFFANY CHESTLER
168	RYAN TRECARTIN / ASHLAND MINES
176	NAOMI FISHER / ALEJANDRO CARDENAS
184	CATHY LEFF / MICKY WOLFSON
188	JENNA BALFE / MAURICIO ABASCAL
194	RHONDA MITRANI / CAROLINA GARCÍA JAYARAM
200	TM SISTERS TASHA & MONICA LOPEZ DE VICTORIA / JIAE HWANG-RUIZ
206	TYLER EMERSON-DORSCH / BROOK DORSCH
210	LEYDEN RODRIGUEZ-CASANOVA / RENÉ MORALES
216	SUSAN CARABALLO / VIVIAN MARTHELL
220	CLAIRE BREUKEL / SUSAN LEE-CHUN
226	ROSIE GORDON-WALLACE / BARBARA YOUNG
230	AMY ROSENBLUM / DAVID CASTILLO
234	THEA SMOLINSKI / CRAIG KUCIA
238	KATHRYN MIKESELL / CLIFTON CHILDREE
244	BRANDON OPALKA / JACIN GIORDANO
248	PRES RODRIGUEZ / DANNY GONZALEZ
254	JILLIAN MAYER / LUCAS LEYVA
260	LEYDEN RODRIGUEZ-CASANOVA / JOSE REYES / MANNY PRIERES

FORWARD

ALBERTO IBARGÜEN

President, Knight Foundation

By the beginning of the 21st Century, Miami had evolved from a winter haven for northerners, past real estate speculation, sunny beaches, art deco and cocaine cowboys into a serious contender as the keystone of international trade and finance between North and South America. Geographically located at the center, it had become the place where the hemispheres converged and people came to reinvent themselves and find a new future.

Heady stuff. But it’s hard to make a community when three quarters of the population was born someplace else. What we needed were organically Miami things to bind us to the place, and to each other.

Making Miami chronicles how Miami joined around art and evolved a culture that creates. The conversations in this book show the perspective of some of the key figures in that evolution. They catalog an awesome and small “d” democratic ambition that art be general, accessible and authentic. And quality, because what moves us is great painting or music, dance or writing.

Miami has been a cultural center for years. It has been at the core of Latin music for decades, its book fair has long established itself as one of the country's best and its film festival shows "foreign" films to audiences who view them as culturally “local.” A new generation of wealth created in Miami propelled entrepreneurs who assembled significant art collections built on fortunes made in real estate, cars, law, beer, finance and trade. The geography and the collecting community caught the eye of Art Basel, which risked a bet on Miami and its future, creating a commercial success that exploded into a tipping point in the cultural history of the place.

Making Miami puts the diversity and dynamism of Miami on full display, and shows in clear, vivid color, that this place has something special to offer.

I’m proud of the catalytic role played by Knight Foundation, funding every major institution and hundreds of grassroots projects and artists. Our community goal, wonderfully reflected in these pages, was to make art general in Miami, borrowing from the last paragraph of James Joyce’s “The Dead,” which read, in part, “Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland.” When the final chapter is written, we want it to be true that the newspapers were right: art was general all over Miami. No single person or group can take credit for the transformation of the city’s cultural life but the Miami of today seems far removed from the Miami of 20 years ago. Ultimately, that’s par for the course for a city in a state of constant reinvention. With every new wave of people that get sand in their shoes, this community grows and changes. It is a place of creativity, a young city, and far from finished.

A LOVE LETTER TO MIAMI

VIVEK &
CAROLINA
JAYARAM

Outsiders have long underestimated Miami. Like many great beauties, these tropical shores have attracted countless suitors attempting to tame its mystery, only to find Miami continues to resist definition and logic. This isn't a city for conformists. This is a city for visionaries and dreamers. And dreams, as we all know, defy logic; only revealing their meaning in circuitous and transcendental ways, and often much, much later.

So, what does it mean to love Miami and what does the story of Miami mean to us?

Throughout history, the myths of all great cities have been woven by their creatives. To try and understand what happened in Mesopotamia, ancient Rome or Machu Picchu, we look to what the artists left behind. Carved etchings on a cliffside, beaded costumes, oil lamp painted canvases hung down long dark corridors, oratories in the town square or songs and stories, pressed and printed then shared and stored away. Creative expression has illuminated life in any time and place, shedding light on what it felt like to be alive. It's never the complete story but it is a powerful lens that future generations can look back through to connect to and deepen their humanity.

Artists are the centripetal force that center, catalyze, organize and enliven a city. They are the observers; interpreting how our time here will be remembered. And so, it isn't at all surprising that the cities which remain rooted in our modern imaginations, that evolve to mythic stature and pulse in ways other cities do not, were teeming with artists who lived, loved, lost and worked to leave behind their unique imprints. But inexplicably, in their time, most artists have been undervalued. In fact, most will likely wield greater influence long after they are gone, when we want to make sense of a new dawn and better comprehend how we got here.

Modern Miami owes a great debt to the multi-disciplinary artists who have long come here - from those fleeing oppressive regimes to those seeking a tropical escape to those running from or to something new and different. This beach encircled thumb tip of humid extravagance has long attracted creative souls and the devoted groupies like us who wanted to be in their orbits.

×

○



other side of the Atlantic that would soon take root and wend its way into nearly every crevice of Miami.

But the early aughts still belonged to the local artists and the community that nurtured and championed them. Funnily, we both came for legal gigs and over the years have each been lucky to work alongside many visionary artists, founders, entrepreneurs - what's the difference anymore? It's been miraculous and great fun to see how artists shaped Miami. We know this book and the many, many stories captured here, offers but one uniquely colorful kaleidoscope lens of a moment in time and in a place where it was all possible.

At a 2022 gathering at our home on Miami Beach, we heard a newly transplanted New Yorker remark, "was there anything here before we all got here?" Startled, but inspired, the two of us looked at each other, undoubtedly recalled the early days of our relationship, and shared an identical thought: "histories need to be told, or else they disappear forever."

Here's this one, we hope you enjoy it. We love you, Miami.

Vivek + Carolina
Miami Beach
September, 2023

MILE STONES IN MIAMI'S COMING OF AGE SAGA

ESSAY

ELISA
TURNER

January 10, 1999 It's one year before the millennium. Three years before the first Art Basel Miami Beach finally arrives. Already Miami's art scene percolates with ambition, I write in "Visually on the Verge: With Tropical Cliches Safely in the Past, Could South Florida's Art Future Be Something Great?" The fair Art Miami attracts collectors and curators, among them New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art curator Lowery Sims. She tells me, "Obviously Miami is a hot scene. It's very strong in Latin American art, and the visual arts in general. I'm coming down to see how it all goes together." In town is Art Basel spokesman Samuel Keller, surely because Art Basel plans to stage a local event, possibly to coincide with a future Art Miami. "We are in a crossover time, and Miami is a crossover place," he says.

George Sanchez declares these days "the most happening art week in Miami." Area artists, collectors, dealers and others credit the efforts of MoCA, MAM, the Rubell Family Collection and FIU in particular with ratcheting up the visual arts bar. However, Fred Snitzer tells me, "I think the problem remains that we are lacking an enthusiastic audience that recognizes what the outside recognizes, that Miami is a great cultural mix." Artists generate events feeding upon Art Miami's global and local synergy. Compared to museums hosting big-budget shows or private collectors acquiring internationally known works, artists' efforts may seem modest. But they are critical to the community's creative future. Sanchez devises a massive installation recalling controversial times in South Florida history, the Bay of Pigs Invasion. Tom Downs curates a video and film screening by young, international artists for The Wolfsonian-FIU. Robert Chambers is in talks with New York's Mexican Cultural Institute to establish links between artists in Mexico and Miami. "If you go out and approach people, things start to happen," says Chambers.

January 30, 2000 This weekend marks a milestone in our coming of age saga. It demonstrates a clear desire for innovation in the visual arts. There are fine shows of art across greater Miami in private and public settings, including Martin Z. Margulies's newly installed contemporary photography collection on Northwest 27th St. In "Artists Bond in Doomed Building," I describe abundant buzz about an unprecedented gathering of new, site-specific work by 44 Miami artists in Departing Perspectives, curated by Fred Snitzer, at the former Espirito Santo Bank building on Brickell Ave. To Dennis Scholl, it's "a defining moment for Miami, showing the community how many excellent working artists there are here. I got a chill walking up and down those floors." Among the artists are Hernan Bas, Carol Brown, María Martínez-Cañas, Robert Chambers, Marissa Telleria Diez, Robert Huff, Karen Rifas, Lydia Rubio, Rubén Torres-Llorca, Purvis Young, TM Sisters, Eugenia Vargas, and Annie Wharton. On display are striking collaborations by Bhakti Baxter, Julian Picaza, Jay Hines and also by Roberto Behar and Rosario Marquardt. Working feverishly

MAKING MIAMI

for five days, established artists alongside ambitious high-school and college art students transform eight floors of the soon-to-be demolished building. An estimated 2,400 visitors attend, including Art in America editor Elizabeth C. Baker and author Brian Antoni. Activity animating the doomed bank tower ignites a spirit of community among artists and audiences. “It feels to me like the high after Christo and Jeanne-Claude,” Rifas marvels.

August 6, 2000 Cultivated Under the Sun, the Miami-Dade Public Library’s look at 30 years of South Florida art, is curated by librarian Barbara Young and artists Carol Brown and César Trasobares. Young contemplates the late Fernando Garcia’s green and pink maps of Miami in this show. They resemble a patchwork quilt, created in an adventurous 1980s community project, becoming a witty metaphor for Miami, where people re-invent themselves, yet find they are still attached to reminders of previous homes. The trio, as I explain in “Past, Present and Future, As Seen by ‘Cultivated’ Curators,” speak about how Miami’s art scene has dramatically evolved, recalling when—in the absence of serious museum attention—artists were nurtured by inventive, low-budget programs at the library and North Miami’s Center for Contemporary Art, which preceded Museum of Contemporary Art.

October 19, 2000 Barbara Young and Helen M. Kohen discuss a visual arts archive to document greater Miami’s art scene from the postwar years to the present. It’s time to recognize the years of contributions that artists, collectors, and their supporters have made to build Miami into an international cultural center, says Kohen, the Miami Herald’s art critic from 1979-95. “These days depend on those days,” she emphasizes. The archive is tentatively called the Vasari Project, after 16th Century Italian artist and writer Giorgio Vasari, admired for his artist biographies, I write in “Growth Spurts, Growing Pains, Flocks of Kitsch: What’s Next?” Yet, while we live in a subtropical paradise, plans for a county-wide show, Flamingos in Paradise, sound more like a growing pain than a spurt. Modeled after the widely publicized Cows on Parade, artist-decorated sculptures of cows in Chicago, it resonates with tired, copycat thinking.

November 5, 2000 At Miami Art Museum, Edouard Duval-Carrié’s *Migrations* is a tour de force mix of painting and sculpture wrought with imaginative references to sacred arts of Haitian Vodou. Reminiscent of a Vodou temple, *Migrations* is perfumed with lilies strewn on the floor and fraught with rococo curves of crumbling French colonial architecture. It probes complex African, American and European strands interlacing Haitian culture and history, I write in “Wall of Vodou.” Rendered here are painted panels including a faux marble relief recalling a Roman Catholic altarpiece. In one panel, a tropical forest smolders while in another a tattooed goddess dances in a South Beach strip joint. They deliver bittersweet stories of a besieged country, represented by rural spirits migrating into new urban contexts. The spirits are testaments to the fluid energies of Vodou, which Haitian-born Duval-Carrie has long admired. He calls Vodou, with its syncretic assortment of Yoruba, Kongo, and Roman Catholic deities, “a guerrilla religion.” The show speaks volumes to Miami’s community shaped by Haitian and Caribbean immigrants.

September 9, 2001 Artists of The House, one of Miami’s newest art venues, have a new home as curators of The House at MOCA. Director Bonnie Clearwater took a risk by collaborating with young artists in the midst of their own art education. Yet Martin Oppel, 24; Bhakti Mar Baxter, 21; and Tao Rey, 23, have elicited some admirable experimental work from peers in group shows they’ve orchestrated

since December in their own home. Within their down-at-the-heels house in Edgewater, photography, video and installation art they’ve presented can move wildly from provocative to tedious. But there’s an openness here not found in more structured venues. Not a new concept—think back nearly three decades to the collaborative project Womanhouse in Los Angeles. In Miami, The House signals an independent-minded artist community defining its own space for risk-taking. It seems the most recent manifestation of such initiative, in synch with artist Eugenia Vargas’s shows in her home and the artist-led Locust Projects in a remodeled warehouse. Still, it was a challenge moving their curatorial style to a museum, Oppel admits. The intimate, casual spirit of a House show has been diminished, but there’s still plenty of ambitious work to see, including memorable work by Baxter and Frances Trombly. Baxter created an ethereal web of strings evoking geometric grace in Sol LeWitt drawings. Trombly’s art recalls Rebecca Horn’s mechanized sculptures of machines lacking an obvious function as well as the push and pull in personal relationships.

December 23, 2001 Bringing together work by 60 artists, Robert Chambers curates *globe>Miami>island* for the Bass Museum. I write in “Global Perspective” that more than a few works evoke imaginative places of rising dreams and desires, also notions about nurturing, regeneration and birth. It seems wonderfully apt for an event holding up a mirror—occasionally a wacky funhouse mirror—to an arts scene stepping out of its once-insular-as-an-island past to a more visible, if not global, stage. Amy Cappellazzo notes in her catalog essay that this exhibit encircles several generations of Miami artists, ranging from Purvis Young, Robert Huff, Robert Thiele, and Karen Rifas, who worked or taught here when Miami was considered nothing more than a brain-fried backwater by New York tastemakers, to the current crop twenty-something artists like Naomi Fisher, Gean Moreno and Cooper, whose work has attracted critical attention both here and beyond. In between these generations are those born in Cuba but raised in Miami, like César Trasobares and Pablo Cano, as well as others who came here later from Cuba like Glexis Novoa and José Bedia. The show itself does have flaws, especially in the muddled, chaotic beginning. Some artists aren’t represented by their most compelling works. Still, the new generation of Miami artists leaves you with surprising memories, like the glimmering 35mm slides projected on a hemispheric form by Kevin Arrow and Norberto Rodriguez’s *The End*, a sound piece filling the Bass elevator with hilariously triumphant chords from the end of famous movie soundtracks. In these endings are tantalizing beginnings.

April 27, 2003 It’s as if Miami has become these visionary artists’ playroom, a big city deserving big toys and dreams. Their latest living-large toy is a festive house of cards--perhaps about to collapse but perhaps not—built for Miami Art Museum. Working in their trademark and moderately gigantic mode, artists Roberto Behar and Rosario Marquardt have already caused a child’s peppermint-red block of the letter M to tower four stories high near the Miami River. This is the *M* outdoor sculpture at the Riverwalk Metromover station downtown. At MAM, their house of cards is a 12-foot high mansion of make-believe, I write in “Card Sharks.” Surrounding it is a wooden scaffold, suggesting a place that, like Miami, is not yet finished. It’s part of their installation *A Place in the World*, lit with the lights of a street carnival illuminating a city plaza. Here, barely two-feet tall figures gather around the house of cards, one scaling a ladder, the other reclined in dreamy sleep. Recorded sounds of planes landing and departing and other jangly residues of traffic coming and going disrupt the reflective mood. “This is about excavating our own memories,” says Behar.

“We find that we do have things in common, and they take the form of games and toys.” Charged memories nestle within this classic house of cards, cunning and precarious. In the case of collapse, “we say, ‘let’s try again,’ he affirms. “Now it’s realized. So it was possible.”

January 19, 2004 She’s the warrior maiden who collects machetes and British designer mini-skirts. He’s the skinny boy searching for the perfect cameo pin to wear with his Jill Stuart for Puma shoes. And as close friends and classmates trained in art programs in Miami-Dade County public schools, both Naomi Fisher and Hernan Bas are climbing the charts at a red-hot pace, winning praise and purchases from collectors around the art world, I write in “Amazing Journey—Naomi Fisher, Hernan Bas Connect in Life and Art.” Fisher’s fiercely beguiling blood-colored drawings of women were tapped for the inaugural show in 2002 at the Palais de Tokyo, the new contemporary art museum in Paris, and were just purchased for a prominent foundation in Essen, Germany. Bas will show his delicate, shadowy paintings of waifish boys on risky adventures at London’s cutting-edge Victoria Miro gallery and at the 2004 biennial of New York’s Whitney Museum of American Art. They met in high school creative writing class at New World School of the Arts and now share a studio in Miami Design District. In conversation, they seem like artistic soulmates. They are blood relatives via their shared DNA for art and fashion, Miami-style.

February 29, 2004 On a cool December evening in Miami Beach, Art Basel Miami Beach director Samuel Keller takes a break from exclusive SoBe parties to pocket an orange served up from a jet ski trailer parked in front of Free Spirits Sports Café, a deliciously seedy bar transformed into an impromptu art salon. “Wonderful. We’ll get a lot of vitamins,” Keller nods to Raymond Saá, who had tossed him the orange. With former New World School of the Arts classmate Michael Loveland, Saá had retrofitted an old jet ski trailer to make a street cart for pushing fruit and art during Art Basel Miami Beach. Grapefruit and oranges sell for \$1 each. Art by Saá and Loveland cost hundreds of dollars. Keller had come to this street corner and bar for a tonic stronger than vitamins, I write in “Way Outside the Galleries.” He found that something in the can-do qualities of Miami artists, still on display this month and next in a loose network of artist-run spaces in the Design District, Wynwood, and Edgewater neighborhoods.

June 11, 2004 The House in Edgewater, a ramshackle house-cum-art space boasting an airy porch and open-minded atmosphere, is going down for the count. Its last hurrah is tonight, with a one-night-only exhibit in which several hundred artists have been invited to participate. Since opening in 2000 as a spirited venue run by its live-in artists to showcase themselves and others, it has been a catalyst for Miami’s youthfully expansive art scene. “We’re asking people to leave the work, and all of that will go down with The House,” says current tenant Daniel Arsham. For the moment, The House is a two-story 1930 Edward Hopper-esque survivor on a weedy block giving way to brisk development, I write in “Artists Gather Before the Wrecking Ball Hits.” It’s slated for demolition once the lease Arsham shares with artists Bhakti Baxter, Martin Oppel and Tao Rey expires Tuesday. For tonight, Arsham envisions ephemeral work placed inside and outside, as offerings to the energy The House generated. “It’s been an easy place to show and to make things happen in,” says Arsham.

Reminiscent of a Vodou temple, *Migrations* is perfumed with lilies strewn on the floor and fraught with rococo curves of crumbling French colonial architecture.



Photo courtesy of Golden Dusk Photography

* In the 1980s, award-winning art critic and journalist Elisa Turner began writing for ARTnews magazine as Miami correspondent and for the Miami Herald. From 1995 to 2007, she was the newspaper’s primary art critic, with international assignments to Havana, Haiti, Venice Biennial, and Art Basel. Her writing has appeared in numerous publications. These edited and condensed stories are culled from her personal Miami Herald archives. She is at work on a book drawn from those archives, “Miami’s Cultural Renaissance: Art Made It Happen”.

MAKING MIAMI

KATERINA LLANES

Curator and Program
Manager at Jayaram

In my role as Curator for Jayaram, I was thrilled to be a part of conceiving this book, which aims to capture the collective energy of Miami's contemporary art scene during a pivotal time in our city's history. I sat and reflected on my own experience as a Miami millennial native, born to Cuban parents and raised in Kendall. In my youth, Miami felt too small for me, and I left the minute I turned 18 for college and then NYC. It wasn't until I met Naomi Fisher in 2007 that Miami's secret artworld opened up to me. Naomi was an art star running BFI (Bas Fisher Invitational) out of the Buena Vista building in the Design District. Always a welcoming spirit, Naomi invited me to EVERYTHING and before long, I was tapped in and turned on. I would go on to work at BFI for years, both at the Buena Vista and later at the Downtown ArtHouse that we shared with the TM Sisters, Turn-Based Press and Dimensions Variable. In 2013, I was hired by the Miami Art Museum to run the Time-Based Art program in their new Herzog and de Meuron building, renamed the Pérez Art Museum, or PAMM. These experiences solidified my career as a curator and my new-found love for my hometown.

Making Miami is an archive of voices from the Miami art community in the early 2000s. The book comprises over 40 conversations, images and ephemera from influential artists, curators, collectors, gallerists, musicians and writers, each telling their story of how the Magic City was transformed by a compendium of dynamic creative forces. As the curatorial concept, and to ensure this book truly represented its community, we invited one person and asked them to choose their conversation partner. That way, the connection was truly authentic.

As Miami has evolved into a cultural mecca, we felt it necessary to share these stories, so they are not forgotten, and moreover, that they are told first-hand by those who shaped it. The book is a companion piece to the exhibition on view in the Design District during Miami Art Week 2023, which focuses on non-profit artist-run spaces that emerged during this same period. The show is Jayaram's third Art Week exhibition, and the first to focus on Miami's artist community specifically.

In the pages to follow, you will find the inspiration and reflections woven between a group of close collaborators and friends. I chose Carlos Betancourt to begin the storytelling because, like the glitter in his work, he has touched nearly everyone in this art community and is a shining guide on the importance of preservation and archive.



The Frozen Archive by Amanda Keeley with A
Soundtrack by Lizzi Bougatsos, 2014

Photo courtesy of Bas Fisher Invitational (BFI)

** In Miami, I met Amanda Keeley who was working on a mobile bookstore called EXILE Books and the project evolved into a conversation about books, text, display, and archive. We invited our friend Lizzi Bougatsos, who recently was commissioned by MoMA to compose a sound piece as tribute to John Cage's 4' 33". It was this addition that opened up the fourth veil and gave meaning to the project in its new home at BFI: Books Fuel Ideas. Every word read or written in delves upon us the poetry / record of human thought. It is why we hold onto our books and share them with others. A lifeline to the threads of history that connect us across time and space.*

— Katerina Llanes, November 12, 2014

CON VER SATI ONS

CARLOS BETANCOURT

THE MIAMI SCHOOL

CONVERSATIONS



Richard Haas mural on Fontainebleau Hotel

KATERINA LLANES

Photos courtesy of Carlos Betancourt

Katerina Llanes: So lovely to see you.

Carlos Betancourt: Same here.

Katerina: We're going to talk today about your experience in Miami, in the art scene from the 1980s to the present.

Carlos: Okay. I'll tell you a little bit about my introduction to Miami Beach, which was kind of mythical in my mind's eye. I was born and raised in Puerto Rico to Cuban parents, and I came for the first time to Miami Beach around 1971 when I was 6 years old. Ponce de Leon, first governor of Puerto Rico, died looking for the Fountain of Youth in Florida. Miami had pink flamingos, springs, alligators, Flipper, Everglades, exploration and fantastical architecture. I remember having a

fascination with the Fontainebleau Hotel, the decaying Art Deco building and the other jetsonian buildings, even at that early age. Little did I know then that I would meet Morris Lapidus, the visionary architect of the Fontainebleau Hotel, and that Miami would be one of my main muses.

Katerina: The trompe l'oeil mural that made it feel like you were driving into the water, it was so magical. Sadly, they tore it down in 2003.

Carlos: It was a trompe-l'œil mural by Richard Haas.

Katerina: I loved it! Was mesmerizing to me as a kid.

Carlos: Oh it was! The Fontainebleau was in decay after the years of Frank Sinatra and all of those great entertainers, but it was grand architecture of joy. And when that building was done, it was one of the most influential buildings in the world. It was both loved and hated.

Katerina: Morris Lapidus was ahead of his time.

Carlos: Yes, he gave Miami a definite style, form and a shape. We eventually became friends and he used to stop by my studio that was in Miami Beach, Imperfect Utopia.

Katerina: Incredible!! But before we get to Imperfect Utopia, I heard you were part of a Christo and Jeanne-Claude fan club!

Carlos: When I was in high school, our art teacher, Mr. Fitzpatrick spoke to us about Christo and Jeanne-Claude doing the *Surrounded Islands*. I volunteered but not in the traditional way. I had friends with connections, friends who love to get in trouble. One of those friends loved to steal his father's car, and one day we showed up at the Pelican Harbor to watch the construction of the *Surrounded Islands*. One thing led to another, and I was passing out cups of water, helping people, and assisting or bothering these older artists. I was "volunteering" if you can call it that, watching all day, seeing all the material, and being heavily impacted by the brilliant fuchsia color and this idea of how monumental art can be outside the white cube. Also, it was my first appreciation of

MAKING MIAMI

Miami. I mean, I was young. I think it was 1983, but I knew I wanted to be an artist, architect, designer, maybe all of them. So I saw these artists being inspired by Miami and it was like a switch in my head. I started appreciating nature and all the possibilities. I mean, when you're confronted with something like Christo and Jeanne-Claude doing these interventions, at any age, it is very powerful.

Katerina: Right. It's massive.

Carlos: It gave Miami a definite voice in the contemporary art world dialogue.

Katerina: Putting us on the map for public art.

Carlos: Indeed. And we paid attention. I became a part of the “groupies” of Christo and Jeanne-Claude! We found out that they were staying at the Leslie Hotel on Ocean Drive so we would show up there to try to meet them. I actually met Christo later on and I told him all these stories!

Katerina: What did he say?

Carlos: He remembers the Leslie Hotel. He remembers people hanging out on Ocean Drive. He remembers South Beach being so European and bohemian back then. Nothing particular about me. But he knew what was happening and that people were showing up outside the Leslie Hotel to try to meet him and Jeanne-Claude.

Katerina: There were Christo and Jean-Claude groupies!

Carlos: Yes! And few cared back then about South Beach. So imagine how monumental Christo and Jean-Claude were for my generation... Their artwork and vision lured me to Ocean Drive and its futuristic architecture, again...I was captivated by the supersonic buildings surrounding the Leslie Hotel where they were hosted. These buildings were beautiful ruins and had a force and presence only good architecture can offer. That is why they were worth preserving. Great architecture creates great communities. So while I was going to art school, I resolved that I would come back to live and work in this magic Oz land of fantastical buildings. These artists opened my eyes to Miami as a muse. It's was very important for me and I didn't realize it until a couple of years later. The Sound Symbols Project, an enormous ephemeral installation that I created in 2000, was a direct response to this experience. The first time I collaborated with architect Alberto Latorre was with this project.

Katerina: What else were you doing with these art friends?

Carlos: A lot... During high school, and right after, there was a great alternative club called Fire & Ice in the Design District. And like most people of my generation, we had fake IDs. Everything happened there on a Tuesday night. There was a program called Artifacts put on by Howard Davis, his archives are now at the University of Miami's Special Collections (UM). There were all kinds of art interventions going on there. And I was a young teenager, and I witnessed many out-of-the-box moments that were considered art. It expanded my mind a lot. I started hanging around with a lot of my peers from Fire & Ice. The sound of these times was very defined, influential to this day, Echo & the Bunnymen, Siouxsie and the Banshees, The Cure, Alison Moyet, The Smiths, etc.

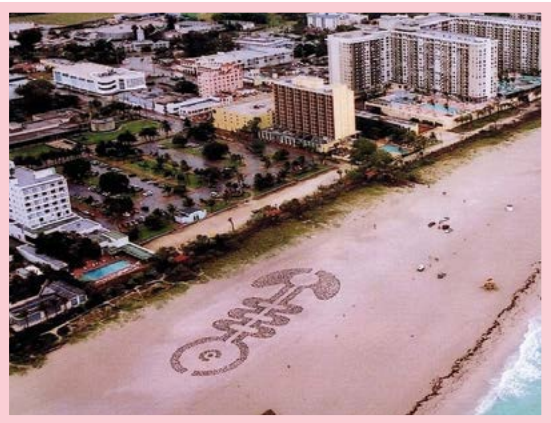
Katerina: It was like a dark wave.

Carlos: Yes. But with optimism. It was called the New Romantics back then. We were romantics in the sense of Oscar Wilde, and we also danced slowly sometimes...



Signed pink material from Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Surrounded Islands*, Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida, 1980-3

Carlos Betancourt, *Sound Symbols Project*, 2000, Miami Beach



Katerina: That moved into Morrissey later.

Carlos: Morrissey of course!

Carlos: Fire & Ice was the hangout, a creative nightclub of sorts. We all knew the door man; we had our fake IDs. and we were dressed a certain way. I had my trench coat and skirts, my friends had punk mohawks, a particular look that reflected our interests and personalities. It was very important for me because there was a culture that was clearly defined. Those times were more about ideas than about objects.

Katerina: Yes, stylistically.

Carlos: We went to these places, you belong to a movement of sorts, but you get to retain your individuality. Other people moved through other cultures during those times, but the Fire & Ice counterculture was the form and the force of the times that helped shaped me, and it had a huge impact on many of my friends also to this day.



The Fire & Ice crowd moves to Miami Beach because of some new mysterious energy, including uplifting architecture and cheap rent! There was a Bohemian force. Miami Beach was no longer a crime-filled forgotten Scarface. The Miami City Ballet was in Lincoln Road and the New World Symphony was soon to be housed inside an old art deco building near the Bass Museum. Many of us were heavily informed by our syncretic and very culturally rich Latin Cultures as well as Warhol, Frida Khalo, Rauschenberg, Octavio Paz, Keith Haring, Bettie Page, Celia Cruz, etc. and we were all obsessed with Miami's tropical lushness and crisp light, mid-century architecture and design, and almost all things vintage. In Miami Beach, the past was right in front of us. These Art Deco buildings and mid-century temples were loaded with memories of glorious adventures, and for a country that was obsessed with constant change and demolishing the past, it was a welcomed reprise that these temples of memory still existed. These ideas helped also shape our tribe.

Katerina: You really had a scene! Where did you all hang out?

Carlos: There was a little visionary shop called Heydays, that was a favorite hangout. It was a secondhand shop that also started creating a particular fashion language. Everybody from the scene was shopping or stopping by there. I met my friend Sandra Bernhard there and I first opened my first artist studio in the back room of Heydays. We drank our vodka there, we dressed there to go out to the new clubs that had our vibe and were playing the music we liked. It was mostly the same crowd from Fire & Ice as well as some very creative people moving from New York City, Europe and Latin America.

Katerina: The Strand was around there too, right?

Carlos: Yes, the Strand, an iconic restaurant, bar and theater next door to Heydays was another of our favorite spots. Many models that started using Miami Beach as backdrops would hang out there. And gays and creatives from all over the world were arriving in droves attracted by beauty and energy. We would meet and dine at the Strand like a big family. Truly Bohemian. Ed Ruscha, used to hang out there, as well, I think he contributed to the menus or something like that. I had my 21st birthday party at The Strand, meeting David Hockney and Paloma Picasso that night.

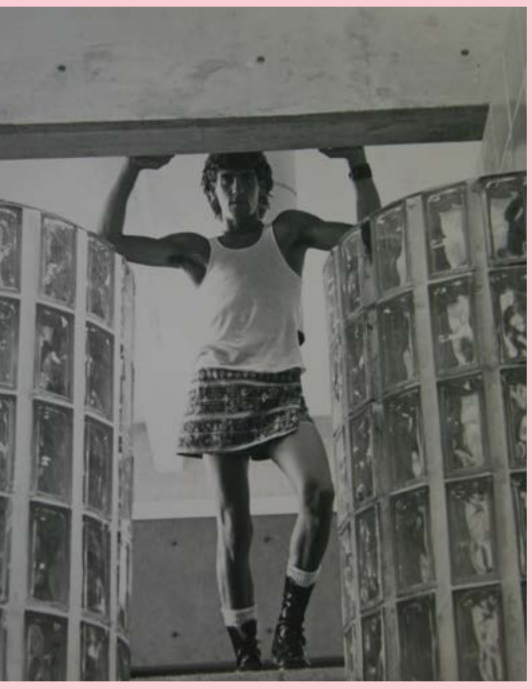
Hyperspace, run by the late Victor Fariñas, was also a favorite alternative space. It had an intimate movie theater that showed B-movies like Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!, also Metropolis and Ciao Manhattan and random footage of Bettie Page and Bunny Yeager. I exhibited there some large graphics with Carlos Alves, Linda Faneuf and several others in the late 80's, 90's. Elisa Turner reviewed some of the exhibits.

At this moment, Miami Beach was being identified as the next underground scene. Other artists favorite places where Café Des' Arts (where Howard Davis of F&I curated special nights), Sempers (hosted by the dynamic duo Louis Canales and Tara Solomon), the Woolworth dinner counter on Lincoln Road, the Amsterdam Palace (eventually the Versace Mansion) and Lums on Lincoln Road. Slowly galleries start opening in the beach. I showed mainly with Helen Cevern Gallery in group shows with Kenny Scharf and other artists.

You could feel the shape of things to come back then. It was an art community forming organically, connected to the source, a scene of sorts. There was purity, and innocence. The possibilities were infinite. We were inspired by our surroundings. People gravitated towards the beach because there was a commonality of a style, sound, and language that still was not defined, but soon. All disciplines of art, from ballet to painting, were in flux in South Beach and eventually in Miami, in a symbiotic relationship inspired by similar forces. Generally it was the syncretism's of Miami's new unique mixing of cultures. Artist friends were doing cutting edge performances inside parking garages or inside supermarkets. I remember vividly a production by Art Act, with costumes designed by the legendary Barbara Hulanicki, of Biba fame. She still lives in the South Beach. The community was developing its own voice.

Katerina: A signature.

Carlos: Yes, somethings like that.



same door person, all going to the same places attracted by the same visual language and vibe. I remember when artist Keith Herring opened a Pop Shop on 5th Street called Wham Bam, we knew similar people and went to the same places, the same when Kenny Scharf arrived to Miami Beach.



The Strand
Miami Beach, 1987

I think that a counterculture or underground scene has to develop organically because it is mostly against any trends. It is a group of thinkers with common interest, but ironically, individuality of thought is treasured. I believe the South Beach underground scene developed organically, like a magnet, attracting similar people with very independent minds. The most common goal was to be able to express freely and authentically. That is why individuality was treasured, without it, honesty could not flourish. The South Beach scene took a more definite shape once the artists began to arrive attracted in part by what was already there, and of course always the sea. The early gay, fashion and modeling scene followed, also attracted by the same forces. And as we start spending time together, a “scene” is created with the same artists, the same gallery owners, the same drug dealers, the



There was very little money. However, we had this thriving force to create. Some people thought we were doing interesting things, and some artists started getting some attention from some international publications, like Interview Magazine, which was our “Bible”. They did a special issue, half of it dedicated to Miami in 1987. Andy Warhol actually called the Director of the Miami Design Preservation League, Diane Camber, who eventually became the Director of the Bass Museum, because he wanted to see this place called the Art Deco District. And she gave him a tour. I have pictures of that!

Katerina: Amazing, I need to see those!

Carlos: It was interesting to get coverage in magazines that we admired and, of course, we read these sitting at the tables of the just opened News Café, but the goal of sort was to remain pure... Anyways, some of us joined the Miami Design Preservation League, led by the late Barbara Capitman and the late Leonard Horowitz in the battle to preserve the Art Deco District integrity. We used to tie ourselves to the buildings, light candles, and do vigils. We lost some buildings like the Senator Hotel, but we saved many others, like the St Moritz. The community that existed was participating in saving their community while creating a new one. The Preservation League won the fight to have the Art Deco District historically designated and, in a way, protected. We now have the largest collection of Art

Deco buildings in the world and it's in Miami Beach. I like to say “not everything old is bad, not everything new is great....

Rent was still cheap. And we start attracting some of our “heroes” to come here and get inspired by our surroundings.

Katerina: So it's like cyclical energy.

Carlos: Nicely put. And in a way that starts validating some of our efforts. But we try to preserve Paradise.

Katerina: And what are the years? The mid-'80s to mid-'90s, would you say?

Carlos: Yes. These are the years of Louis Canales, Tara Solomon, Susanne Bartsch, huge influential forces in the scene and Miami in general. Louis moves from New York. He understood the alternative club scene and the influence that it could have. I attended a concert in 1991 at the Cameo theater on Washington Avenue. David Byrne performed with Celia Cruz! I remember thinking how our culture and Miami was quietly influencing the world.

So, you know, as I have said before, we wanted to keep the purity in some way... I think when Madonna started coming here, and other high-profile people, even though she had an edge, (she had been Basquiat's girlfriend), she was already becoming mainstream. And for many of us, we didn't want her here. She would call too much attention to the area. We were like, oh God, this is our little paradise. But you just can't stop it. That would be selfish, to take this inspiration away, so once in a while, I would hang out with this crowd and take them to see Albita at El Centro Vasco on Calle Ocho. It became like a ritual.

Also during this time, and after submitting my art portfolio, I was invited to join the South Florida Art Center, which was already a couple of years old. It was founded by the late Ellie Schneiderman, a visionary. I used to walk up and down with Ellie on Lincoln Road. When Ellie was interested in renting spaces, many of the artists would tell her, “Ellie, don't rent this! This is the future. Have your foundation buy these spaces.”



She was an intuitive leader and the foundation bought them thanks to her. One of those spaces she bought for the Art Center for \$300,000 sold a few years ago for \$88 million. And that's why we now have Oolite Arts.

Katerina: Which is moving to Little Haiti.

Carlos: Yes, exactly. The South Florida Art Center was very important for us. It was very organized. And the Art Center had an edge.

Katerina: So Art Center is what brought you to Lincoln Road where you started Imperfect Utopia.

Carlos: Yes. Imperfect Utopia was mainly my working studio, also an incubator of ideas and art salon. It was a hang-out for my peers from the South Florida Art Center, my friends, family, drag queens, poets, performers and other fantastical creatures. The first artwork series I developed there was the *Assemblage* series, assembled from the utensils and kitchen ware that I collected from the Netherland Hotels in Ocean Drive.

Katerina: Oh cool, I like that. And the space was a ground-level storefront?

Carlos: Yes, it was a storefront. This was where I lived also. It did not have a tub or shower. I had a hose attached to a sink. And I would take a shower in the alley on the back, so did a lot of people and a lot of my artists friends..... A lot of people took showers there.

At Imperfect Utopia We would conceive artworks, have poetry readings, performances, exhibits, and parties of course. It was a microcosm of the forces that were active in South Beach back then. I remember working with artist Carlos Alves on an installation in the huge display window of Imperfect Utopia. We assembled a composition of objects we had collected from the streets after the passage of scary Hurricane Andrew.

Some others that stopped by where Octavio Paz, Linda Evangelista, Tony Ward, Bruce Weber, Celia Cruz, Gianni Versace, Barry Diller, Glen Albin, Jason Rubell, Andrew Sullivan, and Rudolph Nureyev, whom I would spend hours with listening to his life stories. I remember Julian Schnabel and his beautiful Spanish wife at the time, Olatz. He liked my works from the *Fracturism* series. I used to play La Lupe for them. I was surprised they knew of her music. Julian eventually produced the masterpiece *Before Night Falls*, a movie about the life of Reynaldo Arenas, the legendary writer who escaped communist Cuba and lived in Miami Beach (Ocean Drive) and NYC for a while. And once we hosted an event for the renowned Jazz musician, Dizzy Gillespie.

Katerina: Wow, what a cast of characters! Did this crowd influence your work?



Imperfect Utopia,
1987-95

704 Lincoln Rd,
Miami Beach



Carlos: Yes! With all these very talented people around, we were absorbing knowledge like a sponge. We were certainly learning a lot of things not taught in art school! And it was at Imperfect Utopia that I found my language as an artist, when I began embracing my roots and Puerto Rican/Cuban heritage and the environments around me, as well. My reality, in other words. I had also begun to explore issues of memory, syncretism and using collage, silkscreens, and Miami as a muse.



Rauschenberg, whom I spoke with several times back then was highly influential. Collaging and layering was important to many of us. Then there was Morris Lapidus, the architect of the iconic Fontainebleau Hotel. I finally met him decades after my first visit to the hotel when I was a young kid. Glen Albin, editor of *Interview* magazine brought him to the studio. Back then hardly anyone new of him and we were his groupies, making sure he knew how important and influential he was to us. During his first visit to

Imperfect Utopia we became friends. I showed him an anthology on architecture that mentioned his influential work, a rare thing back then. He was so excited about this! I quickly pull a pen and he autographed the pages of the book where they mentioned him or showed pictures of his work.

Eventually Morris lived long enough to see several books about his influential works. My generation grew up surrounded in what some scholars called the “architecture of optimism”. Morris was instrumental in developing that language, which still continues to influence my artwork and that of many others. I actually have a series of works called *Lapidus Infinitus*. And in Miami Beach there is a large sculptural glass artwork by Dan Graham titled *Morris'*, from 2010.



Dan Graham, *Morris'*,
2010

Photo courtesy of
Katelyn Kopenhagen

Katerina: I love Morris Lapidus and that Dan Graham piece! Didn't realize it was named after Lapidus, but that makes a lot of sense. I got to meet Graham once at Lovely Day in NYC. He was eating alone and I went over and knelt by his table to tell him how much I admired him and he asked me what my sign was, lol. He's very into astrology. There's something playful that connects him to Lapidus. That mural on the Fontainebleau felt like you were driving into an oasis. Made Miami truly magical!

CB: Indeed!

Katerina: And you made magic happen at Imperfect Utopia. What were your favorite shows there?

Carlos: My favorite exhibit at Imperfect Utopia was *Fracturism*. Elisa Turner wrote about it. The show was a series of mixed media paintings I created based on the concept of fractured culture: assembling the splintered vision of all that we knew and related to. This is before the internet attempted to organize information, before google became our memory. Collaging and layering was the best way we could represent this, with Rauschenberg influencing. I used silkscreen a lot. Here I found a unique language, once I embraced my ancestors and rituals, my own history and surrounding, no matter the circumstances. I was captivated then to explore issues of memory, identity, beauty, and nature, as I am now. I liked a lot the exhibit Cuba-Cola where I invited Afro Cuban dancers who performed around sculptures of roasted chickens. We also had events for Amnesty International in support of poet and political prisoner Maria Elena Cruz Varela, who inspired an early series of graphics I did.



I realized back then that Miami is a melting pot of backgrounds and cultures, but somehow we get to retain our identity, slightly removed from the melting pot theory. A new experiment, not truly assimilating, but mixing a little bit.

Katerina: More of a diamond with facets than a liquid that combines to become a new thing.

Carlos: Yes, how beautiful. Those are some of the things that happened. It was a laboratory of experiments. It seemed to be at the right place at the right time.



Keep in mind that this is also the time during the AIDS epidemic. A lot of people came down to Miami to live out their last years of life, many cashed their health insurance. I can give you dozens of names of dear friends and artists that passed away. The Cuban and the Haitian refugees dying at sea constantly. All these were tragic situations that impacted many of us. These were very personal moments, sad and confusing times.

Katerina: I was too young to experience the full force, but the echoes are haunting. We lost most of a generation. What I remember from South Beach as a teenager came after this. It was more of a club scene than an artist one. Is that part of why you closed Imperfect Utopia?

Carlos: Well, I thrived there as a young artist, after all it was primarily a working artist studio, but things were becoming more mainstream in South Beach. Even the gay scene. Warhol had died. And after Giannis death, it was like the end of innocence. And perhaps because it was so much in the news, everybody wanted to come to South Beach, as if it was just discovered. The energy was no longer organic or pure. Gentrification of sorts. I think what happened is that we started getting noticed a bit too much. And like I said, at first it was the publications that we admire, but then it was all kinds of publications. This was, in a way, very flattering and many of us benefited from it, but it was also opening, at least a bit, a Pandoras box. This had happened in other organic communities like Montmartre, and more recently, Soho in NYC. Artists making communities, developers gentrifying communities, artists moving on...The same developers that had helped gentrify Soho, moved to Miami Beach with the same intentions. It was the beginning of the transformation of the South Beach underground scene, and perhaps the last opportunity for a truly underground scene anywhere before social media made that impossible.

And with all these you start losing the dialogue, the conversation that was once very clear and focused is dissipated. So, a lot of things and magical places that were influential to us start disappearing, replaced by nightmare ugly modern cold spaces without personality. Imagine you have a Banana Republic opening on Lincoln Road, Victoria's Secret. The old Woolworths became McDonalds, and the doors of alternative spaces, cafes, gay clubs, art galleries, were shutting or getting gentrified. The gentrification was painful to watch, it was constant and careless and unfortunately, the local government supported it. It was too much. A little bit would have been okay.

Buildings start getting renovated no longer by local creatives but by outside and too corporate forces, all at light speed. And you could feel it, you could feel the change, the "we don't care". But a lot of money was coming in...And, you know, with money comes other possibilities... We're no longer in our 20s. We need to create a future that might cost money, if we want to create a family, travel, if we want to do big projects. So, we start becoming a little bit of accomplices with these forces. I learned quickly that it is all about balance...It was so different, that some of the artists that were here saw no future and started moving away to New York. Miami didn't have much of an artist support system back then, not even academically.

Katerina: That's true, to this day.

Carlos: Yes, in some ways. But I decided to stay in Miami not caring much about opportunities but about inspiration. I really believed in Miami, and it could only be one of my muses if I stayed here. But I understood that collectors weren't buying enough local work, so artists sometimes need to make economic decisions to survive, as well as to find other muses. But I was still fascinated with this place. I did question a lot of things during that period because so much of what we loved was disappearing, was being replaced by nonsense, with little creativity and nothing to do with Miami. It felt impersonal.

Katerina: They were importing things into Miami rather than looking in our backyard.

Carlos: Exactly. It was boring stuff, didn't have the dialogue, the conversation. Not challenging enough. I have to say also that during this period, there were some people who said, "There's nothing in Miami, there never has been." Of course, we were trying to find our own language, but there was always a language here. I really believed in Miami and Miami Beach as a muse, at different times, like Bunny Yeager, Ana Mendieta, Cesar Trasobares, Bruce Weber, Purvis Young, Carlos Alves, Keith Haring, and so many others.

Miami is inspiring to me, the ancient Tequesta, the kitsch, the elegant, the vulgar and edgy. Miami is tropical lush and parking lots, beautiful and ugly, dirty, clean, poor, rich and can be very Avant Garde. Most of us tolerating each other and getting along somehow, most of the time. Like Paris in the early 1900's, it still is in a way. And after all, it was in Miami Beach where Robert Miller first saw my artwork. He loved Miami. We explored it so much. It was very symbolic for my friends and I when I signed with his gallery in NYC, without having to move to NYC! You see, I am an island person, and Miami is almost like an island, water everywhere, the Everglades to the west, the Atlantic on the other sides, and highway barriers everywhere. Yes, Miami is an island. I heard someone say once that the best things about Miami is that it so close to the United States...



And I tell you, it was encouraging seeing back then at least a few artists comfortable embracing Miami, being inspired by it, the good and the bad, the reality of it, and not moving to another town like so many others did.

Katerina: Embracing all of what it was. I had a hard time with that. I moved away because I wanted something more. But there’s usually a pull that brings you back home. It’s like a magnet.

Carlos: Things move, evolve, but there is always opportunity where you connect. Keith Haring said something like, "The primitive will always make us new." That statement had resonance with me. I translated it into ... - once you know your roots, once you own your reality, the possibilities are infinite.

Ironically during this time, I found comfort and inspiration literally in the primitive and underground, (in the oolite) when I became a volunteer in the recently discovered Miami Circle archeological site. It was very important to me, but somehow many of my peers didn't see the site as history. My artwork continued to be influenced by my Caribbean roots, but my new present was Miami and I kept embracing it in several ways.

The site consisted of a perfect circle measuring 38 feet of cut stone in the ground. “It is the only prehistoric permanent structure cut into the bedrock in the eastern United States.. It predates any other known permanent settlement “. It is believed to be the location of a structure built by the Tequesta indigenous people of Miami around 2000 years ago. It was a very important discovery that actually made it to global news cycle. Suddenly, this young city had an ancient past and a larger identity. I remember artist Jose Bedia was also very excited about this finding so I took him to the site a couple of times and we had a magical time sifting through the oolite and finding artifacts that belonged to the Spanish and to the Tequestas. It was one of my most satisfying experiences for me in Miami because it reminded me of Puerto Rico and its indigenous Taino Culture and the importance of immersing yourself in the history of the place you live in. I think Miami found its way again in part because of the Miami Circle archeological site.

There is a simple saying that I like to live by. Know where you come from to know where you are going.

Katerina: I love that. But they didn't see what you saw.

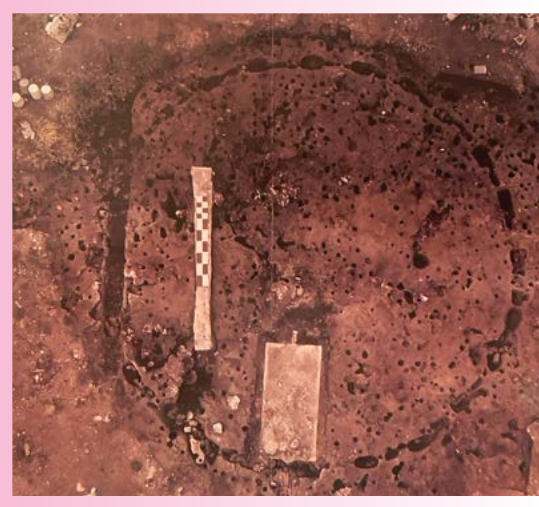
Carlos: Many didn’t. So they tried to belong to another place, New York, Berlin, Los Angeles that made sense for them.

Katerina: But that also speaks to the fact that there wasn't an infrastructure for them here, right?

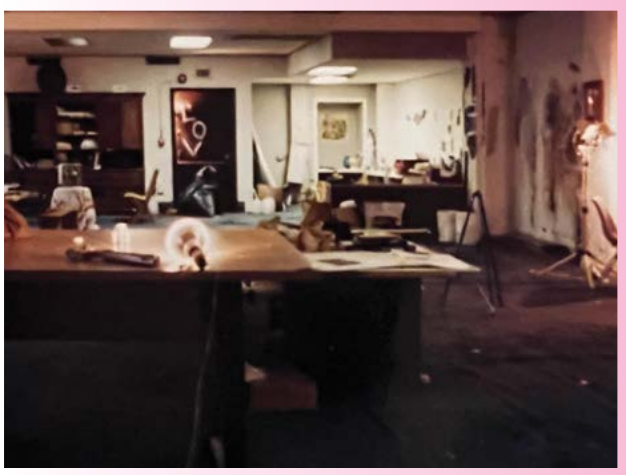
Carlos: There wasn't a lot, and I get it. But I always thought a creative environment was more important than infrastructure.

Katerina: True, but the rent was no longer cheap so they didn't have a real reason to stay.

Carlos: Well yes, but there were still many reasons to stay. Yet, we started seeing a lot of the artists leaving for greener pastures where they could get support and earn a living. That's very important. I struggled. I come from an interesting last name, but we had little money to spend. I worked as a superintendent and cleaned buildings during this period just to support myself. Many artists from the South Florida Art Center decided to leave Miami.



Miami Circle National Historic Landmark



The Bank at the corner of Flagler St and NE 1st St, Miami.

architect Alberto Latorre, who later on became my studio director, and still is to this date. I studied architecture and we both thought that the merging of visual arts and architecture was mythical. We continue collaborating on projects. He is so brilliant and his experience and help as an architect is invaluable. We had a blast in The Bank collaborating.

Katerina: I bet! It’s beautiful to collaborate with your partner in that way.

Carlos: Yes.

Katerina: How did the DASH students come into the picture?

Carlos: I always wanted to support up-and-coming artists, in the same way that other artists had helped me when I was younger. I was involved in a DASH internship program mentoring artists in the studio. Daniel Arsham was one of them. He would help me with my plaster of Paris sculptures and he was very interested in our architectural collaborations. Back then, Daniel wasn't one of my best interns at all. He was young and he was doing drawings of trumpets. He would sneak these trumpets into our commissions! In a mosaic fountain I was working on, he sneaked a trumpet shape with all the Taino and Tequesta symbology I was using. He was driven.



Eventually many of the kids from DASH start hanging in the studio, even after graduating, and at some moment they asked if they could curate an exhibition at my studio.

Katerina: Who was around?

Carlos: Artists like Bhatki Baxter, Tao Rey, Martin Oppel, Bert Rodriguez, Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova and, of course, Daniel Arsham. They were getting inspired by the Bank Space. So they all intervened. Each artist took a cubicle. Bhakti’s installation was in and around the safe deposit box Leyden exhibited a file cabinet loaded with files of people that had his same name, he pulled them from the internet, which was so fresh back then.

Katerina: Did the studio have a proper name?



Miami Circle archeological site



Carlos: At some point, we started calling it The Bank. I always thought that it was from this space that The House comes out of, but who knows. These young artists saw the potential of having their own alternative place. They needed freedom, without asking anyone's permission. They were young, there was a rebellious spirit.

Katerina: They were also talented and resourceful.

Carlos: Agree. Creative forces activate tenacious individuality.

Katerina: Yes, individuality. You also have a largely immigrant population in Miami leaving oppressive regimes.

Carlos: Exactly. A large portion of the population here knows what it is to

lose your freedom of expression, to lose everything, for real. It happened to them, not in some novel or the news. That is why Miami is so tolerant of other people's different views.

Katerina: Absolutely. The spirit of Miami is freedom.

Carlos: And then we have to say also too, that the idea of gentrification was oppressive in a way.

Katerina: Yes.

Carlos: We came from diverse backgrounds, some children of exiles or immigrants. We participate with mainstream cultures, but sometimes these could be very removed from our own culture, so it was important for many of us to work in the margins and I think to remain authentic. And avoid much of the noise.

Katerina: Authentic and very anti-establishment too.

Carlos: In a way yes.

Katerina: That was the punk DIY culture of the time.

Carlos: Something like that.

Suddenly, the younger artists start opening alternative exhibition spaces like The House. And Jose Diaz is doing exhibitions in a condo, Worm-hole Laboratory. Slowly some galleries start opening again. We start avoiding the beach as it no longer has the vibe. Some galleries in Coral Gables were doing interesting things but there wasn't an exciting vibe. Keep in mind that when the beach starts getting gentrified, mostly by developers, Craig and Scott Robins start offering artists free studio spaces in the Design District, where Craig owned a lot of the properties. These offers continued through my time in The Bank. The Robins brothers managed the Española Way Art Center in the 80s and 90s which provided affordable space to artists like Miralda, Craig Coleman, Roberto Juarez, who was also with Robert Miller Gallery, and others.

Katerina: Right, with Kenny Scharf.

Carlos: Yes, Kenny had his space there too. Craig had the foresight to start acquiring places in the Design District, with all its empty design stores. The Design District was gentrified since I can remember. It had some cutting-edge design shops but by this time they were moving someplace else. For me, it didn't have a force, it didn't have enough history, it didn't have a culture and valid architecture. I liked downtown Miami because it had more history, with the river, the Tequesta settlement and more.

The Sears Building, curated by Robert Chambers, August 19 - September 23, 2001
The House

Photo courtesy of Natalia Benedetti

Installation view of Jose Reyes, *Ready to Serve*, 1999 at Box

Photo courtesy of Box Archive

Katerina: And also, downtown Miami for you was more of what had inspired you on the beach, which was these old, abandoned buildings.

Carlos: Oh, yes. That is so clearly said thank you. While some artists begin to move to the Design District, Craig expanded his offer to new energy of artist-run spaces like Locust Projects. I remember visiting Cristina Lei Rodriguez at her studio and many other artists.

Katerina: And there was also Box.

Carlos: Yes, Box was started by Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, Manny Prieres, and Jose Reyes around 1996 and closed in 2004. Naomi Fisher and Hernan Bas had Bas Fisher Invitational. Fascinating things were happening. There was an amalgamation of tradition and history with many disciplines and the new and avant-garde. It was like a Tropicalia, a bit like the beach back then. It was fresh, but not underground. The House was special. It was like Imperfect Utopia; a salon, alternative exhibits, performances, art video projections, it was also fun. And it was great because it helped them develop their language.

Katerina: Yes, artist-run spaces do that. That's why they're so special. You can feel the difference.

Carlos: I remember one of the greatest forces back then was overdevelopment. The cranes were everywhere...constantly building. And these artists were rapidly exploring these important issues about Miami in their exhibits.

Katerina: They moved into The House in 2000 then they lost their lease in 2003 due to development. There was a wrecking ball crane outside and I think it was like a "Destroy The House" kind of party.

Carlos: If I remember well, they were having it up until the very last moment we all knew it was going to be destroyed. And the agreement was like, "You can have this until we sell the land", funny that was usually the offer with most artists, that is how it happened with The Bank. I moved from several studios because artists kept improving the neighborhoods...! The Bank is now a high-end condo. My old studio on Lincoln Road rents now for \$40,000 a month. Back then, the landlord wouldn't even come to pick up the rent check. So once again artists just left Miami. It was like, "Oh, no, We're losing the new voices. We're losing the new language." But Miami had unique energy, you can't help but be in the present here, so, again, many artists returned.

Katerina: What would you say was different about Miami during this time?

Carlos: We used to say then that the best thing about Miami was the airport... I started working a lot from the rainforest in Puerto Rico. I think things in Miami started to change because of the Miami Circle, as I said before, and when a younger group of artists returned to Miami after going to art school somewhere else. So there were more of us! These included some artists I mentioned before, like Naomi Fisher. They were embracing Miami also, its unique crisp light, pink flamingos and all. So I could relate to them with my artwork. Albert and I promptly began collecting some of these artists work within the capacity of our small budget. Some of these artists also became friends.

Katerina: And they did come back stronger, in part, with the help of the Knight Foundation and Craig Robins, who gave free spaces for over a decade before developing the Design District. Some of which, blossomed into well-established non-profits : Diaspora Vibe (DVCAI), Locust Projects, Dimensions Variable and Bas Fisher Invitational (BFI).





Carlos: During this period, besides The House events, I recall going to Dimensions Variable and the opening of Diaspora Vibe. Rosie was monumental in the sense that she was looking into the Caribbean, expanding the narrative of Miami and owning it. Most of us come from the Caribbean and South America, so it was appreciated by the artists. There was a place called the Food Culture Museum, which was also close to the Design District it belonged to Antoni Miralda, and his wonderful partner

Montse Guillen. And Albert and I had moved finally blocks away from the design district, on the edge of Wynwood. We moved to a sea foam green house that Robert Miller Gallery bought. So many things happened in the district with this gathering of creative forces, from installations and performances to parties and backyard barbecues!

Katerina: Jason Hedges’ BBQ’s!

Carlos: What I see in general is a transition into organizations and organizing.

Katerina: Yes, taking it into your own hands.

Carlos: Cultivating our own voice, and keeping close to those who have similar visions, again. But it's interesting, after a while, it was becoming different in many ways. And there was a lot of competition. Like who was hanging out with, and who was copying who with their artwork.

Katerina: Cliquish.

Carlos: Oh, cliquish. Wow, that's a very good word. And remember, many of these places began as vehicles for our own works.

Katerina: Right, that's how artist-run spaces typically function, they are an extension of your practice.

Carlos: Exactly.

Katerina: When I spoke with Westen about Locust Projects, he was saying that they had originally, same as you, gotten studios but had too much space. And they were using their own funds to print the invitations and to put the exhibitions together. It was a labor of love. Naomi had a studio in the back of Bas Fisher Invitational (BFI) during the Buena Vista years. I think it’s generous that on top of your own studio practice, you would want to share your space with the community and put other people on.

Carlos: Yes, there comes a moment when you are doing okay, you feel confident and you can start giving. Not only that, you start getting influenced by the artists around you.

Katerina: Your community.

Carlos: Yes, it is the exchange of ideas in our art factories. And artist’s works were influencing each other again, expanding and it was diverse. There were many different voices, Leyden with his minimalist Cuban themes, Daniel with architectural themes, Naomi and Cristina Lei with lushness, I can go on and on. Robert Farris Thompson, pioneer in the study of Africa and the Afro-Atlantic world, once wrote about my artwork during this time that the Caribbean was a school for me, “where everything has been always mixing and bending”....I thought about Miami in that way.

Image courtesy of Naomi Fisher's Archive



BBQ in Palm Lot

Photo courtesy of Jason Hedges

Katerina: It had fracturism.

Carlos: You are great! Yes, it had fracturism! And we were talking to each other in more or less in the same way visually. I put together this show at J Johnson Gallery in Jacksonville, Florida called *Miami Visions of Now*, including the artworks of Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, Wendy Wischer, Daniel Arsham, Charo Oquet, Glexis Novoa, Pepe Mar, etc. The catalog had an essay by the late Paula Harper of *Art in America*. What I tried to accomplish with this exhibit was perhaps, that there was a Miami school being formed. I raised the money privately. There weren’t many foundations. We were trying to support each other. Some supportive organizations existed like the Vasari Project, Miami-Dade Department of Cultural Affairs with Michael Spring and Brandi Reddick, as well as, the South Florida Art Center, all investing in Miami arts and culture but the other ones like the Knight Foundation were just beginning to establish their grant

programs for Miami artists as well as the other alternative organizations. It seems as if the institutional academic part was soon finally coming together.

Katerina: Your generation in the '80s wasn't organizing in that way.

Carlos: We were organizing ourselves, but that support didn’t exist back then.

Katerina: Maybe there was a professionalization that you hadn't received, and they did through mentors like yourself.

Carlos: That is very generous of you. Some went to great schools.

Katerina: Yes, many came from New World, Dash, YoungArts. And a lot of the artists that we're talking about got shows very early in their careers.

Carlos: Yes.

Katerina: I know that Naomi and Hernan were with Fred Snitzer in their early 20s. And that Bonnie Clearwater really took a lot of them under their wing and started showing them at MOCA. Can we talk about that?

Carlos: We needed an institution to embrace its artist community, no matter what it was. There were so many missed opportunities to show institutionally what Miami artists were doing. Bonnie at MOCA finally did just that. I think some exhibit she was supposed to have was cancelled, and luckily she thought of the artists at The House. Most of the institutions in Miami had little interest in Miami artists. Exceptions were the Lowe Museum and the occasional “summer exhibit”.

Katerina: Yes, Bonnie did very important work.

Carlos: And that was influential. We were so happy that something like that had taken shape. And even though it was a small group of artists, it still had an influence on everybody.

Katerina: It brought attention to the art scene. And the exhibit garnered some good reviews in international arts publications.

Carlos: Locally and then internationally, it got well-deserved attention. And a lot of artists were coming back because the small collector’s base was growing. And some artists failed because they didn't have the continuity in Miami. I benefited a lot from staying here and risking it in a certain way, you know...

Katerina: Yes, in claiming Miami.

Carlos: The good, the bad, the kitsch, the deep, the superficial, its history and the complexities of a new experiment in the states like no other. But also, you know, that once you own your reality, it becomes universal. The local becoming global, someone once said. I think a lot of artists began understanding that concept and grasping it.

Katerina: The House ended after 3 or so years but the other artist organizations - Bas Fisher Invitational (BFI), Locust Projects, Dimensions Variable, and Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator (DVCAI)- all still exist to this day. So, they've gone through the ups and downs you started talking about with your space.

Carlos: They have the economics and the support that many artists didn't have.

Remember, Art Basel comes here because of what was already here, that so many people worked on. And even thought the main fairs did not involve the Miami arts community much, Art Basel brought a lot of credibility, it was validating Miami as an international art destination, so the local institutions kind of start paying more attention to the Miami based artists. So ironic.

Katerina: Yes, the big art fairs didn't pull from Miami. They took over the city, but they didn't make it about Miami ever.

Carlos: I am grateful to have exhibited in the main fair several times and benefited from their studio visit programs, but there should be by now, more specific art projects for Miami based artist in the main fair. It will actually be a great business decision as well. But there was, and maybe continues to be a persistent inferiority complex institutionalized that forces many of the museum gate keepers to look outside of their community too often. Perhaps because they are not very familiar with the art scene/ history of Miami as it is not that accessible. And few scholars have ever taken an interest to write a book, take a deep dive. That is changing. Albert and I live sometime during the year in Greece and Mexico, and when that's our reality, we immerse ourselves inside the culture and history of the places that surrounds us, and new museums and new curators arriving to Miami should do that.

Katerina: They look outside, instead of inside.

Carlos: Whatever art is being created in the community, is what it is. It doesn't matter if you like purple, black, green. I believe it is part of the job description of most institutions to help present it. There of course has to be some curatorial decisions, but institutional curators sometimes let their personal taste and concept dictate the vision, when actually it is the artist or artist community vision they have to represent.

Katerina: Exactly.

Carlos: Institutions in NYC, Brooklyn, Los Angeles, San Juan, have been representing and supporting their local art scene for decades. So much great art and stories in Miami that could have also inspired have disappeared perhaps forever because there were few ways of sharing it.

Katerina: All these spaces like Imperfect Utopia, The House, Box, they were curating from their community. They would collaborate with artists from the outside sometimes, but only if there was already a relationship with Miami.



Carlos Betancourt,
El Portal (detail), 2011



El Speakeasy in Little
Haiti, Miami.

Carlos: I think an artist-run space first and foremost takes the shape and form of the artists themselves. It's their world and how they see the world. There's an energy about it that I think in my case, you feel, and you want it to be expressed and it includes more than yourself. The process takes priority, being in the present and connected to the source. With Imperfect Utopia, it was the shape of things to come. You didn't know the shape but you could feel it and we as people are attracted to that, especially when a visual image is formed out of it.

Katerina: I agree, because it's an open invitation.

Carlos: It's an open invitation for creativity and experimentation that allows some to capture the essence of that time without really knowing it. Museums and bigger establishments have bureaucracy, planning exhibitions and programs years out. The artists don't have any delay. These places live in the times and in the moment. It is about new work and new visions. So artists are in a way, keepers of a certain truth.

Katerina: Beautifully said. They get to work in real time and connect to the present.

Carlos: Correct. But I am old enough to know that not everything new is great, not everything old is bad. And American culture is too obsessed with the Future, like the title of one of my exhibits, *The Future Eternal*. Too fast, too much. So it is more about balance. But you can still remain experimental.

Katerina: Yes. And innovative.

Carlos: We try to do what's in our nature, you know, at least we try. Like you said "You remain true to the mission of that organization. As long as you can." And protect that, hold on to it with all the strength and courage you have. And as I believe in God big time, I like to remain connected to the source. Sometimes art can be as simple as picking up seahsells.

DANIEL ARSHAM

WELCOME TO
THE FUTURE

CONVERSATIONS



VIVEK JAYARAM

Photos courtesy of Daniel Arsham / Locust Projects

MAKING
MIAMI

Vivek Jayaram: So Daniel, you were born in Cleveland and raised in Miami. When did you first leave Miami?

Daniel Arsham: I left Miami in 1999.

Vivek: That was about 5 years before I moved here from New York. Why did you leave?

Daniel: To go to school in New York in fall of 1999.

Vivek: So you left to go to Cooper Union?

Daniel: Yes.

Vivek: When you left, do you remember anything about what was happening in the local art scene around here, in Miami. At that point, in 1999, I don't think I had even ever been to Miami in my life.

Daniel: There was not much at that point going on. I don't even know if Locust Projects was open. It may have been. I had done a couple of exhibitions with a place in Fort Lauderdale that was run by our professor. So when I left for NY a lot of that stuff hadn't been formed yet, like The House and all those other things that came later.

Vivek: Right. Then you came back to Miami from Cooper in like 2003? That makes sense, because I met you shortly after that, and you were done with Cooper and you were already showing with Emanuel, I think.

Daniel: So I was back and forth, and there was a period where I considered actually taking a year off school. It's great that I didn't, but I was back and forth. I was certainly in Miami in the summers, and it was around that time, I think it was maybe 2000, around 2000 that The House was started. So when I was in town, I was involved in that, in the formation of it and in the founding of it. And obviously, I was away at school during the first two years of that. But yeah, returned to Miami in 2003.

Vivek: Cool. Tell me a little bit about The House. What do you remember your first impressions of it being? Like who was involved in it and like what was happening there and where was it? My general recollection of the time was that everybody and every thing down here was kind of just emerging. A bubbling of talent.

Daniel: The House was between 24th and 25th, one block east of Biscayne, in Edgewater. When we got it was a bit rundown. It was a white typical Miami bungalow-style house, that had a porch on the front of it that was enclosed, and we basically demolished all the walls on the ground floor and repainted the floors, making it look like what we thought a gallery looked like, and we started having exhibitions there and it became a place in once a month that we would have a big party in the backyard. We had real food and have beer and all that. And it was a gathering place for a lot of different people over that time.

Vivek: And it was also around that time, I guess around 2003 or so when you signed on with Emmanuel, right? With Perrotin. My best memories of Perrotin involved the art walks in Wynwood when all the galleries opened up I think one Saturday a month. That was a vibe.

Daniel: So I met Emmanuel in 2002, maybe. When I was back for Art Basel, and at that point we had an additional studio that was in the Design District that Craig Robins had given us.

Vivek: Yeah, I remember that. Craig was helping everybody.

Daniel: It's in a building that no longer exists, but it was basically on Northeast Second Avenue and like 39th Street. Yeah, we had the studio there and we met Emmanuel through a local collective.

Vivek: Okay. Did you know Craig Robins before you left to Cooper? Or was he somebody you met during the early Emanuel years?

Daniel: I had met him once when I was in high school, so I must have been, or maybe directly after I was probably 18 or 19 years old. I think there was like a talk that was given at another gallery that I was at. And I remember him asking me what we were up to. And there were a couple of other artists, I think Hernan Bas and Naomi already had a studio in the Design District. And so we asked him if he would do that for us too.

Vivek: Cool. And he ended up giving you space in Design District, right?

Daniel: Yeah, we had space there for multiple years.

Vivek: You and I ended up meeting probably in 2005 through Carolina. I remember the first time I met you I think was in Jenny Goldberg's backyard at that house in south Miami. I was asking you about art and you were asking me about constitutional law. I always thought that was hilarious. Not much has changed.

Daniel: Yeah, probably. I could see that.

Vivek: I think it was a party. I was playing tennis with Chris McLeod and then you, me and Chris were hanging out. When did you end up leaving for NYC?

Daniel: During all those years I effectively had a place in New York, so I would come back and forth. Some friends, Alex (Mustonen, Arsham's partner in Snarkitecture) actually had this apartment that a bunch of people, I basically just had a bed in there. I started coming back more frequently in 2005.



Daniel Arsham, *Welcome to the Future*, 2014. Installation view at Locust Projects. Photo by Zachary Balber/Ginger Photography.

Daniel Arsham, *Welcome to the Future*, 2014. Installation detail at Locust Projects. Photo by Zachary Balber/Ginger Photography.



Daniel Arsham, *Welcome to the Future*, 2014. Installation view at Locust Projects. Photo by Zachary Balber/Ginger Photography.

Vivek: So this book is called *Making Miami*, and it tells a story of all of you guys, all the artists that were here during those years and how that group of artists really had an extraordinary impact on making the Miami we all see today. When you think back to those years in the early 2000s in Miami, why do you think that those years ended up producing that really interesting mix of creative people and what's your impression of that time?

Daniel: Yeah, I think it's a couple of different things that I can pinpoint. One is certainly, that was the moment that all of the magnet schools were starting to produce real talent. So New World, Dash certainly, and all of us were basically starting to graduate college at that point. We all knew each other. So that's one aspect of it. I think the magnet high schools graduating students that were going to a lot of significant art colleges whether it's RISD or Cooper, Pratt, all of those schools. And then the other thing I think was a combination of inexpensive rents being available in Miami. Everyone's sort of gathering in a very small neighborhood. Everyone lived between Edgewater and Wynwood basically. It was probably within a 10 square block radius. Most of the people I knew were living there.

Vivek: Yep. I've always felt that the art made in Miami feels so different than really anywhere else because of the mix of cultures here. That and Basel have made a huge difference.

Daniel: Then the thing that really set it off, I think was Art Basel coming there. This acted as a catalyst for other people from outside Miami to want to go there and see what was happening at the beginning of Basel. Before Basel, there weren't the kind of parties and other things going on that we see every year nowadays. So before the fair arrived, people rarely visited art studios or engaged with contemporary art in that way in Miami. It's all so different now.



Daniel Arsham, *Welcome to the Future*, 2014. Installation detail at Locust Projects. Photo by Zachary Balber/Ginger Photography.

DAVID ROHN

CONVERSATIONS



CAROL JAZZAR

HOME-GALLERY AND SMALL, MEDIUM, LARGE

MAKING MIAMI

Carol Jazzar: David, what a great opportunity to reminisce on your performances. I always enjoy your performances and you as a performer. They were really powerful, thoughtful, creative, intelligent, and at times, prophetic. I was happy to work with you when I started my home-gallery. And today, we are going to talk about the *Small, Medium, and Large* installation/performance you did in 2012.

David Rohn: Carol, thanks for that. It was fun for me to work with you too. If I remember correctly, we did 4 shows over something between 4 and 5 years, and they were all a lot of fun, and well-attended. For me, *Small, Medium, and Large*, really stands out the most.

Carol: Why this one in particular? What was the idea?

David: Yeah. The idea behind it, which I spoke about at the time, and got you interested in, really had to do with the sifting down of information from top to medium to bottom. So, it has to do with the idea of social/economic hierarchy. *Small, Medium, and Large*, like the possibility of ordering French fries or a milkshake in different sizes, “small medium or large,” is also related to pop culture and consumption, and very much for me, the way people consume information and what we call news.

So, we took the existing gallery, which I always admired—It’s the shape of a house with a peaked roof, even though it’s a two-car garage with beautiful proportions - I always compared it to a Japanese Shinto temple. So right next to it, I built a plywood structure with each dimension of the existing building, length, width, and height divided by half. So, the exact same proportions, but in finality one quarter the size of the actual gallery, and then next to that one, a smaller one that was one half the dimensions of the medium-sized one I had built. So, we had the large existing one, the medium-sized one, which was one-quarter of that; and the small, which was one-quarter of the medium.

Carol: I remember the visuals: It was really striking to see them next to each other. When you arrived in the back of the house, you saw 3 buildings: a large, a medium, and a small one, all standing next to one another and looking the same. It was visually really powerful.

David: Yeah, and part of the idea was of things filtering down; trickling down, maybe is the way to put it. So, I was in the first room—The existing gallery, the largest room—We partitioned a section with curtains and made a space for me to be a newscaster with a video camera directed at me. I painted my face to resemble a ventriloquist’s dummy. The camera on me projected my image onto a screen in the large room. Inside that room was also a rocking chair covered with glitter paint and resting on a red carpet with a motor that made it self-rocking.

The idea of consumption, comfortability, and absorption, in this case of ‘information’ —is why; It could have been like a Barca-lounger—But the rocking chair appealed to me more, maybe for the reference to early Americanism and so forth. So, that’s what you saw in that room, and then at the back of that room was a camera that was taping the room with the TV, the rocking chair, and the wallpaper with the cows and pig clusters and guards on them, and also, anyone who came into the space.

So, that camera was being projected onto a TV screen—a smaller TV in the medium-sized space next door. Inside that space was also a corresponding smaller rocking chair and a similar strip of wallpaper. So, if you went into that medium space, you would see what was going on in the bigger room with the projection of the newscaster ventriloquist's dummy.

Then when you went into the third space, the small building—this one was one-quarter of the medium-sized one—so you had to crawl in on hands and knees - there was a tiny TV set projecting what was going on in the medium-sized one, which was also projecting what was going on in the larger one. So, everything was being dumbed down to a lower level. Conversely, what you saw in the third space, which was the smallest, included the most information – since it projected what was in the medium and in the large. Paradoxically it was reduced but more comprehensive. The idea of propaganda and surveillance, also suggested by the wallpaper with images of sheep, pigs, and soldiers was incorporated into the visual/spatial dynamic. The stereotypical idea of 'pigs' as over-consumers and of 'sheep' as docile group-thinkers being paradoxically either guarded or surveilled by the 'guards' was the intent

Carol: It was visually and intellectually a very sophisticated, high-tech installation piece for a somewhat off-the-grid exhibition space. You really built it on your own. It was remarkable.



Large Interior,
Small, Medium &
Large, 2012



Rohn Behind Curtain, *Small Medium & Large*, 2012

...even though it's a two-car garage with beautiful proportions - I always compared it to a Japanese Shinto temple.

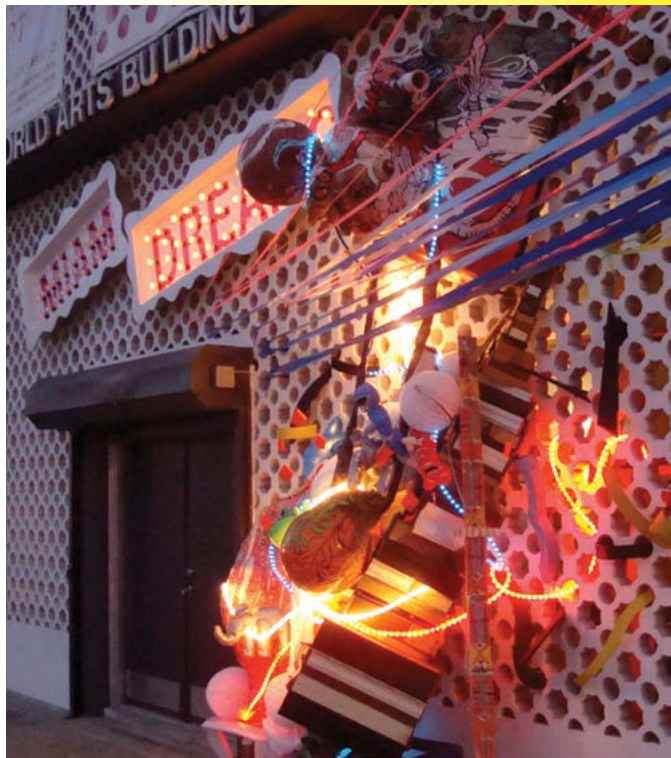


Medium Interior, *Small,
Medium & Large*, 2012

CHARO OQUET

EDGE ZONES & THE ART BASEL PHENOMENON

CONVERSATIONS



Charo Oquet, *Miami Dreams* installation, Edge Zones Art Center

DAVID MARSH

Photos courtesy of Charo Oquet

MAKING MIAMI

Charo Oquet: In 2007, our second Zones Contemporary Art Fair took place at the World Arts Building on 2214 North Miami Avenue, where Edge Zone was located. It was a special time for us.

David Marsh: I am reflecting on the uniqueness of Edge Zones in the Wynwood Art District. It was a space that allowed artists complete freedom to express themselves creatively.

Charo: It was a massive undertaking with a 25,000 square feet of space spread across three floors, complete with a theater, bar, and even a ping pong table. By the time we moved from that building, we had built a total of 23 separate gallery spaces.

David: That's impressive! Creating a parallel art fair to Art Basel Miami must have been a monumental task.

Charo: As a Dominican Republic native with experience attending art fairs like ARCO in Spain, I was curious about how local artists would be included in the Art Basel phenomenon in Miami.

It became clear that local artists and the Miami art scene were relatively uninformed about the impact this would have. This realization sparked my interest in finding ways for the local community to participate in this event. In 2006, we launched our first Zones Art Fair, and in 2007, we organized our largest and most elaborate fair, featuring segments like Talks Zone and live music. We invited international curators. We not only provided local artists with affordable booth opportunities but also rented spaces to international galleries.

We also allocated individual spaces to groups of artists from Puerto Rico, Basel Switzerland, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic.

David: What you did with Zones Art Fair was unique because it connected the art fair concept to the more discursive biennales. It provided a platform for emerging artists from marginalized countries. This allowed for some truly beautiful and genuine artistic experiences that you don't often find in other art fairs. Coming from Connecticut, I didn't have much exposure to art fairs before coming to Miami. Art Basel was my first experience when I was 19 and it was mind-blowing. Meeting you and being able to connect with collectors and more accomplished artists was a turning point for me. It propelled me to pursue a master's degree based on my ability to create and showcase my paintings in your space.

Charo: There was a vibrant energy in Miami where anything felt possible.

David: Back then, there was a chance to meet real collectors at events. I was a 20-year-old invited by Art Basel, showcasing my video projector art on the walls.

Charo: Miami wasn't prepared for the injection of art and visitors. It took a while for everyone including our local government figure out how to understand the phenomenon and support it financially.



David: Art Basel was where I first saw Basquiat paintings. I also learned about running a bar in an art gallery through Art Basel. The early art fairs shaped many things and have had a significant impact on my life.

Charo: Art Basel brought amazing art from all over the world, raising our standards and forcing us to develop. However, it also negatively affected local artists and galleries.

David: Despite the downsides, I believe there are more collectors as a result.

I think the art fairs have played a significant role in attracting people to Miami. Over the years, visitors have come to realize how great our art scene is. This has resulted in the emergence of a new generation of young collectors who are actively supporting and collecting the work of local artists. Art Basel in Miami provided numerous opportunities for local artists like myself. While many of my friends felt the need to go to New York City, I stayed here and witnessed the positive impact the event had on our art scene.

Charo: Art Basel brought about a significant shift in the perception of art and collecting in Miami. While Miami already had a thriving art scene with local fairs and Latin American galleries, Art Basel introduced a whole new level of galleries and artists that elevated the city's status.

David: The consequences that have come out of it is that a lot of us make art for the market because the city has been shaped by the art market. It's not just museums. The museums here are not that important. It's the art market here that's the thing.

Charo: Edge Zones no longer produces the Zones Art Fair. Creating and maintaining an Art Fair year-round is challenging, especially with a small staff like ours. Looking back, it's amazing what we accomplished back then, but I can't do it now! Anyway, I think this was a good conversation. Thank you, David.

David: Hey, those are some of my best memories- I appreciate everything you accomplished.

Edouard Duval-Carrié,
Zones Art Fair, 2008



We not only provided local artists with affordable

booth opportunities but also rented spaces to international galleries.

FRIENDS WITHYOU

EARLY DESIGN DISTRICT

CONVERSATIONS



Skywalkers parade curated & organized by FriendsWithYou during Art Basel Miami Beach 2006. Pictured inflatables featuring artwork by Mumbleboy, FriendsWithYou, David Choe, Ben Jones.

SAM & TURY

Photos courtesy of FriendsWithYou

Samuel Borkson: Hey, what's going on. This is Sam.

Arturo Sandoval III: And Tury here.

Sam: And together, we are FriendsWithYou. We were really lucky to be able to get a space in the Design District around 2007 / 2008. Craig Robins and Pharrell Williams set us up in the Melin building, and it was really, really major for us.

Tury: Yeah. Special time, new beginnings for us from, actually, I guess it was our first studio together.

Sam: Yeah. We'd been working from my tiny apartment and from Tury's house for years before that - we had started working at Tury's house in 2001 / 2002. So, this was our first really amazing moment together. And it kind of changed our whole trajectory and opened up our art career. The Design District is a really cool place because it brought people from all different kinds of businesses, like people from the entertainment and design world as well as the art world. They were all in and around the Design at that moment. So, it was cool to be near a bunch of other artists and friends and getting inspired from them as well as people coming to the studio and coming to the Design District because it was a pretty awesome moment in Miami's history, the development of that.

Tury: Yeah, and I think something that was unique about that zone too was the cross-pollination between everyone that was there. Not just the artists, but also the other even retailers and high-end furniture makers. And I guess Marni was there and Margiela, and I think that those brands and disciplines were also eye-opening to us as we were mixing it into our own art practice and applying that to what we were making. It was very interesting, and I feel like that was one of the magical, mystical ingredients to the Design District soup; it was such a mashup of everything at the same time.

Sam: Yeah, and all the artists had this crazy Palm Lot that we would get together at and have barbecues. Jason Hedges would cook crazy stuff, and all these guys like Daniel Arsham and Bhakti Baxter and Jay Hines and Jason Hedges and Nick Lobo, all welcomed me and Tury. It was a fun place. We were also really really inspired by Hernan Bas and Naomi Fisher, who were the people really making it at that time, and Bert Rodriguez, and all these guys and girls in Miami that were making pure and amazing art and recognizing the strange stuff we were doing, and coming to our weird installations that we were making by hand, and it was a magical moment. But there were so many amazing magical moments in the Design District at that time! Especially *Rainbow City* with Pharrell, when we took over the palm lot and made a crazy experiential concert almost, NERD performed, *PAPER* magazine was involved and *America Online* was sponsoring. It was just such a crazy memory of this interactive and very special installation we made. But it formed a lot of who and what we are today, so we're forever grateful for that opportunity.

MAKING MIAMI

Cloud City at MOCA
North Miami 2005



Tury: Yeah, it's special. I think that's what's also amazing about Miami and the type of setting that Miami is, that it does allow for a lot of experimentation without a lot of high degrees of second-guessing what you're doing in comparison to other peers because there was such a small community, and it was very cohesive how people gave each other feedback, supported each other, and rinse and repeat, just keep experimenting, keep moving forward. I feel it was a very unique setting. I don't know. At least, for instance, right now in Downtown L.A. where we are, the nearest studio is miles away, and over there, it was walking distance. It was such a small, tight-knit community of makers, thinkers, and mischiefs, and not such a formal approach to artmaking. Everyone was almost seeing how far and experimental we could get with what we were doing. I don't think anyone was being very straightforward making traditional paintings or traditional sculpture. Everyone was really on the fringes of what could be perceived as art.

Sam: Yeah, and even all our friends, our best friends, like Jen Stark and Alvaro Ilizarbe, and Bhakti and Daniel. It was this whole crazy group of friends making crazy stuff and even fashion and designers. Our good friends like Pres Rodriguez and the kids that are making Andrew skate shop now, are connected to what that was. There's a great group of people that were (and still are) in Miami and creating in this time, and we feel really special to be part of Miami and the history and the Design District.

FRIENDSWITHYOU / SAM & TURRY

I think that's what's also amazing about Miami and the

type of setting that Miami is, that it does allow for a lot of experimentation without a lot of high degrees of second-guessing.



Get Lucky exhibition at Box, Miami, 2004



Detail image from Get Lucky exhibition at Box, Miami, 2004

MAKING MIAMI



Rainbow City at Art
Basel Miami Beach, 2010

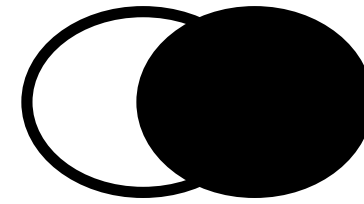
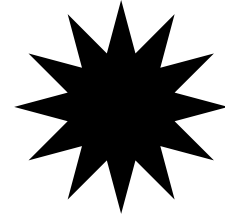
Skywalkers parade
curated and organized by
FriendsWithYou during Art
Basel Miami Beach, 2006.

Inflatable by Ara Peterson



Cloud City at MOCA
North Miami, 2005

BHAKTI BAXTER



FROM THE LABORATORY TO THE HOUSE

CONVERSATIONS



Photo courtesy of Naomi Fisher

ROBERT CHAMBERS

Photos courtesy of Robert Chambers

MAKING MIAMI

Bhakti Baxter: Okay, we are here with the one and only Robert Chambers, artist, father, educator, mentor, scientist, and dear friend. And we've had the pleasure to work together in the past and continue to work together in the present. How are you doing, Robert?

Robert Chambers: Fine! I'm just trying to figure out where to start...why don't we just jump into when we first met?

Bhakti: That's exactly where I wanted to start because you were a guest speaker at my high school and it was one of the most inspiring talks I'd ever seen. It really changed my outlook on what art could be and the many infinite approaches to creating art in a modern world. And I 100% credit you with that freedom of vision! So I wanted to ask you in turn, what were your inspirations when you decided that being an artist was the path you wanted to take?

Robert: Thank you, Bhakti. Yeah. I've never been gallery-centric. I've always been into the alternative. When I moved to New York City in the early 80s, I had been studying with my mother, a painter/sculptor, and working in my father's laboratory. I apprenticed when I was in grade school and high school with different artisans and worked under various scientists as well. So I guess the earliest memory of that time is being a tiny kid, wearing my mother's chipping helmet. She was a stone carver as well as a painter and a welder. I remember wearing her helmet and the visor was touching my knees, so I was pretty small. I would be chipping at some marble or granite in her studio and she would give me talks about the types of chisels and how to carve. The tungsten bits were embedded in the chisel tips, made in Pietrasanta, Italy, and you could actually chip very hard materials like granite. I remember the chips flying off and the sound. So I would say my mother was my first major influence.

Bhakti: Awesome.

Robert: My mother and father would bring me to museums in Europe, and I was always around the element of art and science because of my parents in my formative years. I started visiting my uncle Brad, an activist/writer when I was a little kid at St. Mark's Place in New York City. He also took me around the alternative art events throughout the city. Many of my family were born, lived, and worked in NYC. So I watched the scene from the 70s through the 80s when I moved to NYC and there was a lot of hype. But it was an interesting and educational scene as far as it informed me to understand what I wanted to do in the future.

Bhakti: And before we get to talking about The House, I wanted to ask you briefly what you felt Miami was like in the mid to late 90s, leading up to the period where in early 2000 all the big changes started to take place before Art Basel.

Robert: I came back from NYC early 90's because my father needed me to help him in the laboratory. He was getting older and he needed me to be there. So I moved back thinking I would commute. I also was a visiting assistant prof from NYU at UM and attempted to connect the two schools.

Bhakti: Sorry to interrupt, but what kind of laboratory did your dad have?

Robert: He was a cellular molecular physiologist and he invented a lot of the devices he used. His work is related to micromanipulation, cells, and fertilization. Micromanipulators and voltage clamps and micropipettes are all precursors to in vitro. But they also relate to understanding why the cell, why the egg divides after it's fertilized. The egg, when it's fertilized, gives off a spark of pure energy!

Bhakti: Yes!

Robert: He was an expert on the cell. He wrote a book with his dad called *Explorations into the Nature of the Living Cell*. I remember reading that in high school. He was a compelling adventurer with a rebellious streak, and he also encouraged me to become an artist like my mother.

Bhakti: So when you went back to Miami to help your dad in the lab, it was in the early 90s?

Robert: Yes. I had an opportunity to connect New York University with the University of Miami at the same time. I was teaching at NYU. I jumped on it because I wasn't about to suddenly leave my scene in New York City. I had been showing for years, doing alternative shows. I had a solo show at the Sculpture Center in 1991. It was my breakout show. I had just been hired as a teacher at New York University. So I produced the entire show in the East Village sculpture department of NYU at 34 Stuyvesant Street. I also had a show the same year at PS1 MoMA. It was called *New York Diary*, curated by Ryszard Wasko, the director of PS1. Later I was at Socrates Sculpture Park as a resident artist for some time as well. I was bouncing around doing shows in London and Mexico with Kenny Schachter's Rove, etc., so I came back and there were a number of stalwart artists and a whole scene going on in Miami. Miami's always had a strong art scene.

Bhakti: Leading up to when we (with Tao Rey and Martin Oppel) invited you to do the show at The House, The Sears building, which was one of the most memorable experiences at The House for me and for most people. What was your approach to that because almost every artist you knew ended up showing in The House, in the ceiling, in the bathrooms, in the rooms, in The House next-door, in the front yard and on the roof, it was just this explosive art experience. What was your approach to that?

Robert: Well, I was involved in a few alternative things going on at the time in Miami. I had shown/performed recently at Space Cadet run by brothers Rafael and Alfredo Galvez and also Sander Willig over on Bird Road where I met Naomi Fisher in 1995. I was just getting into it. There was a vibrant alternative scene going on in Miami.

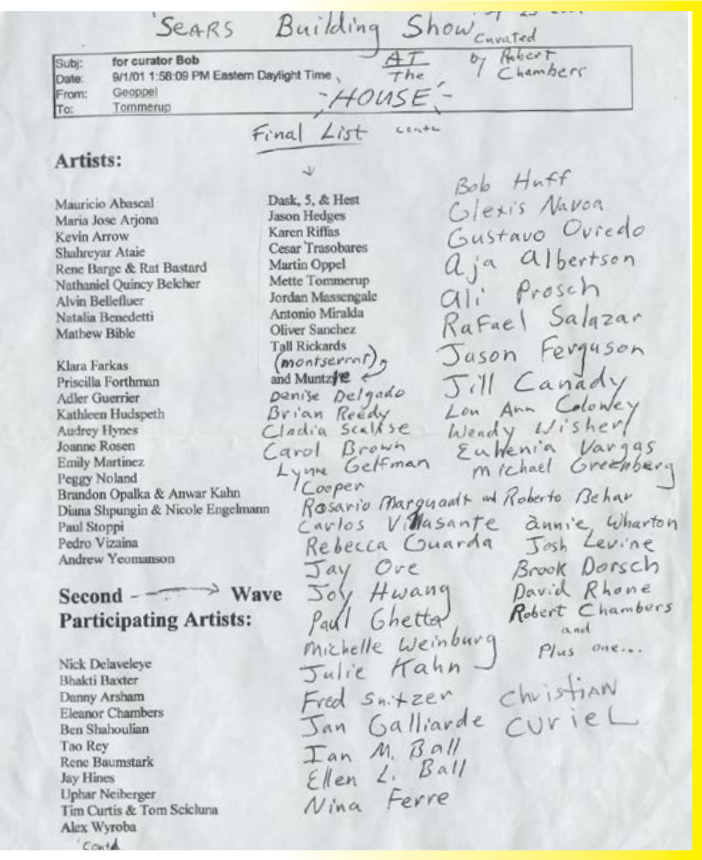


Image courtesy of Robert Chambers Artist File, Artist Files Collection, The Vasari Project, Special Collections and Archives, Miami-Dade Public Library System



The Sears Building exhibition curated by Robert Chambers at The House, August 19-September 23, 2001

Photo courtesy of Natalia Benedetti



Purvis Young, installation *globe>miami<island* Bass Museum 2001-2002

Photo courtesy of Mette Tommerup



DJ Hottpants, aka Daniel Blair, at The House

Bhakti: I remember.

Robert: I was thinking about the “miami rat pack” that was around in the 40s through the 70’s. There were so many fantastic artists in that show.

Bhakti: But did you just decide, "Okay, I'm just going to invite every artist that I come across or how did you make these decisions...?"

Robert: I knew every one of these artists and I had seen their work. I met you when you were still in school at Dash. But later I saw you at the Espirito Santo show, you were like 18. And yet you still look exactly the same!

Bhakti: Not really!

Robert: Maybe a couple of little crow's feet going from surfing! You were very concerned about your fellow artists and were talking about the scene. From what I experienced, I wanted to create this chemistry. Several years before that show, Pedro Reyes, the curator, writer, sculptor, an amazing artist out of Mexico City, had curated me into a solo show titled *Mental Maga* at La Torre de Los Vientos in Mexico City and one of his friends was Hans Ulrich Obrist. I was studying his curatorial practice and I was thinking about how The House was bringing together all of these groups, elements, and ideas in a similar way.

Bhakti: Cool.

Robert: It was like cooking. So I brought these amazing people/ingredients together. I mean, there were so many people there! The flyer only had a fraction of the artists. And there were artists that just showed up and inserted themselves!

Bhakti: There was such a solid mix of disciplines in that show.

Robert: I had secretly invited a dozen ice cream wagons and food trucks to come to the happening as well. I'm trying to remember how many artists ended up in the show.

Bhakti: Pretty much everybody. And this show inevitably was the precursor to *globe>miami<island*, or was it not?

Robert: Yes, it was a testing ground for the *Globe* show.

Bhakti: Which took place at the Bass Museum?

Robert: Remember, all of this was going on pre and post-9/11 in early 2001. The show was called *globe>miami<island* and opened on December 13, 2001, and ran until February 3, 2002. It was like a sanctuary, a refuge for artists post-9/11. It was a hub. A lot of things were going on. Purvis Young was a force and painted the news on the walls of the Bass.

Bhakti: I remember. Wow.

Bhakti: It was epic. The show was another convergence of so many artists that were in Miami or had connections to Miami in some way.

Robert: And a number of dance troupes as well.

Bhakti: And just because this was supposed to be just kind of a quick interview, I want to ask you a quick question, and then after this, you could just tell me anything else you want to add. But it's a silly question to ask because I'm an artist as well and we both find art to be essential, but if you were to tell somebody that doesn't understand the importance of art, how would you say why is art important? Why?

Robert: Art is important because it actually gives certain people a will to live.

Bhakti: So, it's essential as food or water.

Robert: Well, for me, yes. I have to do something. The idea of not following the parade but working on the periphery. So, that has consequences as well. But for me, and you, the same thing. You work very alternatively. You work around the periphery. You come in, like you're coming into town from your gold mine and you sell some gold and do what you need to do, and then you go back to your Topanga gold mine.



Robert Chambers, *Ballship*, 2001
globe>miami<island, Bass Museum, 2001-2002

Photo courtesy of Mette Tommerup

Bhakti: Yeah.

Robert: But it's a special way of not conforming to the government, Big Brother, the politics. It's a way of staying anti-establishment by working in the trenches in your formative years. You can get into deep hippie culture.

Bhakti: Right.

Robert: Anyways, for me, it's an alternative way, and everyone does it differently.

Bhakti: For sure. And is there anything else you want to add to the interview that you want to talk about?

Robert: More about Miami's first major Art Basel show.

Bhakti: Oh, the *globe>miami<island*

Robert: Diane Camber, the former director of The Bass asked me if I wanted a show. I said yes but I'm going to curate a show instead of artists with ties to Miami as a happening. So, I asked Ursula Von Rydingsvard first, an artist known to have ties to Miami. Then I secured the Felix Gonzalez-Torres work *Untitled (the two silver rings touching)* It greeted you first as you entered the space. I was allowed to take over the inside and outside of the museum. The new addition had just been completed by architect Arata Isozaki. I wanted to create a platform for Miami artists to show the world as Art Basel descended, what we had to offer, how important and strong our homegrown artwork was.

Bhakti: And where do you think Miami's going or where is it now and where do you think Miami's headed as far as a city that fosters creative action?

Robert: I think revisiting some of the formulas of the happenings back then. I mean, taking a harder look at what was going on at The House for example, just a clean, simple, yet very sophisticated idea of generating a dynamic energy and the collective, a co-op, a collab. You came up with the whole collab thing



Ursula Von Rydingsvard, Mette Tommerup
Bass Museum, *globe<miami<island*, 2001-2002



Catalog for 65 artists,
globe>miami<island, 2002

early on, right?

Bhakti: Well, it was a collaborative effort with Jason Hedges.

Robert: I remember I came to one of the first ones.

Bhakti: You did, and you and I actually collaborated on a piece.

Robert: ...that trippy dome paint dripper...!

Bhakti: I gave Hans Ulrich Obrist a tour of that whole show.

Robert: There were happenings and awakenings during that show that occurred spontaneously.

Bhakti: And just to get back to the question about Miami and where it is and where it's heading as a creative artistic community, do you see that today? Do you see people sticking around and making things happen? Or is everybody leaving? Is the energy different? What's your take on that?

Robert: Miami was low energy for some time due to the pandemic, but recently it has picked up and there are strong artists coming out of 305. Many artists chose to stay here. Things are happening, new groups, a number of collectives so yes. I have nothing negative to say. I think it's all startling good.

Bhakti: Any other closing thoughts, Robert, before we wrap it up?

Robert: Proud to know you, man.

Bhakti: I'm proud of you my man. You've changed my life.

Robert: Take care, man. You're the best.



Photos courtesy of Naomi Fisher

OLIVER SANCHEZ

MAITE URRECHAGA



Photos courtesy of Swampspace and Maitejosune Urrechaga

SWAMPSPACE: THE UN-GALLERY

Oliver Sanchez: Please tell us how to pronounce your interesting name and a little bit about yourself.

Maitejosune Urrechaga: It's My-tae-joe-sue-nay (Maitejosune) Urrechaga. It's Basque. My mom is from Barcelona, Spain, and my dad from Matanzas, Cuba. I was born and raised in Miami. Tony Kapel and I have been together since 1995 forming the indie band Pocket Of Lollipops. We also have a non-profit named Houndstooth Cottage for events and things that we do for the community.

Oliver: Together you are a mainstay in the Miami art scene. When did you first learn about Swampspace?

Maite: We stumbled upon Swampspace in 2008, We were curating a show at Dorsch Gallery in Wynwood. Tony was working on a documentary that covered 1998-2008. One of the artists that we worked with was collaborating with a fabricator who shared space with you at the first Swampspace.

Oliver: That goes back a while. I moved to the Design District in 2005 as part of Craig Robin's artist residency program. We were a small community of young local artists. Craig provided studio space in several dilapidated buildings. There was Design District and Wynwood; two neighborhoods with different visions. Both neighborhoods were ripe for the next urbanist repurpose. What were you doing back then?

Maite: I remember the difference, and when the changes started, there were only a few spaces that actually had activity within the arts.

Oliver: Moving back to Miami in 1992, I missed the art scene in NY where Haring, Basquiat, and other artists emerged. I met these kids who were working at MOCA North Miami helping build shows. We got along really well. They were Bhakti Baxter, Tao Rey, Martin Oppel, Jason Hedges, Vickie Pierre, Daniel Arsham, and others. I learned that some of them shared an old house, a craftsman bungalow they called "The House." They were really fun to be with. I liked their energy. Do you recall a little bit of The House though it was relatively short-lived.

Maite: It was short-lived. And I think I only remember one or two events that we went to. I think The House was a known place, but also still very underground. I remember the people.

Oliver: Back then we were enjoying things under the radar. And then, at one point, The House got the attention of Bonnie Clearwater and she gave them a summer show that landed them an article in the *New York Times*. That kind of recognition is always helpful for emerging artists. Yet the idea of being in the margins, the idea of being a foreigner in your own town, these are constant themes and a source of creativity.

Maite: Yeah. Well, we have footage from those times. Nobody would walk to the other galleries in Wynwood, and they were pretty close to each other.

Oliver: Crazy that today you gotta get an app to park your car.

Maite: Yeah haha. I don't have the app to park.

Oliver: It's astounding what can happen in 20 years, I remember coming to the Design District, and it was tumbleweeds and crickets. Midtown didn't exist. Wynwood was also rather sketchy.



Maitejosune Urrechaga and Tony Kapel during *Empty Your Pockets* Exhibition Opening

Maite: No. It was more about the fun of everything, I think. And I do remember in the Design District when all of this was starting to pop off there were great events. I don't know if you remember Pop Life it used to be in the Piccadilly Garden and the Miami Music Club; it was a nomadic music and performance space. It's interesting because a lot of artists went there to dance. It wasn't the Miami Beach Nightlife. They were trying to bring an alternative into the Design District nightlife for the artists and the youth culture of that time.

Oliver: The DD was the place to be. Locust Projects moved there because Wynwood had become commercialized. And so, to some extent, they wanted to be here because this was where a select kind of artistic hub was.

Maite: I definitely think this is where the action was. The people who really had an interest in how they were presenting their artwork. That's what I think slowly started to happen in the Design District.

FIRST LOCATION 2005-2008

Oliver: So, we had these buildings. They were really run down, but there was a sense of community. At some point, I thought; I have this storefront and I have great autonomy so why not open a matchbox gallery and call it Swampspace. You were one of the first shows and though I wasn't soliciting artists, you guys found your way here stepped up to the plate.

Maite: It was interesting how it happened. I think you were starting to have exhibitions. Maybe at the time, you didn't know that's what you were doing. I remember saying, "Oh, we're going to paint the walls black." It all just happened naturally. The show before ours was one of the reasons why we were there. It was the Marlon Pruz show *Recycle Your Rabbits*. You stated, "Oh, you guys can be the next thing." And we said, "Okay, I guess we're putting something together." I still have all the pockets from that show, so I plan to exhibit them again.

Oliver: Well, somewhere out there, there's a bunch of pants without pockets for sure.

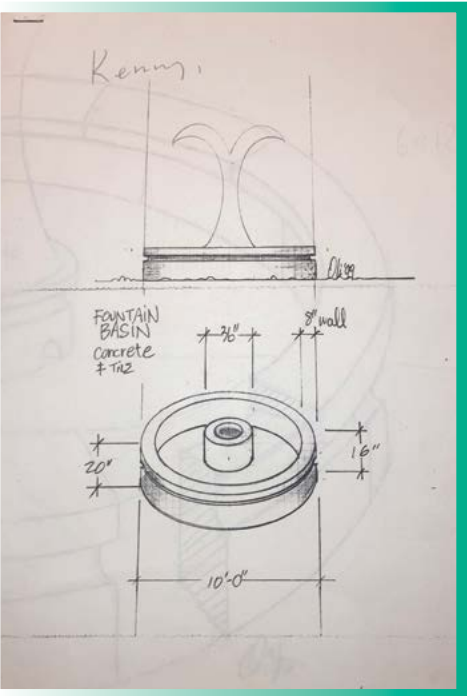
Maite: Yes, it's my fault.

Oliver: I'd only had a couple of events and wanted Swampspace to be funded by my practice, my fabrications business, and not to be a commercial gallery I wanted it to be unadulterated by those kinds of conditions and motives. So, that, in a way, it allowed us to do whatever we wanted albeit with no budget.

Maite: *Empty Your Pockets*. Yeah. Tony and I wanted to create a space that was enchanting and a play on the words of our band name and the new project that we started.

Oliver: It was the golden age of the Miami art scene, in my opinion. SOBE was still hopping. There were a few museums and galleries, institutions that were doing the status quo thing. We were just these hopelessly avant-garde champions gathering and googling.

Swampspace/Kenny Scharf sketch for bronze fountain



Maite: Many local art stars hadn't become what they are now, which is awesome to know that we've been able to have that here.

Oliver: They didn't come out of a bubble.

Maite: No they didn't. We all became friends and found each other. Sam from FriendsWithYou we have known since college and he was at our wedding in 2001 along with Danny from Jacuzzi Boys. Alvaro Ilizarbe, from freegums, had his solo show at your first space. So, it's exiting to see how much everyone has evolved.

Oliver: Yes, Arsham, Jen, Lebo, Ahol and so many others. Even Britto, who was not hanging out with us, made the big time. Miami did produce some world-class shit haha.

SECOND LOCATION 2008-2012

Oliver: In 2010 we had to move and the second chapter of Swampspace began. We got a new location and with it, new opportunities for programming. You guys had another show there.

Maite: We had a few shows there at that time as long as it fit with whatever programming you were doing with other people. You did a few group shows at that second space. I remember the "Collage" something?

Oliver: Loved *Collage Potage!* Big group show.

Maite: That was interesting because it brought out not only the art scene, it brought out a lot of people from the music scene. Brian Butler's *Double Vision* show. And Tony's *The Halls Ways* show.

Oliver: I think I gave you the keys because I couldn't be there.

Maite: Yes, You couldn't be there. And at first, I was like, "Oliver gave us his keys. You totally trusted us."

Oliver: I'm sorry I missed it.

Maite: It was a great thing. Besides the artwork, Tony included his book and an installation of a fake classroom. The next show that you let us put there was my solo show.

Oliver: Then there was *Presque Vu*?

Maite: Yeah. I did *Presque Vu*. It was about the communications I have with my students. It was actually artwork that I was not interested in sharing at the time. I don't know if I ever told you this, but you saw them.

Oliver: Oh, some of your best work.

Maite: And you told me I had to share them. And I remember going home to tell Tony, and I'm like, "He wants me to share these." I showed you all these other things. And I had no interest in sharing them because I felt they were personal. Because for a long time my music, my art, and my teaching career were very separate. Now, I see my students out there getting grants from Oolite and such. They're helping other galleries write their own grants. So, it's interesting to see how my circles have collided.

Oliver: We had a ton of crazy shows there.

THIRD LOCATION 2012-2023

Oliver: Then we moved again and got a little grant money from Knight. People would ask, “So what’s your mission statement?”. I’d say we don’t have one, don’t want one. We were going to do what we did, whether it was performance, theater, music, art shows, literary events. This was the golden age of things, but we had settled into a good stride. Some of the other entities that were doing similar work had also evolved. They progressed down this developmental path, getting all sorts of funding, turning into non-profits, and becoming something other than what they were originally. A good path, not our path. I think that we’ve been able to stay relevant by virtue of remaining in the margins to see others come and go.



Maite: Yeah. Well, there’s nothing wrong with that. I think some of the artists that have gone through Swampspace have done that. And some of them are part of other galleries. Some of them still get to do their own thing.

Oliver: Yeah. I think of Eddie Arroyo, a curious fellow who had his breakout show here and went all the way to the Whitney Biennial. It’s always good to see people that you support succeed. It’s similar when you have students for one year, and then they come back to you five years later, and they’re like, “Oh, thank you, Miss Maite!”

Maite: Miss Urrechaga is what they call me. And then I think a few call me “professor”.

Oliver: Pardon me, Professor!

Maite: Yeah.

Oliver: What would you say is the future of these weird art scenes? Because, like, I’m old now. I barely go out. What’s the future of these grassroots, scrappy artists’ gatherings doing something their way kind of places?

Maite: I mean, the future, I don’t think it’s going to stop. Maybe it transitions hands, and keeps on encouraging people to be a part of it. Being together, gathering, and wanting to share, I think that’s one of the reasons why we’re all still here wanting to do that.

Oliver: Haha, muchas gracias.

Maite: Thanks, Oliver.



ANTONIA WRIGHT

A GLIMPSE OF THE PERFORMANCE ART SCENE

CONVERSATIONS



Wynwood Art Fair, 2011

RUBEN MILLARES

Ruben Millares: Antonia, you moved back to Miami from New York in 2008 and our life together exploded, as well as what felt like the Miami art scene! Tell us a little bit.

Antonia Wright: I moved back to Miami in late 2008, and at that point, the financial crisis was raging, especially in New York. I was offered a job in Miami, and it seemed like an exciting change, so I took the opportunity. When I got here, I was happily surprised. Even though I moved back during the financial crisis, there was still so much development in Miami, and because of that, coupled with the recession, there were all these empty spaces and artists were just given the keys. Landlords would say, "Here, put on a solo show, curate a show with your friends, do whatever you want." It felt like an exciting moment where people were creating and showing.

Ruben: Totally. You and I did a double solo show in the Gables, a renegade space my dad was running called the 777 Gallery. I was playing rock and roll on the rooftop, and the cops used to show up and shut us down. It was a pretty wild space.

Antonia: That was a crazy space. I remember you invited me over there, and suddenly, there's these 60-year-old Cuban guys raging, your dad and his artist friends...and in the Gables of all places. And I remember being like, "Okay, even in Coral Gables?" Your dad was organizing really cool art shows, and that was one of the first solo shows I'd ever had, the one that we did together. And then from there...

Ruben: Well, you start working at the Margulies Collection. I was friends with Marty [Margulies] and introduced you to him, and then to Constance [Collins] and Katherine [Hinds], and you ended up getting a job at the collection. This ended up leading to the creation of The Wynwood Art Fair. There was so much creativity and making new things happen!

Antonia: They used to have art-based fundraisers at the Margulies Collection for the Lotus House where they invited incredible artists, like Sarah Sze (who just had a solo show at the Guggenheim) to make art live and interactive. Inspired by Allen Kaprow's *Happenings*, Constance thought that performance art was the most democratic kind of art, going back to the roots of the medium, where you couldn't buy it or sell it. She felt this kind of work mirrored the mission at the Lotus House, which serves unhoused women and children. Ultimately her dream was to produce an art fair for the shelter, and she did it. Together we founded the Wynwood Art Fair in 2011, which closed five blocks on 29th Street for three days. Wynwood was very different back then and this was before Art Wynwood. Museums, collections, and galleries were all sponsoring artists, who would make art live, and nothing was for sale. You did a big piece in that, too.

Ruben: I was in *Heart Happenings*, the first fundraiser at the Margulies Collection at the Warehouse. I created a big Rumba drum circle and a video artist projected images on our white clothes. There were some great artists in that that you mentioned before—Helado Negro, David Ellis, Sarah Sze, and the TM Sisters. When it evolved into the street fair, you and I did a performance called *Job Creation In a Bad Economy*. It was a piece that was inspired by library closures across the country and the defunding of the arts in schools. We would collect thousands of books, make a huge wall out of them, and then run through them as hard as we could. It took us hours to build the walls and seconds to crash through them! We made videos of each performance. The year of the Wynwood Art Fair, Marty bought that video work embedded in two book towers and was showing it in the collection.

MAKING MIAMI

Photos courtesy of Antonia Wright / Lotus House

Antonia: That's right, he bought it from Spinello Projects, who had a gallery back then in the Design District next to the old Locust Projects.

Ruben: Yes..

Antonia: And then you and I did the performance on the street during the Wynwood Art Fair where we asked fairgoers to bring books, we built walls out of them, ran through them live, and then we donated all the books to Lotus House for the shelter's library. The whole fair was so fun. I remember Art in Public Places sponsored Robert Chambers. He showed up with a bubble machine, a confetti machine, a DJ, and Bhatki Baxter who was wearing a horse head mask. I remember watching the confetti fly up and then drift into I-95 and thinking that we were all going to get shut down immediately. FriendsWithYou was sponsored by the de la Cruz Collection and they did a big balloon float down 29th street. Jessie Nite and Ahol Sniffs Glue were painting live. What felt like the whole art community was on 29th Street for three days.



Antonia Wright and Ruben Millares, *Job Creation in a Bad Economy*, 2010

Photo courtesy of the Margulies Collection at the Warehouse.



Sarah Sze and Trajal Harrell at the Margulies Collection at the Warehouse, 2011

FriendsWithYou at the Wynwood Art Fair, 2011



Ruben: I remember Ben Fain and Frank Van Derm also did a wild parade with a blue sphinx. Around that same time, Justin Long, Meatball [Robert Lorrie], and a bunch of their friends did a show called *The Youth Fair Bro*.

Antonia: *The Youth Fair Bro*! now seems super illegal and very dangerous...!

Ruben: Yes.

Antonia: I think that the big difference that I noticed coming here, was that it was a little less institutionalized than New York. I feel lucky to have moved to Miami when I did. I was growing as an artist and I felt the city, the art scene, grew with me and supported me as well.

Ruben: Yes, I feel the same way. I was deep in music at that time with *Smiling Gums* and had just embarked on my visual arts life. It really felt like things were coming together and Miami served as a wonderful springboard to launch us to the next level of our careers.

CRISTINA LEI RODRIGUEZ

MAXIMALISTS

CONVERSATIONS



Photos courtesy of Paul Laster

PEPE MAR

Photos courtesy of Pepe Mar and Cristina Lei Rodriguez

Cristina Lei Rodriguez: Pepe, I remember when I first met you! It was the summer of 2003, I had just returned to Miami and met you at an opening at MAM. We immediately hit it off because we realized we had both gone to CCA in San Francisco for art school and knew people in common. You were the way you are now, vibrant, well-versed in contemporary art and on a mission to develop your work and get it shown.

Pepe Mar: Yes! I remember seeing your work at the Art Center South Florida, now Oolite. I got really excited! I felt an immediate connection with your work, and yes, that San Francisco bond was strong and led us to start working with my friend Jose Diaz at Worm-Hole Lab. It was an exciting moment in the Miami art scene when there was a focus on Miami artists and an excitement for the possibilities of what art could be in this city.

Cristina Lei Rodriguez: We bonded because we are both maximalists, and in early 2000's the contemporary art we were tuned into internationally was riffing off the visuals and energy of pop, glamour and fantasy. As artists we were still a bit in love with the visual culture of our 80's youth, but it felt powerful to remix it and call it our own. I remember feeling bold, free and together we were empowered to go out and get it. It was from this energy that Jose Diaz decided to launch Worm-Hole Lab from his apartment to give us a platform to make things happen. Painter Diego Singh was a collaborator as well. Our first show was *Haunted*, which was a huge win for us!

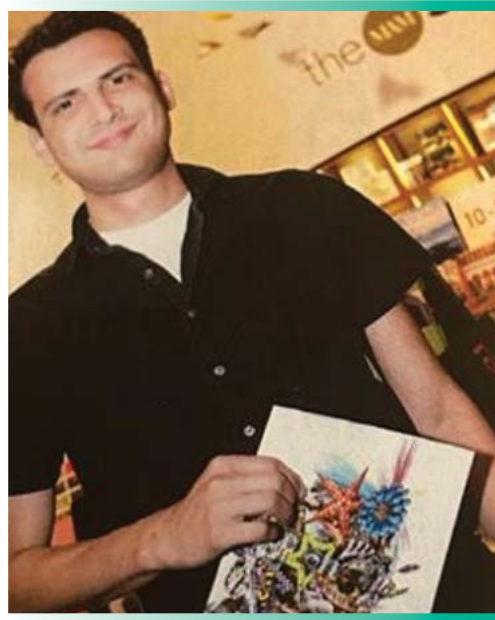
Pepe: I remember Worm-Hole Lab being a great project where like you said, a maximalist aesthetic was embraced as an antidote to the predominant trends in Miami at the time. *Haunted* was a turning point, a catalyst for all of us to launch our careers in Miami. I remember Diego Singh doing a mural at the entrance of the space with some theatrical lighting. Your work occupied the next room taking over the floor of the living room and I placed my sculptures with stuffed animals and paint on the kitchen counter! I also remember some wild press release that Jose wrote and a listing that came out in the *Miami New Times* that brought visitors to the opening.

Cristina Lei: Major collectors and curators came through as well. We were so psyched and we used that energy to keep pushing forward. Totally remember "flying it up" to promote our shows, with bulk postcards of our work with show info in a tote bag. You, Jose, Diego and I were always out seeing as many gallery and museums shows we could in Miami. Miami's scene was small, but lots of people were trying to make something happen. As a community of artists, we would show up for each other and attend art exhibitions and projects, whether it was under a highway, in an empty warehouse, in an apartment, in a store front, on a street corner. Art openings were meant to be fun, performative and inclusive. This attitude helped art get sponsored by developers and brands with space, studios, even liquor for openings! We would make a list of what we needed and start scheming on how to get it.

Pepe: *The Stray Show* in Chicago was great exposure for Worm-Hole Lab since a lot of artist-run spaces from the US participated in that fair. Our presentation with the thematic of an island was very special. We were lucky as young artists to have access to Miami collector Rosa de la Cruz and we both were included in exhibitions at The Moore Space with Silvia Cubiñá. We also travelled to NYC to participate in a group show

MAKING MIAMI

at Annina Nosei Gallery in Chelsea and knowing it was Basquiat's gallery in the 80's was very exciting for us as artists starting out. Having that experience in Chicago and New York and getting an amazing response, we came back home and started working on what would be our most ambitious group exhibition at Rocket Projects entitled *If you believe hard enough*. Having Miami as our base mattered because we were a community and kept us thinking together about art globally. It was shortly after these trips that I had my first solo show in New York and garnered a review in The New York Times by Ken Johnson. We were believing hard and harder in what we were doing!!



Cristina Lei: We did put our heads together for *If you believe hard enough* and were intentional about including national and international artists that we loved and wanted to show with. One of the anchors of the show was Assume Vivid Astro Focus, who visually and conceptually was pushing ideas of inclusivity, pop, accessibility and fantasy. I remember feeling that we were presenting our work in a context that felt relevant, and so current; it felt urgent. We did actually feel that if we believed hard enough, and put in the work, we could make our dreams happen. As a group, you, Diego, Jose and I, always thought about the art scene globally, and Miami was our launching pad. Later that year, we both had our first solo shows at Rocket Projects and by the time Art Basel 2004 came around, Rocket Projects was at NADA with a sold-out booth. Our careers had launched as emerging artists and major museums, collectors, curators and artists were in conversation with us and following our work. We helped each other start our careers during that time, and my work was really pushed to be its best by the dialogue and support I had from Rosa and Silvia, and Mark Coetzee too. I will never forget that Basel we were at the NADA booth and you said to me, "omg Jeffery Deitch is looking at your work, you have to go meet him and invite him to see your work at the Rubell's!" And you then pushed me in front of him, which was amazing, because I did meet him, and met him again at my installation at the Rubell's, and then he even came out to my studio way out in Kendall in a cab later that week. It led to showing my work with Deitch Projects. Those moments mattered!



Cristina Lei Rodriguez, *Encantadas*, 2003

Photo courtesy of Mariano Peuser

Detail of Cristina Lei Rodriguez,
Untitled (over ripe), 2004

As a community of artists, we would show up for each other and attend art exhibitions and projects, whether it was under a highway, in an empty warehouse, in an apartment...



DEBRA SCHOLL

LOCUST PROJECTS & ITS BEAUTIFUL CHAOS



Jedediah Caesar, *and I and I and I and I*, 2004, wheatpaste mural on façade of Locust Projects' original location at 105 NW 23rd St.

LORIE MERTES

Lorie Mertes: Hi, Debra. How are you doing today? It's great to have this opportunity to do a little flashback on Flashback Friday! LOL!

Debra Scholl: HAHA! Yes, I've been thinking a lot about this.

Lorie: Obviously, why we're here is our connection to Locust Projects, founded by artists for artists in Wynwood in 1998 and also the unifying fact that all of the artist spaces and collectives part of this project, including Locust Projects, would eventually have a physical space for a period of time in the Design District thanks to Craig Robins' vision and generosity towards artists.

So to give a little background, maybe tell us a little about how you got involved with Locust in those early days, then I'll chime in with how I came to be connected.

Debra: Dennis and I got involved with Locust by coming to one of their early shows, I do not remember the exhibition or the artists. But I do remember walking into Locust which was on Northwest 23rd Street in Wynwood. And this was before Wynwood was really Wynwood. They had a thirty-day month-to-month lease.

We met Westen [Charles], COOPER, and Elizabeth [Withstandley], the artist co-founders. I didn't love the show that they had up, but I loved the idea of what they were trying to do. They all had day jobs, and made art by night, but wanted to support artists in whatever realm they wanted to show work and not have to worry about any commercial ramifications. It was so freeing to see something like that, that wasn't just curated for a certain space—nothing wrong with something being curated— but, it was nice to have that kind of alternative space, which I guess Locust has always been. So we went to their shows. We loved what they were doing. And we continually went back. And at some point, Dennis and I said to Wes, COOPER, and Elizabeth, we think you should become a little more structured and become a 501(c)3. And that's how we started getting very involved with Locust Projects.

Lorie: As for me, in the years between 1996 to 2006, I was the curator at the Miami Art Museum, precursor to PAMM. I knew you and Dennis back then as collectors deeply supportive of artists, as well as curators, both locally and nationally. I got involved with Locust because I got what I remember receiving was a manifesto, statement of purpose, I think it was in the mail, from the co-founders Elizabeth, Wes, and COOPER.

And so I bit, and they asked me to get involved as a curatorial advisory board member, along with Jeremy Chestler and Amy Cappellazzo. I stayed on in that role til I left Miami in 2006. And at your invitation, I came back to Locust as Executive Director in 2017. What's really hard to believe is that this year, Locust Projects is 25 years old, and five years ago, we published a book for our 20th anniversary. So, I thought we might cheat a little bit and focus on the big “moments”, those iconic ones that have lived on in collective memories, the moments that really distinguished what Locust was doing different. There's language Locust used repeatedly over the years that says, “it provides

the time, the space, and the resources for artists to create ambitious work not possible in traditional spaces or commercial galleries” I feel that in no way captures the chaos, craziness, and creative awesomeness of what Locust enables, what I see is a culture of Yes, providing that space for artists to dream big, realize really ambitious projects that really, truly couldn't happen in other type of spaces. And so maybe, if you want to think back, even to the Wynwood days, like, what was one of the first like, projects, where you said, "The artist wants to do what????"

Debra: There are two particulars in Wynwood. The first was Clifton Childree's show, it felt like it was a creepy carnival. To me, it was very dark, a little political, if I remember correctly. I'm not very good at remembering, you know, the specifics but, I remember walking through one space to another amazed. And it was like, Oh, my God, this is so dark, so strange, but it made me react, which I think that's what art should always do. And then the other one that was just the opposite - the TM Sisters swimming in an above ground pool and roller skating throughout the space. And it was just like chaos, but it was beautiful chaos. To me, those were like the two quintessential Locust shows that you would never see anywhere else. And it was just wonderful. There are other shows too, like Lorie's [Beltran]...

Lorie: Yes, the last show in old Wynwood space, which was just phenomenal. I wish I had seen that.

Debra: Right. It was the last show in Wynwood and he tore apart the walls, sort of what Ruben Ochoa did on 38th street in the Design District where he dug up the floor.

Lorie: Yes! massive chunks of concrete torn out of the floor and suspended on metal poles like flowers creating an urban flower garden. Projects pushing the boundaries of concepts of art and space is what I've always associated with Locust. I remember in the early Wynwood days walking into a dark space when Rosario Marquardt and Roberto Behar had a woman sleeping-dreaming in a bed and all the candles on the floor and thinking, okay, something different is going on here, or the Tent survival show where they had artists stay for 48 hours in the space camping out and creating a show.

Debra: I loved that.

Lorie: As a curator at the time working in a museum, I was so into it. And then Jason Hedges cooking a lamb on a spit and the Donald Judd-inspired Caja de China in the Locust Courtyard and, again, Lorie's final project closing Wynwood was all part of the trajectory of artists at Locust pushing what the very concepts of art is. You become chair right around that same time right? Like 2009?

Debra: Yes. So we were still in Wynwood. But we were moving, I don't remember if it was like February, I just don't remember but we were moving. And that's when I became Chair. Claire Breukel had just left. And I remember interviewing Chana Sheldon. We were in the 38th Street space for a little while but then moved to North Miami Ave after 39th Street, the old Placemaker space, where we were for about 12 years.

Lorie: I was not here in Miami at that time, but in the process of working on Locust's 20th anniversary book in 2018, I saw there was clearly a big shift with the move to a storefront space on 38th Street in the Design District, and subsequently to North Miami Ave. it really changed the nature of a lot of the shows, like Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova's massive undulating hills of pink carpet in the gallery. And then one I really wish I had seen was Valerie Hegarty.

Debra: With all the birds and the post-apocalyptic swamp... in 2010, it was an amazing trompe l'oeil effect where Miami swimming pools have turned into swamps and succumbed to sea-level rise. So I remember that. It looked incredible with the birds and faked landscape - almost AI.



TM Sisters, *WHIRL CRASH GO!*, 2009

Ruben Ochoa, *CORES and CUTOUTS*, 2011



Lorie: Yes! So not long after you are moving from that space and Ruben Ochoa is the final project, the one we talked about with the raised floor concrete flowers. So, I want to know how that conversation went down where the idea for Ruben to tear up the floor came up?

Debra: Well, we knew we were leaving the space. And I think we got approval from Craig Robins because he was demolishing the space. So it made it very easy for the board to be very excited about doing that.

Lorie: So afterward, did the artists come in and kind of say, Hey, can I do this level of destruction too? Or did you all say just in this case, hey, this building's gonna be torn apart? Do you want to do something? Do you remember how that went?

Debra: I think it was sort of the latter. I think maybe Chana was speaking to Ruben and said this is what he wants to do. And I think we then all said, That's a great idea. Go ahead and do it.

Lorie: Yeah, I feel like that was the moment where for future artist projects, what's the term when you say, when "all bets are off," bringing forward a new era for what is possible at Locust Projects.

Debra: Yes. I think Locust Projects definitely defined this kind of support for artists. And I think moving ahead, when we moved into the old Placemaker space on 39th, it was a precedent for Daniel Arsham who would go so much further, tearing up a massive 30-ft diameter, 2-ft deep section of the concrete floor. Craig was willing to do that, you know, as long as we covered it.

Lorie: I think ever since those iconic projects, any artist who applies well knows the context in which they're hoping to work. I think exponentially the projects have become more and more ambitious and attractive to not just emerging, but also mid-career and established artists, for what we are able to help them realize that other spaces do not support. For example, we're supposed to end this dialogue with 2012 and that was a penultimate moment for Locust with Theaster Gates, on the heels of Documenta, creating his *Soul Manufacturing* project. Do you want to talk about that? A little?

Debra: At that time, Dennis and I were collecting a lot of his work. He was at the precipice where he was just taking it to the next level. And I think he was excited about coming to Miami during Basel doing something that was so off, nothing that you can really sell. And so he did this great space of production with a working ceramic studio and workers supported by yoga, music, and more, and it was really wonderful.



Roberto Behar & Rosario Marquardt, *December 16*, 2000, 2000



And you know, I always thought that that was what Locust was about, you know, having someone like Theaster make something that's not really sellable. Having someone like Daniel digging into the floor and, putting things he made inspired by his past in there like a time capsule to be found in years to come. That, to me, is the beauty about Locust and to get that

level of artists to do those kinds of things and not have to worry about the commercial pressure, I think that's, that's great. Whether they're emerging, or mid-career and they want to shake it up a little and do something new, Locust uniquely supports that.

Lorie: For me as a curator, the opportunity to come to Locust in this role was so exciting because you really get to help make art happen, support the creative process, and get to see artists like, even Theaster Gates or Trenton Doyle Hancock, take a risk and do something they've not done before with the freedoms the space provides.

Debra: Agreed, and you've also added to all we do since you've been at the helm.

Lorie: Thank you! Well, this was fun but I think that's kind of where we're at time-wise given Theaster's show was December 2012. Fast forward a couple of years to 2014 and Daniel Arsham would return to what was Placemaker and create his iconic jackhammered floor project. And now, with a move in early 2023, Locust's story continues, in a space twice our previous size. I am excited about what artists will make happen here and into the future.



Drew Heitzler, *The World is Yours*, 2010



Jillian Mayer, *Swing Space*, 2013

MICHELE OKA DONER

CONVERSATIONS



MERA RUBELL

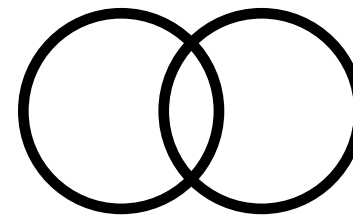


Photo courtesy of Frederick Doner

A WALK ON THE BEACH DREAMING TOGETHER

Michele Oka Doner: Let's focus on the early years when we imagined what could be in Miami Beach, how it could become a cultural magnet, what it would take, how we dreamed together.

Mera Rubell: When you say this, my dream is a walk on the beach. And that dream repeats itself every time I arrive in Miami airport and I'm reflecting upon your Walk on the Beach work of art and how poetic it is that we're still walking. I walked it over and over again because, in the walk along the shore, we envisioned our life going forward for the next 40 years.

Michele: And it has. That's what's so beautiful. I remember the first time you took me to what became your first exhibition space, the Rubell Collection on 29th Street. It was located in a broken-window neighborhood.

Mera: With a lot of...narcotic paraphernalia around the street.

Michele: But how about the chickens and the roosters in the backyard?

Mera: And also at one point there was a goat in the backyard too. I think they are rural Santeria offerings.

Michele: So here I am, I'm hearing the cock-a-doodle-doo and you turn to me saying, "And that's where the tennis court will go."

Mera: Oh my God. 30 years later, I took you to Allapattah on the railroad tracks, where there were wild dogs roaming. When I brought you there, I had this vision to say we were on the course to make it happen. But I was extremely uncertain whether it was feasible. I think frontiers don't frighten you, Michele.

Michele: No, you and I have always lived with one foot firmly planted down on this earth and the other one on its way. So that is how we've lived.

Mera: I like that metaphor. I guess the foot on the earth is about, how we both have lived with the same man for what? I just celebrated 59 years. How many years? You're close.

Michele: You're two years older and two years more married.

Mera: Newlyweds. And Don and I just celebrated 59 years and you were there for our 50th anniversary.

Michele: Absolutely. But back to Allapattah, is that how you say it?

Mera: Yes, Allapattah.

Michele: I remember two things distinctly. One is that the gravel in your backyard had fossil clamshells and I found one and I thought that was the most exciting place in all of my life.

Mera: Wait a second, you found that?

Michele: Yes.

MAKING MIAMI



GALAXY, detail from one of four rotundas for *A WALK ON THE BEACH*, Miami International Airport, 2005, terrazzo and mother of pearl.

Photo courtesy of Chicago History Museum, Hedrich Blessing Collection, Nick Merrick photographer

Mera: Look, it was nice to have a friend to walk the beach, especially with a friend whose father was the Mayor of Miami Beach at one time. And to imagine what our life would be like together. Actually, at that time I still lived part-time in New York and part-time in Miami, but we made quite a life of it. And who would have imagined that Miami would become a cultural destination? I think that was a remote dream honestly. I mean it was very remote.

Michele: I think I saw it coming because I had intense conversations with you and arguments with Don. He just didn't think it was going to happen. And I would then have conversations with Micky (Wolfson) who I would convince it was going to happen and pushed him forward with the Wolfsonian. What's interesting about what you did in terms of this history is that Wynwood at that time was an outpost, not a destination. And you brought to Wynwood a joie de vivre. You made the frontier seem like the center of the situation. And that was a big leap.

Mera: I think art always has to bring people to some sort of frontier. I think the great museums of the world have always somehow done that. One way or another, it has to transport people to a new imaginative place. Let's put it this way, it took courage for people to come into Wynwood at that time. It was never really as dangerous as people thought it was, but it's always a remote, foreign, and perhaps dangerous in the imaginative way.. Allapattah has much more of a residential history and has pride of place. It took a lot for the Wynwood community to say, "Hey, we want to be identified as Wynwood", which became the legitimate name for that neighborhood.

Michele: Well, you had a partner in spirit with Tony Goldman because of the Wynwood Walls, now what year did he begin?

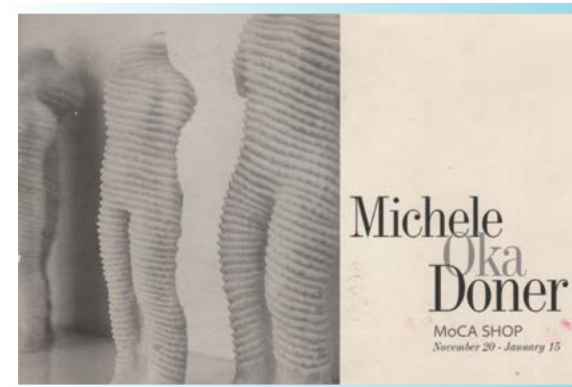
Mera: He came in approximately 10 years after we were there. It's interesting sometimes the fresher look at a place brings new spirit. Tony Goldman, we have to give him credit for looking at the entire picture. We were much more involved with our museum, with our collection, with what we were doing. We weren't thinking of ourselves as real estate



Photo courtesy of Frederick Doner

Michele Oka Doner, *RADOS CANDLES*, 1997 for Cerabella

Photo courtesy of Michele Oka Doner



developers. We were thinking, we found this incredible building. We have this space for our collection. People are coming. We didn't think in terms of what kind of neighborhood can this become? We were very focused on building the collection. And when Tony came in, he had a big vision for the neighborhood. He bought as much property as he could, we focused on buying as much art as we could with the resources that we had. And he focused on really buying buildings and he had the big vision. He really brought this to Wynwood and his legacy with his daughter running the operation is very impressive. He absolutely transformed Wynwood. And in conversation with Jeffrey Deitch, they came up with this, "Well, why don't we bring graffiti to celebrate the neighborhood." And he did it, he built a neighborhood.

Michele: We are living in his legacy and back to that period 1996 to 2012. Tony not only developed real estate, but he wanted to sing in these hotels. He wanted to go back to that glamorous moment. So we went and heard him sing. On Lincoln Road!

Mera: He was a beautiful man and a perfect neighbor to have. But he also exploded Wynwood to the point that any kind of expansion on our part became impossible. His effort, his imagination, and his commitment to Wynwood appreciated the property that we bought way back in 93, so when we were then able to sell, we managed to acquire a whole bunch of Allapattah warehouses with the ambition of really creating this cultural campus. Tony did a lot of that for Wynwood, there's no question about it.

Michele: So you know, back to whether it was dangerous or not during those years, the 1990s, early 1990s to mid-1990s was a period of Miami Vice, Scarface, and Cocaine Cowboys. So the image that was going out to the world was of a violent place. We spoke about what it would take to counter that bad publicity. And it wasn't quite true. It was extreme, but it was focused on certain areas. There was an innocence about those times...

Mera: There was so much going on in Miami. Look at Lincoln Road. You'd walk down Lincoln Road and know every single person on the street. And of course, the gay community added so much life and meaning to the vitality of the place.

Michele: So what year did you buy the Sony building?

Mera: The Sony was around 93. That was right after the Andrew hurricane.

Michele: My younger sister called and told me that a hurricane was coming. Well, Miami hadn't had one in 30 years and nobody was doing anything. She said, "Top off your gas and buy some water at Publix."

So my younger son, Jeremy, was with me and said "Mom, your sister's hysterical. Why isn't anybody else in Publix?" Well, five o'clock the next morning, she called me and said, "Get out of town if you still want to...."

Mera: We kind of were flirting right before Andrew, but we made our commitment in 93. There was endless creativity, just walking down Lincoln Road. And one disco club after another, the kind of energy that was not since Studio 54 that we experienced that kind of vitality, social vitality.

You know how when you're in small amazing towns in Europe, in the evening people walk towards the church and maybe they stop and have a cup of coffee and visit with each other? Lincoln Road was a kind of walking towards the church. And along the way, your whole social life unfolds. I remember running into amazing artists- a conversation with Lichtenstein about some Lincoln Road project and of course, Morris Lapidis. There was a constant discussion about how art can make a difference in the community.

Michele: Which is amazing. Because Miami Beach really was a tropical desert in terms of culture.

Mera: Well, it was a tropical desert that went to play. Like you told me your father and mother would be on a plane or a boat to Havana all the time. Entertainment was someplace else, but young, exciting, dynamic cultural shifts were happening in Miami Beach.

Michele: I'm going to say there was a second revival!

Mera: After Andrew. For some reason that was the big shift. Maybe it was money coming to the South. I don't know what it was.

Michele: It was always about Miami Beach. But it's amazing that it came back and what brought it back was the new thing called television. The Jackie Gleason show was staged from there. Walter Winchell did radio from the towers of the Roney Plaza. So it's fascinating that this cycle is as grand and large as the last one, but I guess social media really makes everything explode into another dimension.

Mera: Okay, so we opened our space in 93 in Wynwood, and in 2002, Art Basel came to Miami. And of course, I think that that's a game changer. A huge shift in the cultural world coming to Miami, bringing international art lovers to the city every year. Miami became conscious of who it was. It took outsiders to say, "Look what you have here." You have collectors, public spaces, a dynamic, young, free society here. And with the world falling in love with Miami, I think Miami became aware of its potential. The world coming back every year felt like we had to perform for the world. We were like, suddenly Miami became a stage and we were responsible for the performance.

Michele: I had just moved into the Imperial House. So it had to have been like 1992.

Mera: Oh my God, the Imperial House. Thanks to you. You lived on the 7th floor. We lived on the sixth floor in an identical apartment overlooking the ocean. That was amazing. And of course, we'd meet up at the pool and dream about having grandchildren and having them play in this beautiful, gorgeous pool in front of the ocean.

Michele: Well, all of our Miami dreams have come true, Mera.

Mera: You were busy exploring the globe and doing extraordinary work everywhere you went and we moved into Wynwood. It's hard to believe, but we were the first new residents to Wynwood. People just lived there forever, it was an old Puerto Rican community. And we moved right behind our museum. Our neighbors were playing checkers all night long, singing Cuban songs, dancing to salsa music. We really felt we lived inside the culture of that place.

Michele: It's the people who have fire in the belly. And you are one of the new generations that had a major effect on what we have today, which is why we're a magnet for culture, adventure, and invention.

Mera: You've taken the inspiration of Miami, the walks on Miami Beach, and made a whole career out of it. Basically introducing your passion for Miami; its nature and spirituality of the place inside of your work. Everywhere you go, you're talking about the kind of spirituality that nature gives us all that we don't always pay attention to, but it's there for us, and what a special place Miami is.

Michele: Stephen Jay Gould once was asked by Rolling Stone magazine, "You're a naturalist. What is the most beautiful place in the world, Stephen?" He replied, "That's the place where your soul first opened." And that is how I feel about Miami. And so like family life, like the gifts I received of education, of curation, of civilization from my family. And you carry those forward, those golden threads. And that's what artists do. That's what you do.

Mera: There are so many stories that we didn't touch on. So many people have made a difference in the city. Everyone, in one way or another in this city now is touched by art. People living in this city are involved with art, in one way or another. I'm just amazed that we get hundreds of people showing up at our museum every single week. It's just shocking to me. They could be at the beach or golfing. There is an engagement with art in Miami and nowhere is it more evident.

Michele: There's a hunger.

Mera: You do a lecture here and everybody shows up because they're eager to know more. It's absolutely astonishing. And of course, for me, I am welcomed back every time I leave Miami with the walk in the airport. Walking on your floor always brings me back to our beautiful walks in the morning. You always found a shell that I didn't see or some petrified wood floating in the water, and you make art out of it. It's really beautiful. Thank you for including me in this little walk of memory.

Michele: This is so wonderful. Mera, I love you.

Mera: I love you too. I miss you. I hope to see you very soon.

Michele: Very soon.



Michele Oka Doner at work with a squeegee, pushing away water from the grinding to reveal bronze forms for *A WALK ON THE BEACH*, Miami International Airport, 1995.

Photo courtesy of Lea Nickless

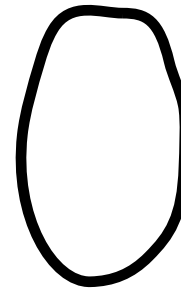
JOSÉ DÍAZ

CONVERSATIONS



NINA ARIAS

Photos courtesy of José Díaz and Nina Arias



ROCKET PROJECTS & WORM-HOLE LABS

José Díaz: Hi Nina! I wanted to start us off by hearing about the origins of Wynwood as an official art destination and your memory of its formation.

Nina Arias: So great to catch up with you Jose, and reminisce on the early days of Wynwood and the Miami art world. It was around fall, (November 2003) when the beginning of the Wynwood Art District was founded. We were a group of art dealers, artists, curators, and collectors who wanted to create a gallery walk. Among the pioneers of this exciting new district was the Rubell Collection directed by Mark Coetzee, Brook Dorsch of Dorsch Gallery, Westen Charles of Locust Projects, Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, and us, (Nina and Nick) from Rocket Projects. Other noteworthy galleries and art spaces from back then: Damien Art Center, Margulies Collection, Diana Lowenstein Gallery, and Marina Kessler Gallery.

José: There was also a neighborhood map.

Nina: Yes, I helped design the first map of gallery and studio listings which was hot pink in color and had the Wynwood Street manhole cover as its logo. I recall Marty Margulies sponsoring the printing of the first 10,000 maps we printed, and the city of Miami sponsored the street banners that hung around the neighborhood street corners. Every second Saturday of each month, a community-wide art walk was held. Galleries, studios, and alternative spaces opened their doors to the public for art, music, and spirits.

José: Among that group was the emergence of Rocket Projects, which you made into a cultural hub, especially for the next generation of artists. Tell me more.

Nina: Earlier that summer, (June 2003), Nick Cindrick and I launched Rocket Projects located on N. Miami Ave and 34th Street right across from the old Shipping Container yard, (now known as Midtown). Considered an “alternative space”, the gallery presented cutting-edge programming and represented emerging and mid-career artists such as: Emilio Perez, Christian Curiel, Diego Singh, Brandon Opalka, Ryan Humphrey and Cristina Lei Rodriguez. The 1,500 sq ft gallery space included a main exhibition room, a smaller project space, and a flat-file lounge to view works on paper, photography, and videos.

Memories of our inaugural exhibition was the group show *Customized* showcasing artists Daniel Arsham, Martin Oppel, David Rohn, and George Sanchez and in the project space was an incredible installation, *Assembly of an Allegory*, by collaborative Fe Cu Op: Jason Ferguson, Christian Curiel, and Brandon Opalka. Our inaugural opening brought out over 1000+ patrons to see the new gallery in the neighborhood. For the next 5-8 years Wynwood grew and grew, turning into a vibrant art community. It became an important art destination that inspired and fostered incredible art, artists, galleries and collections on a national level.

José: That’s right! Around the same time, I was a curatorial intern at the Rubells which was foundational in my career. My project there was a Jenny Holzer solo and I even tried to install her *Truisms* across Lincoln Road but the city rejected it. After that experience, I was living alone at 401 NE 22nd Street and decided to turn my empty apartment into an

MAKING MIAMI

experimental exhibition space: Worm-Hole Lab. The mission statement mentioned it was nomadic and for investigations in contemporary art. The first show *Haunted* opened on November 29, 2003, with Jen Denike, Pepe Mar, Cristina Lei Rodriguez, and Diego Singh. The press release for that show started with: “*Haunted* is a metaphor for the angst and obsessions felt by the artists in this show and its curator”!

From the initial acclaim, I was then invited to curate exhibitions across Miami including *Gypsy’s Curse*, June 2004, in the Buena Vista Building and an exhibit at Placemaker, and even a t-shirt project where many people wore shirts decorated by artists and worn during the art fair week. At some point, we became great friends and co-curators!



Worm-Hole Labs at 401 NE 22 St, Miami

Nina: Yes! Those were some good times! We had so much fun curating many shows and installation projects around Miami’s Design District and Wynwood. We had a mutual admiration for many of the same artists and the artwork being created back then. I fondly recall a few exhibitions we co-curated at Ingalls and Associates and the Moore Space. Collaborations with real estate developers like Craig Robins, from Dacra in the Design District, were key in supporting all the artists and art we wanted to show.

Thanks to the generosity of developers lending us vacant retail space some amazing exhibitions and projects came about, like *Drawing Conclusions*, *Going Out on a Limb*, and *Hanging by a Thread*.

José: Yes, *Hanging by a Thread* at The Moore Space! That happened in September 2005. It had noteworthy artists including Ghada Amer, Cósima Vin Bonin, Tracy Emin, Arturo Herrera, Misaki Kawai, but we mixed it up carefully with Miami artists like FriendsWithYou, Gean Moreno, Frances Trombly, Jacin Giordano, and Diego Singh. I remember lots of enthusiasm from the artists and lenders. Tell me about our theme and what you recall.

Nina: With *Hanging by a Thread*, I remember we wanted to explore the current status of craft processes and techniques used by contemporary artists during that time. We selected artists using fiber-based materials, manual labor, and tactic skills like sewing and weaving to successfully develop craft materials and techniques into works of art. This exhibition featured hybrid sculpture, interpretations of painting and drawing, and non-conventional uses of textiles. Mainly, it examined craft’s revisited importance in contemporary art.

José: It really captured the appreciation of craft but had our maximalist aesthetic and point of view! Thankfully Rosa and Silvia believed in us as curators. I always felt that Miami curators knew how to roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty.

Nina: No doubt it was a very special moment back then. Our art community was filled with creative energy, ambition, and fearlessness to make an artistic impact. I’m honored to have been a part of that history 20 years ago that made Miami the cultural hub it is today.



...Miami curators knew how to roll up their sleeves and get their hands dirty.



FRANCES TROMBLY

WOMEN'S WORK



Frances Trombly, *Aftermath*, 2005. Installation View. *Trading Places* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami.

BONNIE CLEARWATER

Frances Trombly: Leyden and I actually met at an event at The House. We were introduced by a friend and then I think later he saw me and we kind of had an exchange at *The House at MOCA* exhibition. Is that right Leyden?

Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova: Yeah, we reconnected there.

Bonnie Clearwater: I remember when I first met you. You were in The House. Did you have your studio in there at that point? You had a room there.

Frances: I didn't, I believe we just met there to review my work.

Bonnie: And you were working on the woven pieces. They looked like ruled paper. And then you would crumple them and put them on the floor, in the corner. Having followed the art program at The House, I invited the artists to bring their curatorial vision to the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) where together we organized the exhibition *The House at MOCA* in the summer of 2001. It was the first major museum exhibition for these artists. The exhibition received national exposure in the Sunday *New York Times* arts section with a feature story and a big photo of the artists standing in front of The House.

Frances: Yeah, I remember that.

Bonnie: You know, most of you hadn't gone to graduate school.

Frances: I didn't feel like I needed to go and get my master's, my master's was me folding into my community and learning things very hands-on and having these experiences, like creating my own space and contributing to culture. I mean, this is my education. But, let's define it, there's a traditional master's, which you would get a certain type of academic education. But, what I'm doing is building a community, you can't compare.

Bonnie: Right, and how important networking is, supporting each other, and mentoring that continues to address that lack of community that was here. And the biggest loss I saw was when The House was demolished. It became a diaspora afterward and it all seemed to fall apart. And so then some of the artists left for L.A. and I thought that wasn't a good idea. I thought it would be difficult if you didn't go to the schools in L.A., it's really hard to break into that scene.

Frances: But some of us decided to stay. You know, Leyden and I created some of the community we wanted here.

Bonnie: Yeah, you created Box and Dimensions Variable.

Frances: Well, he had Box beforehand, and we were together a little bit while he was running Box. And then the guys, Manny, Jose, and Leyden, they all came to the conclusion that they didn't have the resources to continue it. So I don't remember the date when they stopped running the program.



Frances Trombly, *Give and Take*, 2001. Installation View at *The House* at MOCA, Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami.

Leyden: I think our last show at Box was FriendsWithYou's first solo show. They exhibited at Box in 2003.

Bonnie: Yes, and I gave them their first museum show in 2005.

Frances: Well, that's really interesting because Leyden you also brought up William Cordova's show at Box many years ago. Do you remember what year that was?

Leyden: That was in 1997. It was one of the first Box shows.

Frances: So it's these small communities.

Bonnie: That was pre-House and it also was pre-Knight Foundation giving back to support things that were going on.

Frances: Yeah, back then, many of us women artists in the community had realized, that Craig had donated space to a lot of men and they were all the gentlemen from The House, and well, where were the women? So through Tiffany Chestler, we sent a letter to Dacra asking for donated space. I think because of a lot of these previous opportunities with MOCA, led to our donated studio in the Design District. And so it was Natalia Benedetti, Wendy Wischer, myself, and Cristina Lei Rodriguez who sent the letter. And Craig accepted and gave us the space on 38th Street—it was a huge space! It was donated and it was how Dimensions Variable kind of came about. But as we're talking I'm thinking a lot about these small spaces, like The House, Box, and then even what we do at Dimensions Variable. It's interesting to see the catalyst of these small projects that are notable.

Bonnie: How important they are and then you know, I'm watching what's happening.

Frances: And after we had been in this new space, Leyden came into the studios, as well. For us starting Dimensions Variable, it kind of came out of feeling that artists were more than the products they made. For us in a way, it was like creating cultural capital and thinking we have this space, it's being given to us, let's do something more. How can we use it as a way to give back to the community that we're in? Instead of keeping it closed or private—it was about sharing our opportunities.



Frances Trombly with FriendsWithYou character at *Get Lucky* exhibition at Box, Miami, 2004



...my master's was sort of me folding into my community and learning things very hands-on



KEVIN ARROW



Roberto Behar & Rosario Marquardt,
Selfportrait, 2001

PUBLIC ART IN THE MAGIC CITY

Kevin Arrow: So I want to talk to you both today about your presence in Miami and about the Design District specifically. I want to start with a picture of you arriving. In what year did you come down here?

Roberto Behar: We arrived in Miami in May 1983, following a year of studying at the legendary Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York City. Our arrival was quite memorable as we entered Miami Beach via the Julia Tuttle Causeway and were greeted by Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Surrounded Islands*. It was an incredible welcome to the city that would become our home.

Kevin: I believe that the entire world looked at Miami the moment the *Surrounded Islands* appeared and a few years afterwards Andy Warhol's *Interview* magazine does the Miami issue in 1986.

Roberto: YES! Christo and Jeanne-Claude's project marked the beginning of a new era for Miami. It positioned the city on the global stage as a place where the fantastic and the real are part of everyday life, where nature and the metropolis merge into one—a "magic city" where everything is possible.

Rosario Marquardt: The impact of this initial image was profound and left a lasting impression. Miami's sense of limitless potential became a powerful source of inspiration for us, shaping our work and creative journey in the city.

Kevin: When did you begin contributing to this magical city with your public art and architecture projects?

Roberto: Despite not having any official commissions at the time, the inspirational force of Miami compelled us to think and draw experimental projects. Some of our early ideas included *The Star of Miami*, a watermark or aerial monument and public park on Biscayne Bay, Little Guatemala, a neighborhood for undocumented migrant workers in Homestead following Hurricane Andrew, and the *M*. The *M* was our first built experiment, a 45-foot-tall gift to the city to celebrate Miami's Centennial in 1996.

Kevin: And this work is still standing in downtown Miami!

Rosario: Yes, the *M* stands where Julia Tuttle's home, the de-facto co-founder of Miami, once stood. It is not only an emblem of the city, but also an instant landmark and a source of wonder in the ongoing collective invention of Miami. We see it as a monument and as an urban toy and simultaneously participates in the tradition of the colossal in America.

Kevin: And it's a functional artwork because it has a clock!

Roberto: Yessss! The *M* is functional and conceptually emotional at once! The amazing aspect of the *M*, is that it is both real and imaginary. It's a letter of the alphabet and a block letter that we all played with as kids, inviting each and everyone to express words and meaning, and imagine the story of Miami to come. It's an homage to the city that we fell in love with.



Roberto Behar & Rosario Marquardt, *The Star of Miami*, 1997

CONVERSATIONS & ROBERTO BEHAR

ROSARIO MARQUARDT

Photos courtesy of R&R Studios

MAKING MIAMI

The *M*, somehow closes the first chapter of the history of public art in Miami. Projects like *Surrounded Islands*, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen's *Dropped Bowl with Scattered Slices and Peels*, *The Miami Line* by Rockne Krebs, and, of course, the collaboration in downtown of Isamu Noguchi and Roberto Burle Marx, the Main Branch of the Miami-Dade Public Library project by Ed Ruscha, and Robert Irwin's landscape project for MIA were part of a remarkable first wave of architectural public art projects for Miami.

Rosario: We should mention, that the *M* was a lucky project, gathering around, amazing supporters like Vivian Rodriguez Director of Miami-Dade Art in Public Places at the time, Joseph and Betty Fleming, and art and architecture historian Vincent Scully. Without them and many others the project would not have been...

Roberto: The second chapter of Miami's public art history began in 1998-1999 when Craig Robins invited DPZ to create a master plan for the Miami Design District. He also entrusted us with developing a public art vision plan for the area, which included strategically placed art projects.

Kevin: *The Living Room* project in a way is like a macro maquette for what the Design District eventually became.

Rosario: Yes, our initial project in the Design District involved creating an Open-Air Museum on the Buick Building. Inspired by the vibrant wall paintings in Little Haiti, we incorporated two large oval portraits—Mackandal and La Malinche—and two super-sized images that appeared to "excavate" the building, revealing a two-room domestic scene inside. We kind of turned the building inside-out.

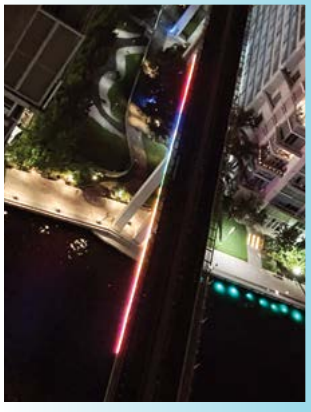
Kevin: And these were on the exterior of the building on North East Second Avenue and 39th Street and in the back of the building?

...where nature and the metropolis merge into one — a "magic city" where

Roberto: Exactly. Craig Robins, having seen the impact of the *M*, invited us to work on the Buick Building project. This project was our first "Open Home" and served as a precursor to *The Living Room*, a 45-foot-tall fragment of a home turned inside out. *The Living Room* opened a private building and gifted the city a public space. We saw the project as a mirage where life unfolds, appearing alternately as a ruin or an unfinished home.

Rosario: Yes. a kind of theater of everyday life! *The Living Room* embodied the concept of Miami as an open city. It symbolized the city as home and was a standout attraction during the first edition of Art Basel in 2002.

Roberto: Yes! it got global attention, reinforcing Miami's image as a place where anything is possible.



Rockne Krebs, *The Miami Line*, 1984

Photo courtesy of Katerina Llanes



Roberto Behar & Rosario Marquardt, *KIDS!*, 2003

Photo courtesy of Oriol Tarridas

Kevin: And what about *KIDS!*, your project at DASH (Design and Architecture Senior High)?

Rosario: *The Living Room* leads to *KIDS!* at DASH, a project dear to us and supported by Craig Robins and Stacy Mancuso, the School Director at the time. We envision *KIDS!* as a novel form of commemoration, elevating teens over the cityscape to celebrate the possibilities of the future....

Roberto: Almost simultaneously, we had two significant exhibitions at Locust Projects curated by the Locust founders Westen Charles. COOPER and Elizabeth Withstandley and the Miami Art Museum (now PAMM) curated by Peter Boswell, that furthered our fascination with the invention of dreamscapes in which the fantastical becomes real.

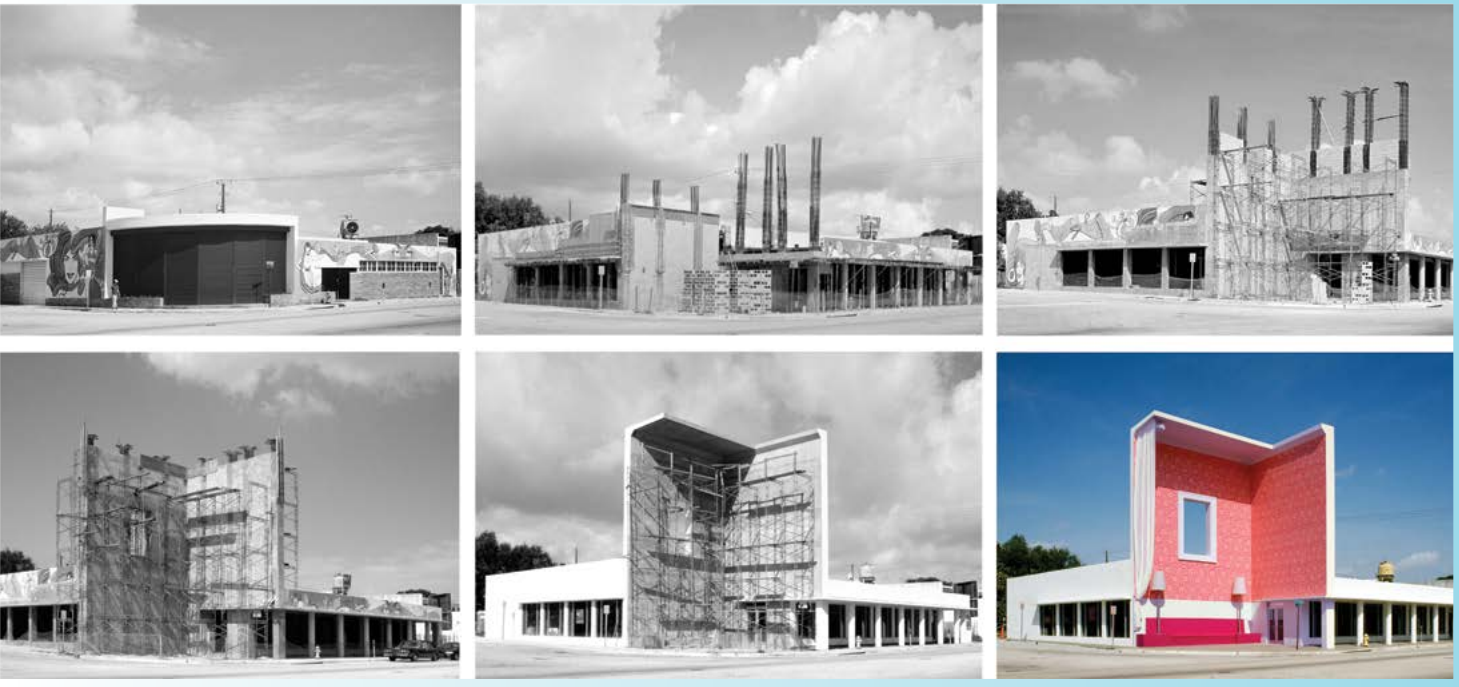
Rosario: Collectively, these early Miami projects become the foundation of our work. We have taken these experimental concepts born in Miami across the country from Seattle, and Denver to San Juan, Puerto Rico and most recently with *The Home We Share* to Princeton University to demonstrate that the imaginary could be real.

Kevin: Fantastic! I think I want to end by saying we hope to see *The Living Room* 2.0

Roberto: Absolutely! We can't wait to create another *The Living Room*.

Rosario: Indeed, a new *The Living Room* is on the horizon, it will happen soon. Stay tuned for updates!

everything is possible.metropolis merge into one —a "magic city" where everything is possible.



Roberto Behar & Rosario Marquardt, *The Construction of the Living Room*, 2001



Roberto Behar & Rosario Marquardt, *M* under construction, 1996



Roberto Behar & Rosario Marquardt
Roberto measuring time
at the *M*, 1996



Roberto Behar & Rosario Marquardt,
Mackandal Portrait, Open Air Museum, 1999

JEN STARK

WE HIT THE GROUND AND DIDN'T STOP RUNNING



Jen Stark, *Circle*, 2007



Left: Manny Prieres, *it's Time to Go Up*, 2014
Right: Manny Prieres, *The Hidden*, 2014

MANNY PRIERES

Manny Prieres: I was thinking about the first time we ever met, Mau [Mauricio Abascal] introduced us [probably around 2005]. You just graduated from college (MICA) and we were outside of Brook Dorsch and Fred Snitzer Gallery. You mentioned that you just graduated and were working and saving money so you could go full-on into your art practice. And I know that that's what you did for a couple of years.

Jen Stark: Wow that's amazing you remember that conversation.

Manny: And then, since the art scene was so small we just started seeing each other a lot more. And then eventually we started sharing a studio space together, which was in downtown.

Jen: Right! Yeah. That was around 2007. It was right next to New World and we shared it with a bunch of other artists: John Peck was in there, the TM Sisters, Pres Rodriguez...

Manny: Mike Del Marmol and Alex Burnard (AKA Burnie). But do you remember how crazy that was? I think we were both like, each person was paying \$150 or something a month. It was wild.

Jen: I loved that studio and moment in time. A blast from the past. Should we talk about life before Art Basel?

Manny: I first opened my artist-run space, Box, in '96 and it ran until we closed it in 2004. I founded it with Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova and Jose Reyes. And then the last show we had was the FriendsWithYou show [with Sam Borkson and Arturo Sandoval III] in 2004. We ran this art space with our own money and eventually wanted to start concentrating on our own practices towards the end.

We got our start showcasing Miami artists. About a year into it, Locust Projects started and we became friends with them. Then The House happened with Bhakti Baxter, Daniel Arsham, Tao Rey, and Martin Oppel. They created an incredible artist-run space and they took it to the next level because they had a lot of people that were championing them. Curators started paying attention...they were able to get a write-up in *The New York Times*. Then Art Basel came to Miami and there were a lot more eyes in the art scene here. And it's wild because if you go to that same area where The House was located, it's just like a huge condo.

Jen: Remember when they tore it down? That beautiful old historic Miami house off Biscayne.

Manny: That's what I'm saying. When it comes to storytelling, you could make a movie of this and it could be engaging. It was such an interesting time! These artists were in the perfect moment to create what they did. Miami's always been a weird place. You don't have the institutions, you don't have the universities. But I feel that that's what makes it interesting.

And you know what? Jen, I feel like your language is very universal. In your artwork, I see elements of growing up in Miami and then you're able to give it your point of view, you know? And that's what I love about Miami.

Photos courtesy of Jen Stark and Manny Prieres

FriendsWithYou started off in Miami. I met Sam first when he was still going to school in Orlando. I think he might have been 19 years old. Someone told him “Manny runs one of the best art spaces in Miami.” And I was like “No, no. It's just a studio.” And of course, 19-year-old Sam said “Look at my sketchbook. You got to give me a show.” And I'm like, “Yo, I just met you.” It was so funny. I was like, dude, this guy's so interesting and ambitious. And then a couple of years later, I find out he moved to Miami and started this new collaboration with Tury.

Jen: Before I knew them well, Mau brought me their sticker pack. I'm like “FriendsWithYou...WTF is this? This is the coolest thing ever. Like, holy moly, these people are doing amazing stuff”. Then I got to know them really well and we were this rag-tag artist crew during a wild moment in Miami. Then in 2012, we all moved out to LA together.

Manny: Yes, and I moved to LA in 2013 in February. By that time all of us were on our own good paths. We were doing our thing.

Jen: At the beginning, there was just this amazing, magical energy in Miami. It was a great place to get a start as an emerging artist. The community kind of just embraced us. And we just hit the ground and we haven't stopped. We paved our own paths.

Manny: Miami's such an interesting place. And I know that it's still a big part of you.

Jen: It's one of the most unique & beautiful places in the world, my family is still there. I'm 3rd generation Miamian and am so proud that I grew up there. I will always come back, no matter where I may live in the world.

Manny: We love you here, you know that, right?

Jen: Thank you so much. I love ya'll too. I think we can leave it at that, right?

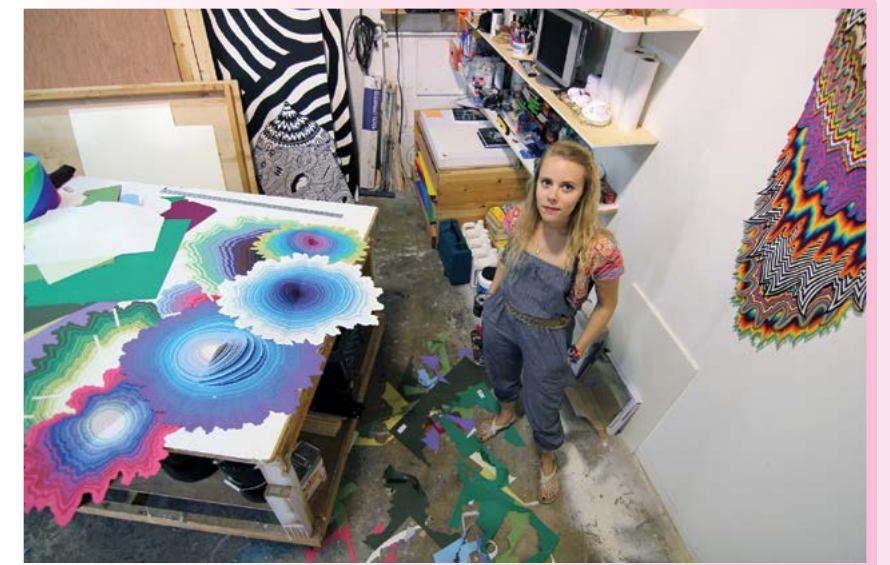
Manny: Love it. Cool. Cool. Boom.



Jen Stark standing in front of *Distant Dimension*, her mural at the Sagamore Hotel in 2008.



Jen Stark, *Burst*, 2007



I'm 3rd generation Miamian and am so proud that I grew up there.
I will always come back, no matter where I may live in the world.



MARIE
VICKLES

Photo courtesy of
Passion Ward



Photo courtesy of
Max Pierre

MAX
PIERRETHE SPIRIT AND SOUL
OF AE DISTRICT

Arrive Miami

Photos courtesy of Max Pierre

Max: I am originally from Haiti. I was actually born in Haiti. But at the age of three, I moved to New York and basically was raised in New York.

Marie: What were some of your first experiences in the Design District? Like what introduced you to Design District as it existed back in 2001?

Max: Well, the truth is, my first real experiences in Miami were really on the beach. I started out in nightlife and hospitality. I think what ultimately got me to the Design District was my first business that I opened on the beach. I opened up the first lifestyle retail store in Miami. We got so much recognition, like *GQ* and *Details* magazine. We were named one of the best retail stores in the United States. *L'uomo Vogue* named us one of the best men's retail stores in the world.

Marie: Nice. What was the name of that store?

Max: Arrive Miami. We were way ahead of our time. I opened that store in 2005. We were the first to bring Y3 to Miami, Vivian Westwood, Alexander McQueen, Martin Margiela... Anyway, I heard Craig Robins was a fan, we had a couple of people in common.. When I decided to close the store they reached out to me and asked if I would be interested in opening something in the Design District. That's what really sort of started my journey. Once I met Craig and I undertood his vision, I knew I wanted to contribute to it. I felt like the Design District was the future.

Max: My first activation was Basel 2008 in the Design District.

Marie: I'm going to call it a gallery. What would you call it?

Max: I coined it a concept gallery and I called it AE District. My whole goal was to merge this idea of art and entertainment. Because everything at that time just felt like the same traditional sort of approach to art. I wanted to create a space that was multidisciplinary and accessible, but at the same time sort of was aspirational. There was nothing like it in Miami. My first true exhibition was \$1 million worth of art, but I had these little vignettes, which felt like living rooms in the space. It was big space, 5,000 square feet. So you didn't feel like, "Oh, I can't touch anything. I'm not wanted here." That was important to me. Coming from a retail space and doing all these amazing artists' collaborations on sneakers and stuff like that, it was a natural evolution, and I wanted to have this space which in essence was a canvas to just show a different perspective that Miami didn't see enough of. So that was the spirit of AE district.

Marie: I remember you all were definitely doing something that did not exist here in Miami at that time. Even in some ways, there still isn't anything like AE exactly. So, looking back on AE District what are some of the most memorable experiences, events, and things that happened in that time while you were running that concept gallery?

Max: So many. I think the first activation I did, I thought Craig was going to kick me out ASAP! I literally got the keys and before renovations or anything, I was like, "Oh." Basel was around the corner and I reached out to my friend who worked at Converse, and he had this traveling retrospective of punk culture. Right? I was a brother who takes on a 5,000-square-foot gallery space with this whole new idea. Like, it's perfect. Let me do punk.

Marie: If that's not punk rock, I don't know what is!

Max: It was amazing. Honestly. It was all converse, they made it happen. What was the name of the show? *Kill Your Idols*.

Marie: I remember that.

Max: Do you remember that?

Marie: Yes. I didn't know that was you actually!

Max: Yes. That was the launch of my space. We literally were three days of just uncut punk culture. All the old vintage posters, and books. I mean, rock bands, punk bands performing every night. I mean, I literally was, "Yo, where are these kids coming from?" I didn't even realize there was such a strong punk culture in Florida.



Marie: You sent out the Bat Signal.

Max: Oh my God. It was incredible. I'm talking about moshing kids, busting their heads open.

Craig's team came one night and I was thinking, "Oh my God, I'm in trouble." Kids flooded into the streets and they were saying, "This is amazing. Max." All I could say was "Yes!" Obviously, that was shocking to me. Then I think after that, the first show that I really, truly did after building the space, I brought Simon Birch to the US and literally, that year, he was the Louis Vuitton Artist of the Year. We had some friends in common, so I was able to bring that show in, it was literally like \$1 million dollars worth of art. I wanted to show them the range that I wanted to play with, and everyone loved that show. The least expensive piece was 30 grand. ASAP Rocky's first Miami performance was at AE District with Jonathan Manion's hip-hop retrospective photo exhibition with Reebok. That was crazy.

I did a solo show with Anthony Mandler. He's a film director now. At the time, he was doing all of Rihanna's videos, and that was literally the launch of Soho House. We did that - it was incredible. My favorite and most memorable exhibition I think was Patrick Farrell. That was the most touching exhibition for so many reasons. Obviously, I'm Haitian. Then a Pulitzer prize-winning photographer, basically saying his work isn't really truly considered art. I said, "No, it's not true," and challenging that, and also seeing the full picture of what really happened with Hurricane Ike and the earthquake. He was on the ground documenting. Obviously whatever he shoots, if it's too harsh, it will never make the newspaper. But having all of his images and being able to curate the experience was nerve-wracking because I didn't know how people would react to it. But I wanted to really tell a full story and it was beautiful. People cried, people hugged, people laughed, smiled. I try to also show that there's strength and there's a future that's being carved out although we've gone through so much hardship, the resiliency. I mean, it was just an incredible show. So that's some of the ones that I always think back to when I think about AE District, and not to mention all the amazing events, plays. It was fun. It was a really great moment. I love that space and I feel like we contributed a lot to Miami as a whole. It was about the moment and the people that we were actually experiencing that moment with. For instance, I learned about people who weren't even present. It doesn't feel like a lifetime ago, but when you think about it from a perspective of media and just technology, I guess it really was a long time ago, huh?

Marie: Yes. There are chronological years and then media years. How media has changed adds a bunch of years to it - or at least distance. So as the years went on how did Art Basel impact what AE was doing?

Max: I think for me it was more of a cultural approach. So, yes, it impacted it because you had amazing people in town, you had amazing brands in town. It's a 5,000-square-foot space. I've never been one to sort of be a one-trick pony or just do status quo. Because that's the other thing. I feel like the spirit of that space was to really introduce different ideas. So Basel is Basel. Right? I think obviously it affected me in a great way. I did this exhibition called *Music Inspires*. It's this idea of how much music plays a part in all creative mediums, right? There were film directors and fashion designers and what else? I don't remember. I think it was three different mediums, three different creatives, and how music played a role in their work. That's a very non-traditional activation when you think about Art Basel. Right? For me, that was a different perspective. But Basel has always been great.

Marie: Oh, okay. Yes.

Max: Keep in mind, there weren't any brothers in the scene like that. When I say brothers, I'm talking about like hip hop artists, right? So this is before Kanye did the album cover with Takashi Murakami. Murakami was coming and hanging out during Basel at my retail store. Pharrell wasn't represented by Emmanuel. I literally remember when Pharrell started hanging out with Emmanuel, and Kanye started tapping into the art community. I remember Swizz Beatz was starting to paint, and I was already in that space so it was amazing to start to see things open up and artists, and when I say artists I'm talking about musicians, start to really collaborate with visual artists.

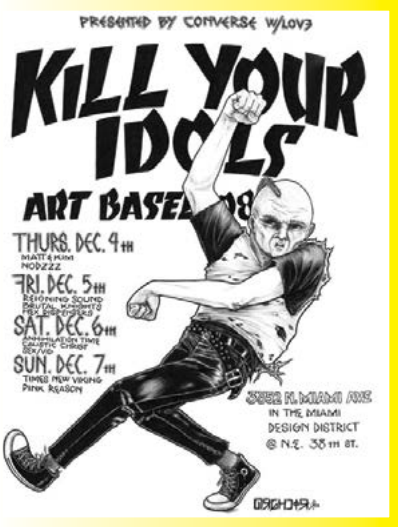
Marie: What does that experience, that time of your life mean to you when you look back on it?

Max: You know what? When I look back, I am really happy because when I was living it and I approached it with such integrity. Even when we were struggling, I felt like I always wanted to be an ally to Craig's vision. Although I approach it from more of a cultural standpoint, I felt like he appreciated what I brought to the Design District, It feels good to be able to reach out to him and say, "Hey, I have this idea and I want to do this thing," and his response is, "Let's do it."

Marie: You laid a good foundation.

Max: Yes. We paved the way and we did our thing and then it feels good to see the next generation be engaged and be involved and contribute as well.

Marie: Thank you so much for sharing your story, your history, the work you did, these memories.



NATALIA BENEDETTI

GIVING ADVICE TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Natalia Benedetti: How are you? Can you hear me?

Adler Guerrier: Yep, I can hear you. I'm good. As good as one can be.

Natalia: I was looking today at my old resumes from 2000 and then you shared the screenshot of your old resume, and I'm impressed by how much we did. There's so much I don't remember, but we did quite a bit. We were a busy bunch, not just the two of us, but everybody who was around. There was quite a lot going on!

Adler: For sure. There was a lot to do.

Natalia: But even before The House too, there was a lot going on.

Adler: The House happened in 2001. I had in mind 2003, it began right in the beginning. That is right after we graduated.

Natalia: This would be something to be confirmed with The House guys, but I have a memory of Bhakti being young and really fascinated by what was going on with the Studio 10o3 and the Green Door Gallery. I wonder if The House project was somehow inspired by all that was happening around us at New World. One would have to ask them if this was the case.

Adler: That's a fair assumption to make because it's in the artists' tradition, where the desire to make and share, to be in the flow of art, and not just be in an insular studio practice, but one that opens up a little bit. That's a fair assumption to make because 10o3 and Green Door were examples. There was a kind of boldness as well. We're done with school in 2000, in May, by that December, we're showing at MOCA, in *Travels in Hyperreality*.

Natalia: That was crazy!

Adler: I kept forgetting the date for that, 2000, and not 2001..

Natalia: Wasn't the first Miami Art Basel in 2000 as well?

Adler: It was supposed to be 2000, but it was canceled. I'm sorry, it was supposed to be 2001. It was canceled because of September 11.

Natalia: It's funny how our memories get so distorted.

Adler: Very distorted.



Natalia Benedetti,
New Approach, 2000

Photos courtesy of Adler Guerrier and Natalia Benedetti





Natalia: I didn't document much about the shows at the Green Door Gallery, didn't take any pictures or put the shows on my resume. Nevertheless, I have strong emotions when I remember those moments. It was exciting and so fun to have such a place. With the Studio 10o3, I also don't have very much documented, but I remember having the certainty that we were accomplishing something deep. I felt really proud of the work I showed there.

Adler: Yep!

Adler: I think in a way, a few things were happening, in terms of how we worked. It's interesting, works were made for exhibitions. And not for much more. Thinking about how Basel changed the scene, while I looked for works to illustrate what I was doing then, I found there were all these things—sketches, small compositions, photos-- I was doing very loose and speculative and observational and kind of note-taking. But they didn't amount to being artworks. They were soft in focus- and they - even seemed unsure as to what was the point or what was the focus in the essence of these images. It's interesting. I like it, to tell you the truth. I know it doesn't really communicate well to another person.

Natalia: Perhaps it was just the beginning of the way you work now.

Adler: For sure. At that point, we're only two years out of art school, out of undergrad. We didn't go directly to a grad program that would've enforced a studio practice structure or demand that studio practice explorations must end in art objects. That's what that education is for in essence. It forces people to make stuff along the stated thesis and lines of inquiry. But when you're working at home, on your own terms, it doesn't always amount to making a statement or finished pieces. You don't have to make a statement. There are no professors, there are no grades involved, there's none of those pressures. My timeline for making art was much longer. The work that came out of this period of time took longer to make, because I took my time. The thinking process was much longer and unhurried. Maybe I'm better for it.



Green Door Gallery
circa 2000

Natalia: Were you thinking of going to grad school? was that even an option? did you consider it?

Adler: I considered a little bit in 2000, 2001. Once Kathleen became pregnant, I didn't think about it anymore.

Natalia: I just thought of something. I think the reason why I didn't document the Green Door Gallery shows, is because I was very much focused on grad school. Everything I did those last couple of years at New World was totally focused on developing something that would get me into grad school. For that reason, I didn't really pay attention to these other very meaningful shows.



Adler: How many times did you apply? Once?

Natalia: Yeah, only once, and I got rejected from every place. I was very upset. But in retrospect, we did a kind of grad school equivalent those years, by working and showing in the Miami art scene.

Adler: if we had gone to the right graduate program, that would have been very different. In the right graduate program, the two years would've been a pressure cooker that forced us to think and read and study and get us to that point of knowing one is interested in these subjects. And we would just go and work along these lines. But because we didn't go through the pressure cooker, we took our time to find the subjects of our art practice. Actually, I may have been and probably still am too idealistic and bohemian in my artistic values. I just want to make art. That is clear.

Natalia: That's why I like you so much!

Adler: Did I want to sell art? I can't really say that was a very big motivation early on. I wanted to show art in the biggest places, and I was lucky. Not only, I was in the group shows MOCA, but Miami Art Museum gave me that show, and I was in *Freestyle* at the Studio Museum in Harlem. I was already lucky that I am showing my artwork in big places. That's the part that I loved. Because I didn't live in New York, it also meant that there were opportunities that I missed.

Nevertheless, living in Miami was to my liking, that's the rhythm that I liked. I didn't want to be in New York with all the pressure to see all the artworks that I like and find balance in making a living, a studio practice, and family life. I wanted to take my time to make artwork, and Miami gave me that. On any given day when Kathleen went to work, and Ellington and I would walk around the yard, walk to the library, and then back home. I'll take a few pictures between the library and the house and the yard. I would read whatever art stuff that comes through, either through newsletters of places we follow or an art magazine or a recent catalogue from an exhibition.

That was the practice in a way. The practice was as loose as that structure. That was my structure, it was a recipe for disaster financially, but it was also a recipe for low stress, thinking and play. I got easy access to a life that I wanted where art was well integrated within it. The advice I'll give my younger self is that life is unsustainable without money, so make a little more money!

Natalia: But if you had said that, then you would have ruined the whole thing.

Adler: Not necessarily. If I traveled back in time, I think there's a way that I can convince myself that making some money in that realm would not be too out of step. If someone else had told me this, I probably would not accept it. The other thing about grad school is that if you go to the right graduate program, your professors are very good and these are people whose advice you'll actually listen to. One problem in those early years was that I didn't really have access to people to give me advice. We had each other, colleagues at our same level but we didn't really have access to people who were five to ten years ahead of us who could give us pointers as to how to navigate our own practice and the world. I think that's the advice I would travel back in time to tell myself--keep everything as is but find a way to make a little more money because just making a little more money would've given me - more opportunities and the hard time would have been more manageable.

...life is unsustainable without money,

so make a little more money!

Natalia: We had some people that we could have asked for advice. Some good friends and teachers, but they had their own thing going on.

Adler: It's difficult actually. It's not that I wasn't open to it, but it was also the kind of thing, a mentor-like relationship, where asking this type of advice requires you to be close, and to reveal aspects of your own life, and trust that the advice given is right for your professional and personal life.

Natalia: By the way, you recently mentioned your connection with Janine Antoni, who was one of my idols at the time. Wouldn't she have been an amazing mentor?

Adler: She's definitely that type of person.

Natalia: I was just remembering meeting Teresita Fernandez in Rome in 1997. She was very generous and kind, and I think she would have been willing to offer guidance and play such a role for me. But I was too proud to ask and never followed up. It was also fitting that she had moved away from Miami. In those days, I sometimes got the sense that the more established local artists were not immediately able to trust us. Because we were suddenly appearing in the art scene, without much experience, but getting a lot of opportunities. Whether it was true or not, this feeling sometimes made it difficult for me to open up to the more experienced artists.

Adler: All these things are still with me, but I know how to manage all of them now. When I first graduated, I did not. I didn't know who or how to ask. What I did know is how to emulate the art historical arc of what it meant to be an artist, that is you make your artwork, try to get it out there, and make the best work within your circumstance. I was going to say, in 2005, you created a show at New World Gallery, *Brought Together Again*, and I was in that.

Natalia: I loved curating that show so much.

Adler: You did?

Natalia: Yes! I put so much love into it. And I was proud because I was able to do it how I wanted, without compromise.

Adler: Was Maggie [Cuesta] already the Dean or Louise Romeo was still the Dean?

Natalia: I think it was Louise. She trusted me so much and that might be the only way I could end up with so much freedom.

Adler: *Brought Together Again* ...I don't remember what I showed.



Kevin Arrow, *I Love My Momma Check-in*, 2001



Natalia Benedetti, *Untitled (DJ Nasty)*, 1999

Natalia: I also don't remember what you showed specifically. But I remember enjoying the process very much and working hard to give everyone a good experience. I curated one other show at World Class Boxing.

Adler: Oh, that same year.

Natalia: It was in 2007. The show featured works from Dennis and Debra Scholl's collection. It was called *Killers and Their Hiding Places*. I believe the name for the show came out from our conversation about a movie.

Adler: There is a Stanley Kubrick movie called *The Killing*.

Natalia: Curating is a lot of fun.

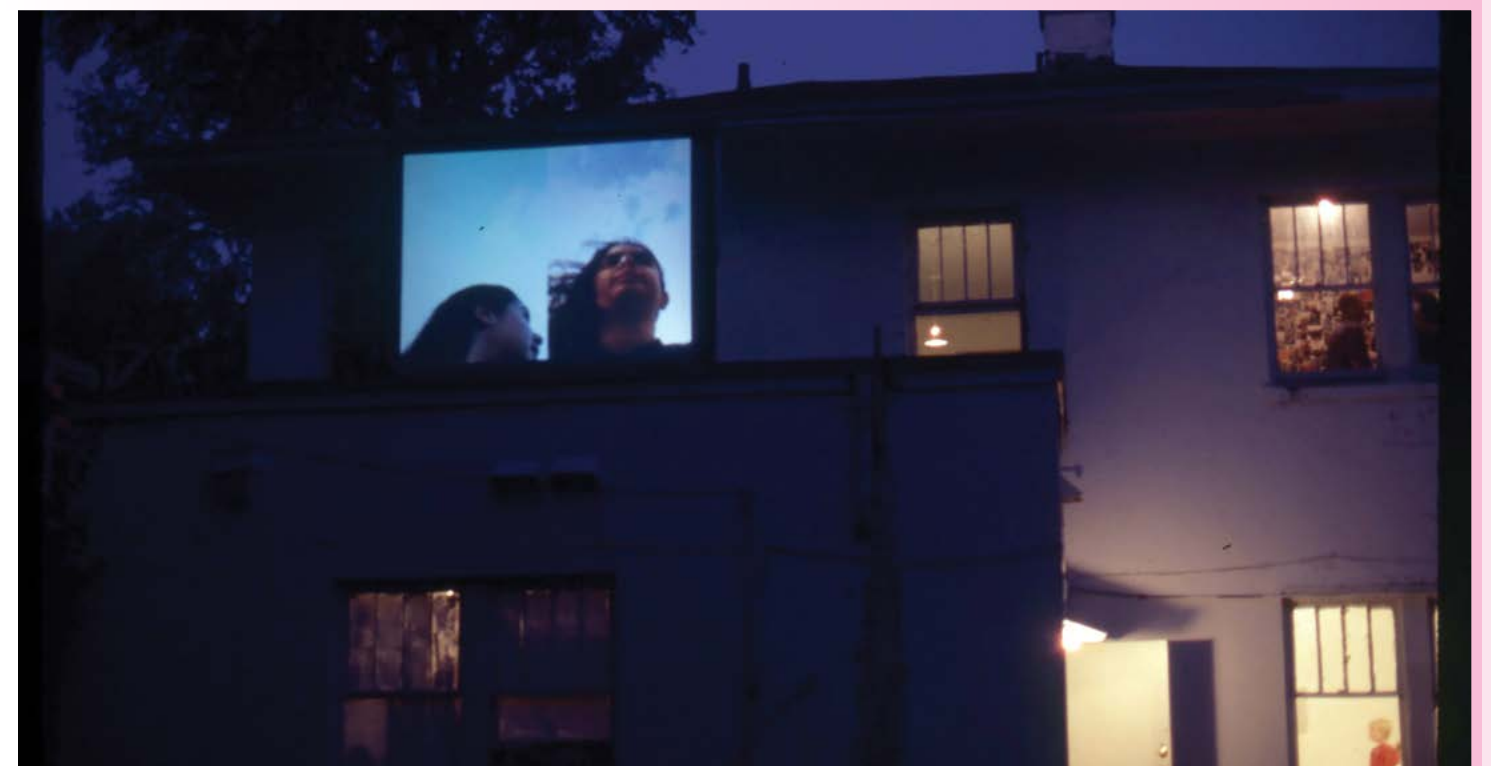
Adler: Curating, I like it, as well.



Natalia Benedetti and Jason Hedges, *Dragged*, 1999

I just want to make art. That is clear.

Natalia Benedetti, *Roll*, 2001 at The House





Natalia Benedetti,
Untitled (DJ Nasty), 1999

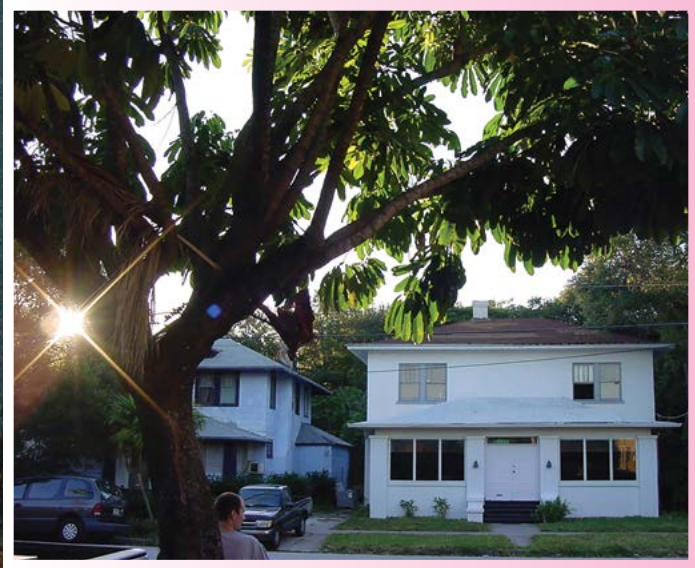


DuPont Plaza Hotel circa 2004



Natalia Benedetti and Rafael Benedetti,
 $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8} + \frac{1}{16} + \frac{1}{32} + \dots = 1$,
1999

Studio 10o3 circa 2000



The House circa 2001



Adler Guerrier, Marisol
Gimenez and Natalia
Benedetti, *Critical
Platforms*, 2000

MARIO CADER-FRECH

Fe Cu Op:
GOING OUT
ON A LIMB



CONVERSATIONS

CHRISTIAN CURIEL

Mario Cader-Frech: Hello, Chris! Today, I have the pleasure of conversing with Chris Curiel, one of the co-founders of Fe Cu Op, which stands for Ferguson, Curiel, and Opalka. These three artists founded the Miami-based artist collective that conducts creative social experiments directly manipulating human behavior. The collective was established in 1997. My name is Mario Cader-Frech, I am a Miami-based contemporary art collector and philanthropist.

Chris, Fe Cu Op had several exhibits in the Design District. For example, in 2003, you exhibited *Going Out On a Limb*, a performance sculpture installation. Why this intersection of social experience and art?

Christian Curiel: First of all, each one of us in the group is an individual artist in our own right. At the time of creating *Going Out On a Limb*, we were building a strong bond as friends and as a creative group. We had already been collaborating on paintings together. We decided to see if our individual backgrounds and artistic practices together could create something new outside of ourselves. It was a moment when we felt the Miami art scene was exploding, and it was doing many of these artistic pop-ups. So, we decided to try and see what we could do as a collaborative, and organically, it really gelled. It was really about a special moment of putting our individual personalities aside or finding a way that they could interact.

Mario: So, please describe the exhibit. I was there and was one of the performers on the top floor. I remember the audience entering through a mysterious, long corridor into a big, sterile white room with low ceilings. It may have felt suffocating to some. There were limbs – legs, hanging from the ceiling. Why did you create this suspense, and what were you trying to achieve in terms of audience interaction with feet and legs? Also, tell us what was happening above, although I was there.

Chris: The concept for the installation originated at a late-night meeting on a Wynwood warehouse rooftop before Wynwood's transformation as we know it today. We brainstormed what kind of experience we wanted to create to challenge the viewer. This became *Going Out On a Limb*, a metaphor for the Miami art scene at that moment. At that time, Art Basel decided to host the art fair shortly after September 11th, and we decided to go all out. The architectural decision was a reaction to the large open space we wanted to control and make more manageable and confined for the desired experience. The long hallway was inspired by moments from 80s and early 90s movies, like Kubrick films, or when E.T. got captured, creating a sense of never-ending hallways. The unlit hallway ended with a bright light, symbolizing the epiphany at the final moment. The feet and legs hanging from the ceiling were a surrealistic idea we wanted to bring to life – we intentionally separated the viewer from the performer. It was all about taking risks and creating a unique experience.

Photos courtesy of Fe Cu Op

MAKING MIAMI

Mario: It was indeed.

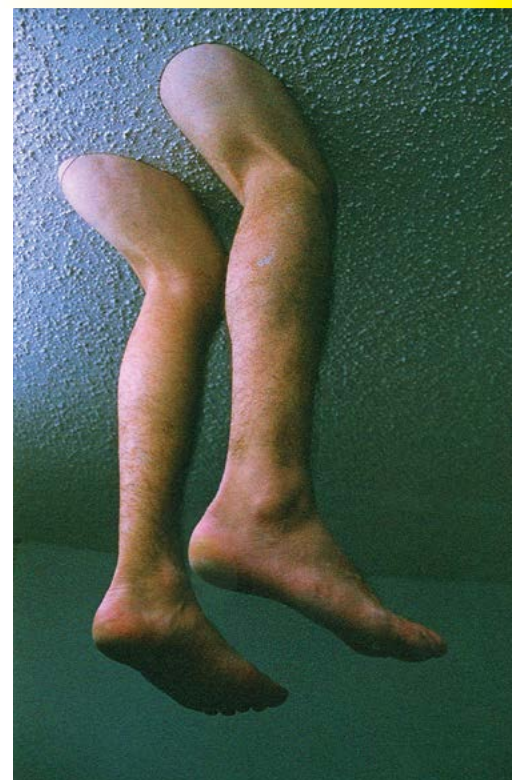
Chris: Yes, people have strong reactions to feet, they either love feet or hate them. And that's where the social experiment comes into our installation – how is the viewer going to react to this image, this forced experience? It was interesting to observe the viewers' and performers' reactions – some touched the feet and legs, while the performers above reacted. As a group, we get satisfaction by recreating how people view one another and interact with each other.

Mario: What was happening above? People were sitting on a false low ceiling with their feet inserted into orifices going down into the public. I remember sitting on top, and there was Sandra and Brandon near me. Can you remind us of the conversations that were going on up there?

Chris: What made this exhibition particularly intriguing and exhilarating was our uncertainty about its outcome. Surprisingly, it evolved into two distinct experiences. The first was the initial encounter where viewers confronted the eerie sight of disembodied human feet suspended from the office-like popcorn ceiling at the end of the hallway. The second involved the performers on top, whom we entrusted to sit with their legs hanging. To achieve this, we enlisted individuals we trusted – our close friends and acquaintances – to ascend ladders onto the scaffolding structure we had constructed. Admittedly, it involved some risky maneuvers (I'll spare the details). Our aim was to convey that this was a work in progress, a developing performance that evolved throughout the night and day, imbued with improvisational vibes. It transformed into a genuine happening, creating an immersive experience, particularly for those closer to us. The third component encompassed all these elements, complemented by photographic documentation of the sitters. This journey became the ignition of our artistic process and the untapped creative potential within our collaborative team. It was a discovery of our artistic process and our collaborative potential.

Mario: This took place in 2003, and I noticed Fe Cu Op participated in other exhibits in the Design District during that time. In 2008, you were at the Yard at Casa Lin, and in 2015, you participated in *100+ Degrees in the Shade*. Was this the beginning, middle, or end of the intersection between the young, up-and-coming art scene in Miami and this vision by Craig Robins, which eventually became what we see today? Where were you in that timeline?

Chris: I'd also like to mention our installation at Locust Projects, *Antenna*, in 2019. To answer your question, *Going Out On a Limb* was the start of it all for us. The title of the exhibition says it all – we put it all out there. We decided to go out on a limb and create the most introspective experience we could imagine. We had to learn from scratch and collaborate closely. Thankfully, we had knowledgeable help from my family who work in construction. So, it was definitely the beginning for us as a collaborative, and it was an eye-opening experience we hope to continue.



Mario: The exhibit took place at the Buena Vista building in the Design District. Was there something special about that building that attracted you to exhibit there? How did you end up in that particular building?

Chris: At that time, the Design District had many vacant spaces. I think during Craig Robins' development, there was uncertainty about how it would unfold. We were working closely with Nina Arias.

Mario: Nina was the curator for this exhibit, right?

Chris: Yes, Nina secured that space for us through her connections, possibly with Craig. At the time, we were working with Rocket Projects Gallery, where Nina was a co-owner or co-director. She found us that project and provided support to make it happen.

Mario: So you would safely say that non-profit or artist-run art spaces came to the Design District because of what you mentioned that there were a lot of empty buildings and Craig was very amicable and willing to lend them to activate it and to lend a hand to the young.

Chris: Yes, I believe so. There were other artist groups, like The House artists and Placemaker Gallery.

Mario: Right.

Chris: They had a space right next to where we set up our temporary installation. Moreover, I'm aware that other artists were also using that building. I believe Naomi Fisher and Hernan Bas were initiating something there as well.

In that context, Craig was very open to activating these vacant spaces. I think this played a significant role in attracting people to consider investing in those properties. In my experience, it's often art that kick-starts spaces like that. It's a substantial reason why the Miami Design District has the distinctive visual and performative character it has today.

Mario: Wonderful. You were catalysts.

Chris: Yes, I believe so, and I'm proud of it.

Mario: We've exceeded our allotted time, but this has been a fascinating conversation. Thank you for your time.

Chris: Thank you.

CRAIG ROBINS

THE DNA OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

CONVERSATIONS



View of Buena Vista building atrium during Art and Design Night, 2010¹

KAREN GRIMSON

MAKING MIAMI

Karen Grimson: I listened to an oral history recording in which you claim that owning a space for an art studio was the real reason behind your involvement with the real estate business,¹ is that right?

Craig Robins: Yes. I was in law school at the time, studying for the Bar and getting ready to graduate. I wasn't sure whether I wanted to go into real estate, which seemed very boring, or become an art dealer, which seemed like an impractical thing to do in Miami. I was torn. So I started looking for an art studio where I could invite artists to come paint, and sort of help manage them and collect them. My father introduced me to Tony Goldman, who happened to have a building on 5th. and Washington, which had a perfect space for an art studio on the second floor, with north-facing windows and natural light. I asked Tony if he would sell me the space and he said, "no, I can't sell you the studio, but you could buy a 50% interest in this and another building for \$20,000."

I looked at him and I said, "if I give you all that cash, can I have the studio for free?" We shook hands and went into business, and that's how I went into real estate. One of my first tenants there was Keith Haring, who did a variation of a pop shop there called *Wham Bam*.

Karen: When was the first time you offered a space for an artist to work in?

Craig: It must have been Carlos Alfonzo in Miami Beach for years. There was also Robert Llimos from Spain, and José Bedia. When we did Española Way, we had Kenny Scharf, the architect Carlos Zapata, Roberto Juarez. We had like 40 or 50 studios in Española Way that we subsidized for artists. But it wasn't just about having artists' studios, we also included public art in everything we did. The first creative director for our company was the Spanish artist Antoni Miralda, who designed the original logo for Dacra. So my business was always, in many different ways, integrated with art.

Karen: And still is, as the Dacra offices became an exhibition space for your personal collection, after a complete architectural re-vamp by Terry Riley, which completely transformed the workspace into a gallery setting.

Craig: Right. Terry was a great friend.

Karen: I'm interested in the idea of the artist studio as a site for the emergence of friendships. What was your relationship with Carlos Alfonzo like, back then?



Antoni Miralda, Logo for Dacra, 1992.



Carlos Alfonzo, Artist and the Genie, 1990. Craig Robins Collection

¹ "A Video Conversation with Visionary Craig Robins" in *Artspeak*, a project of Florida International University, available at

Craig: I had a lot more time then, so when there was nothing to do, I would go and sit in the studio and watch Carlos paint. I was more involved in the artist's career: sometimes I would help them sell art, but I mostly stayed out of the selling part. I more collected their work, got them supplies, traded free space for art. And our friendship evolved as a symptom of that relationship. Carlos was a very close friend.



Karen: He was always in Miami Beach, right? He didn't make it over to the Design District?

Craig: No, he passed away in 1991, before we started buying properties in the District in the mid-1990s. But what we did with art studios and public art projects in the District was a continuation of what we had been doing in South Beach for years.

Karen: Some of the artists who've had studio spaces in the District since then include Agustina Woodgate, Bhakti Baxter, Tao Rey, Daniel Arsham, Jason Hedges, Martin Oppel, Nicolás Lobo, Primary Flight (Typoe, Books Bischof, and Cristina

Gonzalez), Oliver Sánchez, Nektar de Stagni, Frances Trombly, Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, Cristina Lei Rodriguez, Hernan Bas, Naomi Fisher, Iran Issa-Kahn, Craig Kucia, Muriel Olivares, FriendsWithYou. Currently, Harmony Korine, Nereida Garcia Ferraz, Lucia Sánchez, Noah Cribb, and Fran Clougherty have studios here.

Craig: And there's probably more. One of the first things I remember about the District is there was a great group of artists. Some of them lived together in The House,² but none of them had art dealers. They asked if I would give them a space so they could start selling their work, so I offered them a space at a very cheap rate. At some point, some of them started to get gallery representation, so they didn't need this space anymore, but then they lost The House, so they needed studios. For a period of years, they all had studios here.

Karen: The House was demolished in 2004.³ The building that began to be erected on that site was completed in 2008, and in a magical recurrence of artworld overlaps, it happened to be the place where I moved into, when I first moved to Miami in 2022.

Craig: Oh, that's so funny.



Karen: Naomi Fisher, who lived next door to The House and had a space in the District, explained how the property that you originally offered to her and Hernan Bas as studio space eventually morphed into an exhibition space, and became the artist-run space Bas Fisher Invitational. She said, "that was a wonderful way to take Craig's generosity and pass it on to other artists to have their first solo shows. It's an example of how true acts of generosity just keep on giving." So it wasn't just about giving spaces to artists, but also giving them the freedom to do with it what they wanted.

Limited Edition Experiences at FriendsWithYou, 2009

The House demolition

Photos courtesy of Natalia Benedetti

Craig: Yes, it was never about controlling what happened in those spaces. It has always been about supporting art and culture and using the property to give spaces to creative people, either for free or at a huge discount, because they add to the personality of the neighborhood and build community. It felt like a good thing to support.

Karen: Another example of this artistic freedom was the Starlene activation in 2004.

Craig: Ah, yes, a predecessor of The Bruce High Quality Foundation. I was walking around in the neighborhood one day, and I saw that, on one of our lots, these guys had pulled up a pickup truck. I said, "guys, what are you doing here?" They said they were doing an art piece for Art Basel, with a bunch of cars that have a crash and all these police cars, and I said, "who told you that you could come here and do this?" and they looked at me and said, "we're in direct communication with Craig Robins." So I said, "well, if Craig Robins said you could do it, then it's totally fine". They were students at Cooper Union, and we commissioned them to do a huge installation in the Buick building,⁵ and all these cool collaborations that we were doing in the neighborhood just evolved over time.

Karen: Perhaps the bookend to that period of intense transformation was the donation of land to the ICA.

Craig: Yes, that's a great story. But before that, in 2001, when Art Basel was supposed to launch in Miami but was canceled due to the 9-11 attacks, my close friend Rosa de la Cruz called me and asked if I had a space for an exhibition she was otherwise planning to do in her house. I lent her space in the Moore building. For eight years, Rosa and I collaborated (it was really all Rosa), on the Moore space where she would organize incredible exhibitions. Silvia Cubiñá ran that program for many years. And then one day, Rosa and [her husband] Carlos said they had decided to build a museum for the collection, and that's how the de la Cruz Collection building began in the District, which was a great validation for the neighborhood. Shortly after, I was having lunch with Norman Braman, who's a very close friend, and he said to me, "Craig, Irma and I would like to fund a new public art museum called the ICA. If you and your partners would consider giving us the land, Irma and I will pay for the building." I think it's the fastest fundraiser anyone has ever done to get a museum open. Since they needed a temporary space, the ICA moved into the Moore space that Rosa had occupied, and then the ICA was built right next to the de la Cruz. So, it's a story of how things keep happening in the neighborhood.

Then in 2005, Ambra Medda and I started Design Miami in the Moore building. And when you look around the neighborhood and see things like Zaha Hadid's *Elastika* sculpture in the Moore building, or Mark Newson's fence, or Konstantin Grcic's *Netscape*, these design installations have become landmarks of the neighborhood. One year we collaborated through Design Miami on a satellite show with Norman Foster for Buckminster Fuller. We had Bucky's *Fly's Eye Dome*, which is part of my collection, and Norman [Foster] brought the Dymaxion and the Buckminster Fuller Institute to these containers with drawings by Bucky. And now we have the prototype of the *Fly's Eye Dome* in Palm Court. There was all this synergy and interactions between artists and collectors, and it just kept evolving. And it all became part of the DNA of the neighborhood.

2 Tao Rey, Bhakti Baxter, Martin Oppel and Daniel Arsham.
3 Elisa Turner, "Artists Gather Before the Wrecking Ball Hits", *The Miami Herald* (June 11, 2004)
4 Written communication with the author
5 For more on this, see Elisa Turner, "Creating a New Fiction" in *The Miami Herald* (June 5, 2005), p. 3 M



Lord Norman Foster
with Buckminster Fuller's
Dymaxion Car and
Fly's Eye Dome, Miami
Design District, 2011

Photo courtesy of John
Parra for Getty images

Antoni Miralda's
Gondola Shoe, 1990,
installed in the atrium of
the Melin Building.





WESTEN CHARLES

JON PYLYPCHUK &

ELIZABETH WITHSTANDLEY

Photos courtesy of Westen Charles / Locust Projects

ARTIST-RUN SPACE

Westen Charles: Jon, I was asked to reminisce about the good old days of Locust Projects. Things have changed a lot, and I thought about what memories I have of the early Locust days that resonate as classic Locust moments. Your show came to mind. I thought that the way Locust functioned at that time was seminal to how we became successful. It was about providing opportunities and giving artists the full experience in Miami from the perspective of another artist. We were building this together as fellow artists making something happen in Miami. I was curious what your thoughts are about that time. How it affected the things that you went on to do. Where that experience lies within your art path and then we could tell some funny stories too.

Jon Pylypchuk: Eric Wesley did a show before I did, and I remember talking to Eric about the whole situation and what it was like and he was super excited about it and he got me super excited about it. If I recall, I think I was in Miami once the year before for the art fair, but I had never spent any time in Miami. And I remember coming in and seeing the space and being welcomed so graciously and trying to figure out what I was going to do. I had an idea and you guys were so accommodating to have me do whatever I wanted. And it felt like back then that was still sort of an open thing. People were open to trusting the artist to just do whatever it was that they wanted to do.

I don't know if it's quite the same now. I know that in the commercial gallery sense it's almost like people are more conservative about what they're doing. And it really sort of felt right at the time because it was what I was coming from in LA too. China Art Objects is this gallery that was pretty much artist-driven because Steve Hanson, Amy Yao, and Giovanni Intra were all artists and it felt right for me to be able to come to Miami and then experience at the time what was basically just potential. I know that Wynwood was not what it is now and there's something about that grittiness that I really loved. It's interesting because a couple of years later I did a show at the inaugural exhibition of Detroit Moca. It had that same feeling and I kind of felt like that's what the whole art world was supposed to always be. Always potential, always something exciting happening, somebody doing something maybe not necessarily on a shoestring budget but getting anything done and always having the ability to just do anything, whatever you want to do. Open expression. It was so great.

Elizabeth Withstandley: Were you doing installation-type works like that? The original Locust was a pretty decent-sized space for installation works.

Jon: I hadn't done anything that big at that point, but that was sort of the door that got opened for me to start building bigger installations because two years later in Detroit, I did the big installation of the *Shanty Town*. And I want to say in 2005, the year after Locust, I did *Art Unlimited* in Basel. And that was at that point, the biggest installation that I had done. Locust was a springboard into doing bigger installations.

Elizabeth: I was speaking with Adler Guerrier, who is an artist who has been coming to Locust from the beginning. He is on our board. We were talking about the open call for proposals at Locust. We were talking about Miami-based artists and the process

of how those shows come about and so forth. And one of the things he mentioned to me was that he felt like in the beginning of Locust the opportunity to have a space to do a site-specific installation was something that artists were really interested in. And he was countering that with now, where a lot of people are much more concerned about the market or just being a bit more conservative. He felt like there weren't as many people that were interested in that type of opportunity, which I was surprised to hear about, but from hearing from you... in the early Locust days, it sounds like this was something that you were really looking for.

Jon: When you have to start thinking about making sure that you can pay your rent, that's when you know you're not thinking specifically about expression. And I definitely see a difference between then and now. There was a person who had worked at Friedrich Petzel who came to LA in 2012, and he needed studio space. I had done a couple of projects at the end of June in Japan and then in Australia, so I wasn't working in my studio, so I let him work in my studio.

And I came in one day and he had been at this party and this was already like eight years after Locust. So this is how quickly I feel like it changed. I asked him how his party was the night before, and he was kind of a little bit bummed out and a little bit hungover and he said, well, I'll put it to you this way. There were a bunch of 20 to 30-year-olds, a table full of booze, and a swimming pool, the pool was empty, the booze was untouched except for what I drank and everyone was talking about what gallery they were going to show with and that is very different than the environment that I grew up in. Not saying that the environment that I came up in was better, but it was just different. We weren't thinking about it, we probably were, but not to the same extent thinking about career ambitions. We were thinking about what's the next cool thing that you can do. Locust is giving people an opportunity, even now, I don't know if you guys feel like it's the same now at Locust, but giving people that opportunity to not have to think about market constraints is invaluable.

Elizabeth: We try to keep it still in there. So, you visited the space the year before you had the show, and then did you go back to LA and then start to plan what would be there?

Jon: Yeah, I did and it was all around the time that the Iraq war started and we were all sort of, and it's funny when I think about him now, I don't think that he is as nefarious as a human being as I thought that he was back then, but was thinking about George W. Bush and how that whole thing played out after 911 and this idea came to me of him getting off Air Force One and giving everyone the finger and maybe not the greatest conceptual idea ever, but the execution of it was pretty fun. And at the time it folded into some of the other work that I was doing regarding my opposition to international conflict.

Elizabeth: We rolled out the red carpet as much as we could at that time at Locust. It wasn't like a super high-end experience in terms of where you were staying and being in Wynwood at that time because Wynwood was really different. What was that experience like for you?

Jon: Well, I come from a pretty scrappy background, so if the carpet's brown, I can convince myself that it's red and I remember fondly when we were staying at, Wes that was your grandfather's house?

Wes: Yes!

Jon: I feel like I stayed with you and I remember being so enthralled with that house because I'd never seen a house constructed that way. It was half deconstructed and it was magical. I'm sure that I didn't shut up about my entire experience in Miami for years after that.



Elizabeth: So early Locust was working...

Wes: Do you remember going to the art store with me?

Jon: I think so because I needed to get paint for that airplane but I don't remember any details.

Wes: I remember taking you, you had to have a particular ink, you were like "I need this ink". Jon was like going up and down the aisles looking for this ink and I thought this is a madman because he had to have this particular ink. And then I remember finally he found it and he was so happy. I was like, oh great. And then I remember when we got back and I was wondering what he was going to do with it, he started painting a sock and I was like, we just spent like 3 hours looking for this ink and he's painting a sock with it. That was like the genius.

Jon: I was going to say, that's how I constructed the sculptures back then. It was almost like a shabby version of my shabby version of doing because a few years earlier a lot of people were doing all these fiberglass things. So that was my sort of shabby version of a fiberglass sculpture where I would mix watercolor ink, specifically Dr. Martin's, pH Martin Watercolor Ink in the Brown. I can't remember what specific, coffee brown, I think and I would mix it into type 2 wood glue and I would stuff the things and then I would paint it all over it and it would make the surface rigid. I was very specific about it, I honed my use of hot glue, Type II wood glue, and watercolor ink into those sculptures.

Elizabeth: Because this was early Locust years, one thing you mentioned was that you sort of enjoyed that we trusted you to do whatever it is that you were going to do there. That it had some freedom to it that was just part of us being a young organization, but also maybe a part of the fact that there were 3 artists that started it and we were still the driving force at that point. I don't know if you can talk a bit about that.

Jon: Absolutely. It's interesting throughout the last 20 years of doing things. I could backtrack and say China Art Objects always trusted whatever I did, Petzel always trusted whatever I did. Locust giving me that much space and kind of saying go, do it, was great. The next experience that I had doing the installation in Basel, I had the curators of Art Unlimited breathing down my neck to see if I was going to get it done. And I understand that it was sort of a higher stakes situation there, but to me, that is fundamentally a curator, an artist who's a curator, will be able to trust an artist to complete what they're hoping to complete. And even if it doesn't work out properly, have the belief in that person that it will be realized in some way or another. The same thing happened, and I would put this all in the same category as Klaus Curtis when I did the installation in Detroit, where I had made a number of the characters for the installation, but I didn't even have a drawing of it.

Elizabeth: I think in those early days of Locust, Wes really played a pretty pivotal role in helping the artists facilitate what they were doing in the space in a way that I felt was different than a more proper space where the gallery assistants are there and so forth. Wes was okay with things like... We're going to go to this art store and look for this, this guy wants this weird ink. Like that's what we're going to do.

Jon: It's interesting.

Wes: I was going to say that's before, nowadays Locust rents cars for people. Back then we kind of had to do everything with the artists if they wanted to do stuff and having a degree in sculpture helped as well because I was familiar with how to do a lot of the stuff that people needed help with.

Jon: One thing I think is super important. I think that having another sculptor there made that happen. When you have a bunch of assistance trying to do stuff for you, and I realize this a number of years later where I think around 2008, 2009, when my assistant had decided she was going to move to Berlin and pursue her art career, and I was without an assistant, and for a minute I felt like I was floundering, but then I realized that we've made that thing together in Miami. When you have a bunch of people standing around waiting to be told what to do, you get self-conscious about what you're actually doing. Whereas when you are helping me build this thing, we're basically building it together and we are collaborating on the construction of this art project and you're in it, you're not thinking about it, you're just in it. I think that was really important, at least for me at the time, to have the ability to do that.

Wes: We learned just as much, I think helping, it was a collaboration most of the time. I remember you mentioned Eric Wesley, I remember at that time there was faith on both sides and if it didn't work out, that's what was going to happen. That wasn't necessarily failure per se. It was just going to be what it was, and that's what it was going to be. You had goals in this but it wasn't seen through the same lens.

Jon: So you had this organic growth of something, whether it was good or bad, and it existed in almost a more honest way and there was no façade to it.

Wes: I was going to say, we had gone to some art shows in school but for Locust, it was like we knew what 4 walls were, but I don't think at the time we really thought so much about or had a lot of history with putting together shows. The early shows were just kind of like 4 walls and what happened. We didn't really see outside of that. Luckily, we took a couple of pictures.

Jon: To me, there's something beautiful about learning on the fly. There's something simple about trying to understand what that space was, and you took a few pictures, but really it was the experience, I think about family gatherings where all the moms sit around taking pictures of everyone having fun, but they're just documenting it. They're not involved in it. And to a certain extent, when I think about happenings in the 60s or whenever that there's shitty documentation of it, but then you can have somebody tell you about it and somebody that maybe experienced it in real life and in a way the documentation can go away, but that experience, that verbal sharing of the experience is almost more important to the experience. You're too busy doing it, you're too busy being in it. It's like what I said earlier about the swimming pool and the table full of booze. We were too busy experiencing life to think about documenting it. The documentation came out in the art.

this idea came to me of him getting off Air Force

Elizabeth: It's 25 years after we started Locust which just sounds crazy and it's nice that it still exists and is providing opportunities for artists. I'm involved with the open call process and I try to make sure that there are elements of some of our origins. Wes is still on the board there and he's very involved. I just don't run across very many new organizations like Locust.

That kind of goes back to what we touched upon earlier, people were looking for things like that, but the cost of things is so much now or people are not taking chances. To me, these types of spaces are so important because there are, as you talked about, it gave you that opportunity to do this bigger installation and that work then went on and you were able to do some other things after that. It was providing you this opportunity to try things out and experiment. We need more of these types of spaces.

Jon: I often wonder whether I'm not aware of these spaces because I'm older but, I have a feeling that it has more to do with the rent. I read this book called *Treconomics* and it talks about how The Star Trek Society is a post-scarcity society and money doesn't exist and as a result, you have a situation where people are working towards the greater good and when I think about what post-scarcity means, and the idea of having a space that doesn't require a lot of overhead, it just means freedom. It means that human thought can be realized in a way without boundaries, and it's so important for that to exist in the world, even if it is something as dumb as an airplane with a cat giving people the finger. Honestly, I can't think of it, maybe Commonwealth and Council here in LA is sort of like that but even that, everything has gotten so expensive. It seems like the safe, conservative route is the only route for galleries and spaces like that to exist in.

Wes: I think it has something to do with the time that you live too. When we were doing that those early days, there was no social media, that idea of like Super Rock Art Star, if you were an artist back then, there was no like magnetic clout to just like that word "artist". Nobody gave a crap. This was before the Basel Effect where there was a real kindred kind of thing between artists because you were there just for the art.



One and giving everyone the finger...



MONTSE GUILLEN

A BIG SLICE OF HISTORY

CONVERSATIONS



*The Gondola Shoe of the Honeymoon Project
at the Big Fish Mayaimi*

ANTONI MIRALDA

Photos courtesy of Miralda / FoodCultura Archive

MAKING MIAMI

Montse Guillen: Okay! Let's go.

Antoni Miralda: Hello. Yes, today is Monday, the 28th of August. And here's a conversation with Montse Guillen and Antoni Miralda. And this is the history, the 1980s. Yes, I came to Miami in 1982 and was invited by Jan van der Marck and Micky Wolfson. Jan was involved with the foundation of the ensemble of museums at the Miami Dade Cultural Center, MAM, History Miami, and the Public Library. Micky was somebody that I just met at that time, and was very enthusiastic about my work. So they invited me to do a proposal for the New World Festival of the Arts. For this proposal, I came here five times, staying 10 to 12 days each visit. It was kind of an investigation, fieldwork research, a celebration of Miami's cultural diversity and every new visit I asked to stay in different areas of the city. At the very end, we published a 12-page newsprint, in collaboration with the artist Cesar Trasobares, containing information on five different project proposals: *Vizcaya Solstice Gala* (Vizcaya Gardens), *Sea Serpent of the New World* (Port of Miami), *Fontainebleau Deco Cake* (Miami Beach), *Santa Comida* (Little Havana), and *Domestic Coral Castle* (Homestead).

Also as a part of this New World Festival of the Arts, we did a series of installations in different institutions in the city. This was a series of *Mermaid Tables*, which was a food installation on a table in the shape of a double-tailed mermaid, all filled with different kinds of food depending on where it was presented. One of those installations was at the Museum of Science and Montse collaborated and participated on all of the tables, especially the one at the Museum of Science. She prepared a series of nests made of shredded potatoes.

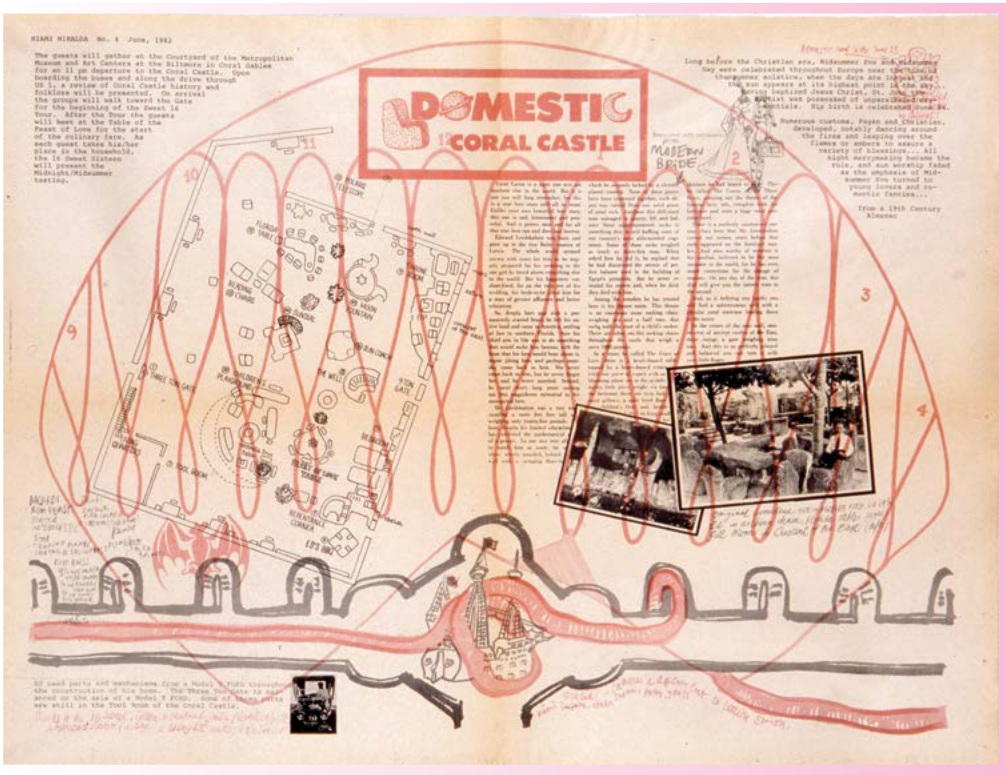
Montse: Yes. There were different ingredients on each table, depending on the location. For the Museum of Science, we were thinking about something in relation to the museum and the birds because they were also presenting a giant book at the time, Audubon's *Elephant*, *The Birds of America*. I thought it was a very good idea to put little nests with different quail eggs and other kinds of eggs. Also, in some nests, I put caviar, because for me these are collections of eggs.

Miralda: But the nests were made of fried potatoes.

Montse: Yes, of course. The nests were made of fried crispy potatoes!

Miralda: So we're talking fried potato nests, quail eggs, and different types of edible seeds. This was one of the mermaid tables, perhaps I could say it was more spectacular, or more curious, in the middle of the Museum of Science! We also had an installation outside of the Museum and had a real baby elephant with its handler. We painted on the tradition of the Holi Hindu festival on one side and a page of the massive Audubon book!

The book that the museum was presenting was by John James Audubon. The Audubon illustrations of the wonderful birds, so we copied a life-size page of the pink flamingo and painted with pigments directly onto the skin of the elephant. I remember the artist Marilyn Gottlieb-Roberts collaborated on the project and did most of the painting.



Miralda: Yes, Marilyn Gottlieb-Roberts! By 1982, we were already connected to Miami artists like César and Marilyn.

So from the five proposed projects for the New World Festival of the Arts the one that was carried out was the Domestic Coral Castle, which happened the night of San Juan of 1982 and incorporated a performance and ceremonial visit of the space followed by a midnight/midsummer tasting. Montse came down from New York to work on the project, base on a sort of a performance meeting with a Lithuanian immigrant named Edward Leedskalnin, the Coral Castle creator. What a beautiful night. It was really a very mysterious, interesting poetic event in the middle of the Coral Castle dedicated to the visionary owner and builder.

Montse: Beautiful.

Miralda: We invited all the different guests who took school- buses to the castle and when they arrived there was a special ambient sound piece performed by sixteen young girls in wedding gowns carrying boomboxes and guiding participants through the mysterious palace by lantern light and the full moon. It was a sensorial experience rooted in that place, that was not on the tourist map yet because it's so far away in the middle of nowhere.

Montse: I'm sorry, Miralda, at this moment, in 1982, we went back to New York for the beginning of the project of the Restaurant El Internacional, and in 1992 when we finished the restaurant and the Honeymoon project so we came back to Miami.

Miralda: In fact, the project of El Internacional Tapas Bar and Restaurant was in 1984-1986. When we were working in Miami in 1982 we were already planning at the same time.

I then came back to Miami in 1985 for the *Santa Comida* project, inspired by one of the five proposals for the New New World Festival of the Arts. I first presented *Santa Comida* in 1984 at the Museo del Barrio in New York and then brought it down to Miami in 1985 to exhibit at the Miami Dade Community College Art Gallery. The ideas behind it revolved around different deities of religions such as Santería, Candomblé, and Voodoo and the imposition of Christianity and the survival of the Yoruba religion. We

Antoni Miralda And
Montse Guillen, Lady
Liberty's Trousseau,
1988

Photo courtesy of
Patricia Fisher



also organized an amazing symposium with John Mason in connection with the Museo del Barrio, Robert Farris Thompson, and Lydia Cabrera who was already at that time a very fragile lady, a wonderful person.

Montse: And then the moment I arrived in Miami in 1992, we finished the *Honeymoon Project* and one of the big pieces, the *Gondola Shoe*, came to Miami and it was selected by Craig Robins to be in his collection. From that moment our relationship with Craig about art and food began and I started to make special dinners for him.

Miralda: The *Honeymoon Project* is this impossible marriage or love affair between two icons, two monuments, one in Barcelona, Columbus representing the conquest and the other one was the Statue of Liberty symbolizing freedom. So, this was a six-year project from 1986-1992, and

in 1988 we presented at the Miami Community College Mitchell Wolfson Campus, the *Lady Liberty's Trousseau*, a magenta nightgown made to scale in Terrassa, my hometown with a long tradition of textile manufacturing. We hung and celebrated the massive gown with the community and many students and friends!

Montse: Craig's partner at the time was Chris Blackwell, the Jamaican-British record producer and founder of Island Records. Chris had a restaurant in Miami Beach, Shabean inside the Marlin Hotel, and they asked me to take care of this Jamaican restaurant. Miralda was on another project and when he finished he came to Miami and Craig gave us the opportunity to live and work on Española Way. It was an energetic street and we were surrounded by other artists like Kenny Scharf, Roberto Juarez, and the architect Carlos Zapata. We often collaborated on events and projects.

Miralda: Yes, we each had these beautiful little studios. Kevin Arrow was also not far from our place and, Montse you prepared many feasts and banquets for friends and other people who happened to come by.

Montse: One of the fantastic projects happened when I asked Craig to close the street for one day and we created the first farmers market. This was a great project and we invited all the farmers from Homestead to sell their products. All the street was a farmland!

Miralda: It was more than a farmer's market...The market was created like an installation. We knew all the people living there, so we could cover the whole street with different colored vinyl.

Montse: It was art and food together.

Miralda: And Montse managed to have the different types of farmers, and we invited some artists like World Famous J Jonny, who was selling fake potatoes, made of concrete and pearls. It was a very unique moment. And at the entrance of the corner of Española and Washington, we installed the *Tri-Uni-Corn*. This is one of my sculptures that is now in the permanent collection of the Reina Sofía Museum in Madrid, and comes from the *Wheat & Steak* project in Kansas City.



Left: Exterior of the Big Fish Mayaimi

Right: Interior of the Big Fish Mayaimi



Double Tail Mermaid mask

Montse: Let's talk now for a moment about 1996-99?

Miralda: We need to talk about the restaurant Big Fish, and then finish.

Montse: The Big Fish Mayaimi

Montse: After Española, we started a restaurant on the Miami River. During the restaurant, there was another art project by Miralda involving the Miami Art Museum

Miralda: The MAM show- *Grandma's Recipes - Miami Bureau*, 1998-99. We invited people of different origins to share the memories and recipes of culinary art, which are traditionally transmitted through oral history. The main component of the exhibit was pictures of people's tongues, a symbol of language and taste. We took photos of the tongues of patrons of the restaurant and visitors to MAM and installed those with recipes that were submitted.

Montse: All this was before Art Basel Miami?

Miralda: Yes, of course.

Miralda: Art Basel didn't exist.

Montse: After Big Fish Mayaimi, we opened TransEat, a large warehouse space at 2417 North Miami Ave in Wynwood before Wynwood, from 1999-2004.

Montse: At TransEat, we had many food events, gatherings, and talks and our first exhibition was *Menu. Collection in Context: Rhyparography* curated by Julieta González in 2003. We held many events and exhibits with artists like Carlos Betancourt, Charo Oquet, and others. We could say we put together the first symbolic Art Basel and displayed the collection from the FoodCultureMuseum.

Miralda: I think that is a pretty good slice of history! Okay, bye.

Montse: Bye, thank you very much.

The main component of the exhibit was pictures

of people's tongues, a symbol of language and taste.

Mermaid Table at the Bass Museum



ROSA DE LA CRUZ



SILVIA KARMAN CUBIÑÁ

& MELISSA WALLEN

Photos courtesy of de la Cruz Collection

THE MOORE SPACE: WE HAD THE FREEDOM TO FAIL

Melissa Wallen: Rosa, could you share the inspiration behind founding The Moore Space and what motivated you to create an alternative art space in Miami?

Rosa de la Cruz: It was not an inspiration. We needed an alternative space. We needed a Moore Space here in Miami. When Sam Keller [then director of Art Basel in Switzerland] visited Miami and spoke with me and Carlos, he said, "We're thinking of bringing Basel to Miami." I couldn't believe it. They could have taken it to New York or LA. There are so many places, but they thought of Miami. So when he said that, I replied that we have to do something. We needed to have an exhibition with Miami artists, because Miami has a strong artist community. But how do we do it?

The first thing we needed was space for the exhibition. Carlos suggested I talk to Craig Robins because he owns the Design District and has a lot of space. He was, as always, very generous: "Where do you want to do the show? I have all these buildings here. You can choose whatever you want." Of course, we all knew about The Moore Building, which used to be the Moore family furniture store many years ago. When he agreed to lend it to us, I could not believe it: Basel was coming to Miami. That was a major thing for all of us.

For the first exhibition, we asked, "How do we do it?" This is something new in Miami. We thought it was very important that Craig be involved in this because he had the knowledge and he had the will. We also needed a curator because we couldn't do it ourselves. At the time, I was on the acquisition board of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and I knew the curator, Dominic Molon. So I said, "Why don't we call Dominic and ask him to do the show?" Dominic agreed: "I want this to be a Miami show with a lot of Miami artists!" We called it *Humid* (2001). It was Hernan Bas's first major show. I'm talking about artists that are now all very well-known. At the time, he also had Pepe Mar...

Silvia Karman Cubiñá: william cordova, Mark Handforth, María Martínez Cañas...

Melissa: Kevin Arrow, Natalia Benedetti, Jeremy Boyle, M.W. Burns—so some of them are from Chicago, some of them are from Miami, Los Angeles, and Pittsburgh.

Rosa: Yes, Dominic invited some artists from international cities since he was from Chicago. But then something unimaginable happened: September 11. Basel decided to cancel the fair.

That year, in reaction to the attack on the Twin Towers, but we already had the show organized, so we decided to do it. When it was over, Craig suggested we keep it open and not just do a one-time exhibition. We established The Moore Space as an alternative space. We started doing exhibitions. Silvia [Karman Cubiñá] was very much part of it. The Moore Space stayed open year-round and became very well known.

Melissa: The Moore Space really grew from this sense of urgency, that there was a need in Miami for this sort of space to exist because we didn't have anything like it. And the word alternative, when you talk about alternative spaces, can mean so much to so many different people. What would you say really made The Moore Space truly alternative in its approach?



Rosa: The selection of artists. We took a lot of time to select artists. This was done in a very rigorous way. We planned everything and traveled a lot. We presented artists from Germany, France—we had international artists. Important artists like Joan Jonas, who invited John Bock for a performance, and Allora & Calzadilla all showed at The Moore Space. We invited a lot of artists who we thought would say no, but they said yes because they wanted to come. Artists felt that it was important to be part of The Moore Space because they

saw that this was a new direction in contemporary art. And of course, Miami was always important to us. We showed many artists from Miami.

Melissa: While it was very grassroots, there was a lot of research behind your programming and consideration for how you were positioning local artists within global conversations in contemporary art. The Moore Space quickly gained a reputation for pushing artistic boundaries.

Silvia: Part of why this program was very interesting was because it wasn't the voice of any one person or curator. We had Dominic Molon, Larry Rinder, Patrick Charpenel when I started, Hans Ulrich Obrist, and Christine Macel, who brought in Jeppe Hein to build a functioning wooden roller coaster inside The Moore Space. I think a lot of interest had to do with timing because it was early on when the art world was starting to globalize. We were meeting our counterparts in different countries, going to Germany and France and different places, meeting the collectors and the curators in all those countries, and we were all talking. When someone would mention an exciting artist, that person would pop up at The Moore Space within a few months or a year later.

Melissa: In the early 2000s, it was beginning to feel as though time was compressing; you could experience other spaces through digital means and how that started to create more dialogue through the international art world.

Silvia: Absolutely. When The Moore Space opened there weren't that many websites or ways of conducting research online. Museums and art spaces were putting their things on the Internet, but it was very early. Galleries were not yet multinational; they were in their space, in their countries. You depended on your colleagues and your friends and fellow collectors and curators to tell you what was going on.

Rosa: It was the first time that it was not about place, like how the Internet is not a place.

Silvia: More about time than place.

Rosa: We were also experiencing a flux in culture. Now we can get information in a second. At the time, it was the beginning of that. Still, the Internet had not developed like it has today. We were able to do many things that we didn't think we could do back then.

Melissa: I was attending college in Miami when The Moore Space was happening. It always felt like a place where you went to see interesting experimental work, performances, and installations—things that weren't necessarily paintings on a wall, but were more of an experience. The Moore Space had this sense of freedom, that you could do things in that space that might have fallen outside of the commercial framework of a gallery, or even a collection or an institution. What elements of The Moore Space legacy have endured and influenced the way alternative spaces are perceived and operate today?

Silvia: We had the freedom to fail. Sometimes, when you're free to fail, you get a lot of success. The Moore Space functioned very much like a European Kunsthalle back then. It positioned a lot of Miami artists within the larger art community. It also allowed artists to do new work, like Jose Dávila; I remember he was just experimenting with the place, using cardboard and neon paint to trace the architecture. Rosa mentioned John Bock and Joan Jonas. Patty Chang—remember the performance she did with all the paint? It was called *Fan Dance* (2003). There was paint in front of a fan and it would spray all over her. Everybody in the audience also got sprayed. We also had a lot of curators beginning their careers. They were in their 30s, and we gave them an opportunity to do things that they couldn't do in their museums. I imagine Christine Marcel had a lot of restrictions at Centre Pompidou—here she didn't. I think it was an incubator for both artists and curators, as well as a model for current alternative spaces.

Melissa: So many emerging artists were given the license to experiment, to dive into their individual practices and take chances while feeling supported, which is so important for young artists.

Silvia: Exactly. When Allora & Calzadilla did *Clamor* (2006), they fabricated a bunker and directed about five or six musicians to play war tunes. It was one of their very first performances! And because we had been working with Patrick Charpenel, we were able to travel to Mexico and meet Pedro Reyes—who was really young at the time—Jose Dávila, Carlos Amoraes, and Francis Alÿs.

Rosa: The artists were very much part of the shows. I mean, there was nowhere that would allow the artist to come and install on their own. That freedom was important for us.

Melissa: That it became specific to Miami and the time and whatever limitations you were dealing with at that moment—that's something that interested you in working with artists in your home as well, Rosa. I know that you've worked with many artists on site-specific installations.

Rosa: I open my home to the public so people can come and see more art. This happened when The Moore Space was open, too. Now it's funny because The Moore Building is becoming a very fancy club. See how things change?

Silvia: Miami has changed.

Rosa: The Moore Space would still do well because artists like to come to Miami. When I do an installation, I always ask the artists, “What do you want to do?” It was always the artist's decision, what the artist wanted. We always asked the artist.

Melissa: Were there any shows at The Moore Space that stood out?

Silvia: *French Kissin' in the USA* (2007), which I curated. Caroline Bourgeois, former director of FRAC Le Plateau, Hans Ulrich Obrist, curator and current Artistic Director of the Serpentine Gallery, London, and Jerome Sans, co-founder and former director of the Palais de Tokyo, also contributed introductory text to the exhibition catalog. We did this show with a grant from the French government.



Metro Pictures (2006) was a collaboration with Bonnie Clearwater at the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami. Bonnie curated the MOCA part, and I curated The Moore Space, which featured work by Kota Izawa, Adler Guerrier, Kianga Ford...

Rosa: And remember, this was in Miami. We were really ahead of our time when we did this.

Silvia: There was a show called *Peer In Peer Out* (2007) with Knut Asdam, Jesper Just, Andrea Lange, Lars Laumann, and Pia Lindman—a very Scandinavian show. We didn't really group them by country, but apparently, maybe we just met one of them and they introduced us to their friends, something like that. *Hurricane Projects I: Outbursts of Energy* (2007) with Susan Lee-Chun, Dara Friedman, Fernando Ortega, Julian Rosefeldt, TM Sisters, and Aída Ruilova. And again, there was a performance with TM Sisters and Susan Lee-Chun here. We had Kalup Linzy and the E-flux Video Rentals—do you know about this? You could come and rent video art like you would do books with a library card. We had some regulars who would come every day. Also, the talks. We had Jeffrey Deitch very early on. We were bringing a lot of people into the neighborhood to do conversations, which I think Locust Projects and Oolite Arts both do very well now.

Rosa: A lot of Miami artists, too. Naomi Fisher, Tao Rey, Mark Handforth. So many.

Silvia: Sean Dack, Jeppe Hein, who you can see in LaGuardia Airport with his fancy balloons and benches. Ryan Trecartin lived here for about six months; The Moore Space rented a house for him and his entire gang moved here to film *A Family Finds Entertainment* (2006). Five of those videos were produced here in Miami. He was the voice of the generation of that time who was getting bombarded by all this information. He was kind of an artist that represented that moment. And he was living here, which is also really great to have artists living and working.

Melissa: It feels like a fever dream watching that piece. Seeing it in the old Miami Design District neighborhood is pretty incredible; there are spaces in that film that no longer exist today. You're essentially watching a time capsule float through the neighborhood.

Rosa: The Design District was nothing compared to what it is now. This was a deserted area. And then we rented a motel suite for our artists when they came so they could stay. There are so many stories.

Silvia: At most we had three people running this space. Rosa was the board president. She and Craig were actively involved.



Rosa: Ibett Yanez and Carlos Ascurra, who would later work at the de la Cruz Collection, were there, too.

Silvia: We just did it! Sometimes you just have to do it. And then word-of-mouth—there was no social media so you didn't have the need to take a picture and put it on social media. All of those things that make institutions complicated, they were just done.

Rosa: We did it well.

Silvia: Absolutely. It wasn't a complicated endeavor back then. Everyone just got on a plane and figured it out. It was that sort of simplicity that allowed everybody to just do it.

Rosa: We've kept going.

Melissa: You didn't stop in The Moore Space.

Silvia: And we're not stopping yet.

Melissa: We certainly need more support for the artists. And a little bit of freedom to fail in hopes that they make something new and exciting happen in the city.

Silvia: There's so much work to do in this city. There's always space for more talks and more art and more commissions. That's what I tell people is so exciting about Miami.

*Edited by Andrew McLees.



DINA MITRANI

FINDING THE BIG "A"

CONVERSATIONS



PEGGY LEVISON NOLAN

Photos courtesy of Dina Mitrani Gallery

MAKING MIAMI

Dina Mitrani: I'm Dina Mitrani and I'm sitting here with Peggy Levison Nolan, and we are going to reminisce about Miami and the art community here, and how it grew and changed so much in those years. I met Peggy when I moved back home to Miami after seven years in New York City, and I was working as an Assistant Curator at the museum at FIU when Dahlia Morgan was still the Director. Peggy was teaching photography, we met and I came across her work and her incredible energy and spirit! I thought one day, I want to have a gallery and I want to represent this lady. That's my perspective of the story but here is Peggy to talk a little bit about how that all went down, and what it was like to exhibit in my gallery and be the first artist that I showed!

Peggy Levison Nolan: Well, I need to correct this I was an adjunct professor and a full-time lab manager at FIU. So, I was never a real professor...

Dina: But you were teaching photography?

Peggy: I taught one photography class every semester. I came to FIU in my mid-forties. I had just taught myself to photograph from adult education classes and needed to get into a really good darkroom... and I just never left! When I met Dina, I was getting my undergraduate degree.

Dina: It was around 2000.

Peggy: Yes, right before I went into graduate school. It took me a long time to use the big "A" word when I talked about my work because I photographed my 7 kids and wasn't really that interested in strangers or anything. I loved taking photos, so I could photograph anything, but my children what really made me pick up the camera.

Dina: So, you didn't consider yourself an artist?

Peggy: No, I did not consider myself an artist. It took me a long time to embrace that word. In fact, I think one of the first times I showed was in the Government Center in downtown Miami with Theresa Deal, Priscilla Forthman, and Cecilia Arboleda. They all were calling themselves artists.

Dina: Amazing, and you were like, I'm just taking pictures!

Peggy: Yep. Teresa looked at my work, I cut my own mats and they were so terrible that she threw them away and cut mats in front of me.

Dina: What year was that?

Peggy: I don't remember. 2000, 1999. I'd have to look back.

Dina: Okay. So right before we met.

Peggy: It was a long time ago!

Dina: But these are the years that we're interested in 1996 to 2012.

Peggy: I had not really cared about having my work on a wall or anything. I hadn't thought about it. And then Dina and I met and she put the bug in my ear. Had I gotten the consortium by the time?

Dina: I think you might have.

Peggy: I had already gotten it.

Dina: I think so.

Peggy: So, the first thing that happened is I applied for the South Florida Consortium and won it, and I hadn't won anything and I hadn't made any money from being an artist, and I sort of lost my mind and thought I needed attention. So when Dina talked to me about that, I thought, well, that would be great! I said, yes, someday.

Dina: You said yes. I had no idea when it would happen, but someday.

Peggy: By the time it happened, the art scene, was slightly burgeoning in Miami. I mean, I wouldn't call it an actual cohesive art scene yet, but there were art walks in Coral Gables and in Miami Beach, all over the place, because we're very divergent and everything's far away from each other- there was no real community yet. A lot of us didn't even know each other. Being in academia gave me an instant community, which I've never really left. I still have colleagues with whom I talk about art all the time, so I was spoiled. But a lot of artists that are out there dangling had nobody to talk to about their work.

Dina: Wynwood started to happen.

Peggy: Wynwood started to happen, and then Art Basel decided to come to Miami, which was a really big deal. And the first year was that 9/11?

Dina: That was supposed to be the first year and they canceled it.

Peggy: Art Basel was supposed to come, 9/11 came. Was I already with you in the gallery?

Dina: No, because I opened the gallery, I was working at FIU and I didn't open the gallery until 2008, but we had already opened the artist studios upstairs.

Peggy: Right, but 2009 was the first show.

Dina: Right. So, I opened in November of 2008, and then in 2009, you were the first artist that I exhibited that I had a solo show with, and the first photograph I ever sold was yours.

Peggy: God bless you. Anyway, 9/11 occurred and Art Basel was canceled and Bernice Steinbaum, who owned one of the oldest galleries in Wynwood, called a meeting. It was an insane meeting. She said, "I'm going to get all the artists, all the curators, all the collectors, and all the writers for the newspapers that write about art all together in one room." Can you imagine all the cats in a bag? So, all these people came, hundreds and hundreds of us staring at each other saying, do I know that person? Little Bernice gets up on a podium or a chair or something, and she shames all of us. She said you guys don't know each other enough. You don't collaborate enough. There is no real community in the art world in South Florida. We have to make one. We've got a year to do it, and by the time Art Basel comes, we better be very connected.



Peggy Nolan, *Blueprint for a Good Life*, curated by Amy Galpin, Frost Art Museum at FIU, summer 2021

I'm a pawn broker's daughter, so I was taught to respect all junk and other people's stuff

Dina: She created the Miami Art Exchange.

Peggy: Yes, she did.

Dina: I remember.

Peggy: People complained, as soon as someone raised their hand and whined, she assigned them a job. Okay, you go and make t-shirts and you go do this. I would say she was partly responsible for creating the community. And then Art Basel came and we all started to get excited about our own neighborhood. It was really remarkable!

Dina: It was wonderful to be a part of how Miami was growing, to be pioneers in the evolving culture of our city.

Peggy: And also living here and being on the inside was very special. We watched all these art shows happen, sort of show-off shows. Each gallery tried to do their best and people came from everywhere. I actually saw Donna Karan and Martha Stewart.

Dina: Where?

Peggy: I saw Martha Stewart in Marty Margulies' collection and went up to her and told her that I loved her Rugelach recipe, and she hugged me.

Dina: And he bought your work when you had your first solo show at the gallery, he bought two of your pieces. I remember. I was thrilled! It was very exciting.



Peggy: Well, it was strange to put my work on the wall, but the thing about Dina, everybody is envious that I am represented by Dina because she's a genuinely nice person, and that goes a long way in a gallery director, a long way. So, all these years I have trusted Dina. I have tried out every idea on her.

Dina: It's been a great relationship. *The Anonymous* exhibition was incredible, where we exhibited your collection of found photographs. That was definitely a highlight of the gallery.

Peggy: I think that was my most fun. Well, first of all, I didn't make any of the work, so I was off the hook!

Dina: It was such a fascinating exhibition. And of course, we have to give a little credit to Jesus Petroccini who designed the exhibition. He hung every little tiny photograph, whether it was unframed or framed in one of these old-fashioned cardboard portals like stereograph images. There were so many different kinds of photographs because they were so old, and he hung them all across the walls. Actually, I'm going to submit images for that too for this book.

Peggy: And also, we had a table, I'm a pawn broker's daughter, so I was taught to respect all junk and other people's stuff that they wanted to get rid of and so I stocked up at the flea market in Sunrise, and other thrift shops and just collected so much ephemera that had to do with photography, millions of old Polaroids, every kind of imaginable thing. And the thing about found photographs is the photographer doesn't have the agenda that an artist has or any of that pressure. It's almost like handing a third grader a camera, it's from their brain, from their eyes to the machine with no thinking. So there were all these weird family arrangements and crying babies and all this fantastic stuff. It was about real people.

Dina: It was great. That was beautiful. Anyway, we've had, I don't know how many, I think we did quite a few solo shows, and we did that one, and hopefully soon we'll be doing some more...

The Fractured Histories of Found Photographs, from the collection of Peggy Levison Nolan, Dina Mitrani Gallery, summer 2015



NINA JOHNSON

WYNWOOD THE EARLY DAYS

CONVERSATIONS



DENNIS SCHOLL

Photos courtesy of Gesi Schilling and Chi Lam, Nina Johnson Gallery

MAKING MIAMI

Nina Johnson: Hi! I'm Nina Johnson.

Dennis Scholl: And this is Dennis Scholl. And we've known each other for a really long time- since you were a baby!

Nina: Yes. Before I had gray hair!

Dennis: That's you. I had gray hair when I was 25, so it doesn't really count. When I think of you and I think of the art world, of course, I remember Diet Gallery. Do you think of that as your beginning in the Miami art world, or were you doing something before that was public?

Nina: I started working for Bernice Steinbaum when I was 15, and that was not very public... because I was only 15. I was a real baby, then! But I definitely think that the formative years that we all had were in Wynwood. I was talking to a friend about this the other day, and he said it so nicely. He was like, we were all in this bubble where we knew each other and everyone was excited about the same things and looking at the same things. And that's definitely not the case anymore here. I feel like it was a concerted moment of time. I was specifically thinking about one instance when we had a performance going on in our space and you had World Class Boxing and were there regularly. And I literally ran over to your space, grabbed you by the arm, and physically dragged you to my gallery. And I just thought, I love that we could be that uncool! We could be wholeheartedly enthusiastic and unfiltered. It was one of the things that was so special about that time. It was definitely a coming of age for me and Gallery Diet was my master's degree.

Dennis: I remember so clearly entering your gallery and walking on all of those cases of drinks, whatever kind it was that Nick [Lobo] did, and almost breaking my ankle! It feels like yesterday. I also recall Wynwood was so fragile in the beginning, like any new project. I understand that as I've done so many entrepreneurial projects that have this fragility when they start. But the scene was slowly developing and you just hoped that it would get to the next level Any little increment of progress was very positive. I recollect that somebody was shot two or three blocks away on one of the big nights, and we thought, oh no.... it's all going to fall apart now if people don't feel safe coming here. But they did continue to come by the dozens and visit all of the galleries and art exhibition spaces, which are all now basically gone. And what happened? It just became one big retail store.

Nina: I think what happens in any cultural moment is that these things are fleeting and they're special. It's sort of like talking about why didn't the Beatles stay a band forever, right? There's a moment in time and there's a certain magic and all those conditions have to be just right. I think you feel the precarity of it when you're in it. For me, one of the things that was so fantastic was the naivete of that time period, and of the gallery.

Dennis: You could do it, and you did it. Yes.

Nina: As you recalled, we did this incredible show by Nick where he brought in thousands of pallets of a drink called Nexcite, a Brazilian energy drink, that had passed its expiration date. The cases covered the gallery floor, wall to wall. There was a sense of community support when people bought the sculptures associated with the installation, and we had hope that they would go to one of the local institutions. I think you and Debra were such a big part of that!



In the very beginning, we just wanted warm bodies at our openings. We received sponsorship from a beer company for our events- and we were like “Isn’t this great? They are going to give us all free beer!” It’s going to drive bodies here.... And oh it did- just too many for any of us to manage! We all had to become bouncers. And remember you guys had this great kinetic sculpture on the wall?

Dennis: Oh, yeah. This lady walks in, she’s kind of drunk. She’s carrying a baby. The kid flails those arms all around and the sculpture is mounted on the wall. It’s a little sculpture by Hans Peter Feldman and it is going like this, back and forth and back and forth, and the lady gets closer and closer and closer....and all of a sudden the kid

reaches out and he knocks the sculpture off the wall and it goes flying across the floor. The lady looks at me, her eyes get this really big look, and then she runs out the door! That was hysterical!

Nina: It was almost more worrisome than the inherent violence of being in such a rough neighborhood at the time, Wynwood then was so desolate. When that sculpture broke, we thought, oh no. Now we are really screwed. Somebody broke that sculpture- it’s really over now.

Dennis: Well when you’re going to have thousands and thousands of people see your stuff, you got to roll with it. Things break. Things fail. Another important thing about the neighborhood was how it served to develop the Miami model of private collections showing publicly. That was not something that really existed and you had us doing it and Marty [Margulies], the Rubells, the de la Cruzs, and Craig [Robins] were all suddenly doing it. And that really added up to a lot of energy for the community and people began to talk about the Miami art scene because of that model. We had the luxury of real estate. You can’t do that in New York.

Nina: Well, you all really did bring an influx. For me, those years were truly a master’s degree. I was talking to Don and Mera [Rubell] the other day about the “Pillow Talks.” Do you remember that series of artist’s talks? And they would do that, we saw Janine Antoni there! I mean, you guys would bring incredible artists to create the installations in the space and that was our access point and a time when the institutions were not as robust as they are now. I remember at one point there was a conversation with Craig about a Master’s degree program developing, and that was a very exciting idea. I think at the time we were all very much looking for a way to make concrete this very intangible magic that was happening.

Dennis: The big failing in this community of the visual arts is that we don’t have a quality master’s program and we export our young. We have some of the greatest artists coming out of high school and the bachelor’s program at New World, and then we export them. Sometimes they come back, which is great. But more often than not they move on to the greater art world cities. Miami has finally gotten on the radar a little bit about the quality of artists here, and I’ve seen that over the last six years at Oolite. But boy, that was a struggle and we were losing a lot of artists that we should have kept.

Nina: Now one of the challenges is that it is almost as expensive to be an artist in Miami as it is to be an artist in New York or Los Angeles! And of course, the audience is still inherently much smaller. I want to ask how you felt because you had a fairly sharp transition at that moment into the Knight Foundation. From the outside, you were this very renegade spirit who entered into a very structured system of philanthropy. I would love to hear about that shift for you because I think it does mimic what happened with the broader scene here.



Emmett Moore, *Surface Tension*, 2012

Photo courtesy of Chi Lam

Emmett Moore, *Surface Tension*, 2012

Photo courtesy of Gesi Schilling



Dennis: Well, this is a great moment as I’ve retired and Alberto [Ibargüen] is retiring. Michael Spring is retiring. The world is changing for the visual arts in our community. It’s going to be led by people like you. I had done a bunch of entrepreneurial projects which started a bunch of businesses, which you and I have talked about a lot over the years. We both grew up at the family dinner table learning about how to be an entrepreneur and I was just looking for something new to do that wasn’t like any other business. I wasn’t seeing anything that had me excited and this opportunity had me excited. At the time, I was volunteering at Knight and Alberto called me one day and said, “My guy just left, you got to help me find somebody right away.” And I said to him, “How about me?”

And he replied, “No, not you. You won’t wear a tie and you won’t come to the meetings.” And I said, “No, just give me a chance!” And he did. And I went in there with the mindset like you and I both have, that this is an entrepreneurial opportunity. And he let me do this, it’s all attributed to him. I would come in and say, “Let’s do this crazy thing.” His response was, “Well, if you can make it work.” And then it dawned on him that I don’t just have ideas, but I have execution. And to be an entrepreneur, you can’t just have ideas. You have to have the ideas and the execution. So that’s what we did at Knight. It was a really joyful time for me.

I think that through those years, we built kind of a safety net for artists. You could get a Knight grant, you could get a Miami-Dade County grant. Over the last six years, you could get an Oolite grant. So you could cob together something. It might not be enough

because of the lack of gallery support, but there are still a lot of individual collectors here who buy a fair bit of Miami art. And so that’s what changed it I think because back in the day before these grants, you had no shot at all. Now you have a chance except the expense side has gone crazy like you said. I think everybody should just move to Hialeah! Hialeah is where it’s at now.

Nina: Yes. I think the entire market has become so borderless that you really can be anywhere. Back in the early 2000s, the idea of being a Miami artist versus a New York artist was really a thing, and now you can be an artist and live anywhere as long as you’re willing to travel and participate in a global dialogue. And that prejudice doesn’t exist in the same way that it did at that time.

Dennis: Look at the way you’ve grown the gallery and the artists that you’re able to represent, even though they’re not here and you’ve spent very little

physical time with them. They just want to be represented by your gallery. I buy most of the things I acquire online now- without seeing them physically. And I think maybe through the pandemic, we all finally got comfortable with that. We are out of time!

Nina: That’s it. We’re over! They picked two blabbermouths.

Dennis: That’s right. They should have given us an hour and 10 minutes!



Nick Lobo, *Bad Soda/ Soft Drunk*, 2014

Photo courtesy of Chi Lam

BERNICE STEINBAUM

PLANTING SEEDS OF CREATIVITY

CONVERSATIONS



CAROLINA GARCÍA JAYARAM

Photos courtesy of LegalArt and Bernice Steinbaum Gallery

MAKING MIAMI

Bernice Steinbaum: In New York, there was a community that I don't think ever existed here. We all knew who the critics were in New York, and somebody might call you and say, "So and so just came to my gallery, I think he's going to your gallery." In New York, if a dealer had diarrhea, the whole street knew it. There was none of that when I came to Miami. And I tried to at least have artists know each other. I've done lots of group shows so that artists get to know a friend. At least once a year since I've been here and this year, I'll be doing two – one up now at Greenspace and my next one will be about memories of childhood because of the wonderful diversity here.

In New York, I was one of the few dealers that sent shows to museums all over the country. And I did that for a long time. I always wanted to share the wealth. They may not have been a known artist - I'm never afraid of showing a non-known artist, everyone needs a chance and I'm willing to give those chances. I was the first one to show Faith Ringgold, the first one to show Amalia Mesa-Bains. First one to show Jaune Quick-to-See Smith. Look where they are.

Carolina García Jayaram: In those first years, after opening around 2000, what were the artists and shows that meant the most to you?

Bernice: Early on, I had Maria Magdalena Campos Pons, Pepón Osorio, and Amalia Mesa-Bains, three headliners.

Carolina: Who are each now in museum shows in New York.

Bernice: Yes!

Carolina: Amazing. All three. So 22 years later we see how some seeds were planted in Miami.

Bernice: And Maria Magdalena Campos Pons didn't want to come here because she hated Florida because there was a Cuban mafia. And I can't tell you what her work is selling for. It's scary.

Carolina: I remember that show very well.

Bernice: She didn't want a show here. She loved me and I loved her. She spent her days at the gallery and stayed at home with me, which is an unusual situation for most dealers. For me, the artists became an extended family. I wanted to make life better for them, not only financially, but to say, "I love you and I love what you're doing." You're making me think. It was a very different attitude. It's not about selling or not selling. I'm so proud to be part of it. It's enough for me. I'm not rich. I live close to my old age benefits, but I know what's important to me in my life. Sharing ideas and enhancing somebody's life or making us think, is far more important to me than making a sale. I just have to sell enough of an artist to vindicate this existence.

Carolina: But it's not your purpose.

Bernice: I do understand younger dealers and their needs. Once I give a price, it never goes down and it never goes up. It was always a museum that got a 10% discount, but no one else. And that was very important to me. In New York, you're supposed to publish (by law) your prices, which I still do. Isn't that funny? And dealers and clients have said, "Such and such gives me 40% off." I said, "Wait. That's impossible." And they respond,

"Well, he doesn't want a big cut for himself." That means that he's raised it 40% to give the 40% discount! I don't have two sets of books. I only have one. It's available right there.

Carolina: You are a straight shooter.

Bernice: And so that was a very important concept to me that we can't make it if we give those kinds of discounts. If we were all legitimate, wouldn't it be wonderful?

Carolina: Wouldn't that be wonderful? So already in the early 2000 years, you were very much considered a mentor and organizer in the community. The photographer Peggy Nolan tells a story for this book to her gallerist Dina Mitrani that is about you. She said you were both an activist on behalf of the artists and on behalf of building this sense of community here by starting the Wynwood Arts District.



You always led with love, and you created this familial aura, this space that I benefited from early on. But I know hundreds of other people did, too. And I wonder, what do you think drove you to build community like that? Because that goes beyond the gallery, dealer, and work. That's something else. I think it was ultimately in service to the artists, but what drove you to do that?

Bernice: It's not how much you have, it's how much you give. I don't know what made me do it like that, but how wonderful it was to give it. How wonderful to be intimate and hear what they're saying and see it from their point of view. You can only get that if there's an intimacy. And how lucky for me that I was able to have that intimacy.

Carolina: I think you're not giving yourself enough credit, though. It wasn't just luck.

Bernice: No.

Carolina: It was a real, prolonged, and thoughtful intention you had.

Bernice: You know my father was a rabbi, right?

Carolina: Makes a lot of sense.

Bernice: He died when I was eight, and I officially gave up all religions, whatever. But anyway, I guess it's in my DNA.

Bikini, Fundraiser for LegalArt, 2003, Bernice Steinbaum Gallery



Carolina: It was passed on to you. You came to Miami at a magical time but it very much needed that kind of generative power that bringing the right ingredients together in new and interesting ways can create. And that's what some of you who had the seniority at the time were able to do for the rest of the community, whether it was you, Mera and Don Rubell, or Ruth and Richard Shack. The people who have the ability to inspire so many young people.

Bernice: Yes. And I think it's all about relationships.

Carolina: It's still interesting to you; you still love stories and you still love relationships. Like you're surrounded by people here in your house all the time I bet?

Bernice: Oh God. All the time.

Carolina: Well, I have to say, you were a big inspiration for me as I built LegalArt, Bernice, in terms of how to do it - how to base it on relationships, how to base it on love and generosity.

Bernice: That's very kind. Maybe I don't know how else to do it. I hope to do all of those things.

Carolina: You do. You've done it a thousand times.

Bernice: I hope so. I've thought to myself, God, how did I get the nerve to do that? How did I do that? How did I work it out? And sometimes I surprise myself. But if you care about someone, you find the way.

In this town, it's all about community. I haven't done everything I want to do. We need to advocate for the artists- they speak to history right now. They make us see another way of seeing. I once asked an artist to show me their best work, and the response was "I haven't made it yet." Along those lines, I am going to continue because I haven't done my best work yet!

Carolina: Thank you so much for this.

Bernice: Thank you for coming.

ARAMIS GUTIERREZ

THE ART OF SUBVERSION

CONVERSATIONS



Funner Projects (Justin H. Long and Robert Lorie),
Maintain Right, 2011 at the de la Cruz Collection

JUSTIN H. LONG

Photos courtesy of Aramis Gutierrez and Justin H. Long

MAKING MIAMI

Aramis Gutierrez II: Subversion is something- that's why artists come to Miami.

Justin H. Long: Totally.

Aramis: Because there is somewhat of a subversive “fuck you” element here. Our city is basically built on illicit money and it's just like a hodgepodge of cultures. Nobody's from Miami, but everybody's from Miami. It's where wealthy people come here to import their bad taste but I think that the freedom you get as an artist to come here, you can explore failure through subversion. And that is why there was enough of that going on to support a lot of homegrown galleries and smaller spaces. We had artists coming here because they weren't getting that freedom in New York for sure.

Justin: Oh, definitely.

Aramis: LA was its own thing, and I don't think you could be that type of artist in LA.

Justin: The LA thing's funny because there's not free spaces, everybody hoards their spaces, and I think that was a crazy thing and kind of what this book is about is how the Design District allowed that stuff to happen- they would invite people in to use those vacant buildings.

Aramis: Yes. So, an interesting thing happened though, because you had these wealthy people giving places to like Locust or The House kids.

Justin: They all had studios there.

Aramis: You were inviting these people in that were seeking subversion, this specific type of artist that was a free spirit... we were making our work and doing our thing, but at the same time, the normal conversation of whatever was going on in New York was not interesting for us.

Justin: Well, that's what led us to do that crazy Youth Fair show!

Aramis: I told you last night, it was like one of my top shows.

Justin: It was an absolutely crazy idea. I borrowed one space from Dacra and curated a show and they were like, okay, you didn't destroy it. We'll let you do it again. We almost did though with two good friends of mine when Meatball [Robert Lorie] and Till [Koerber] made this machine that had a diesel engine that was meant to destroy the art gallery. It was in the middle of the space, and they would start it up and it would just bounce around and I thought... oh man, this thing actually could tear through the wall. And it had a kill switch that was a hand-carved wooden gun with a “kill button” in the trigger of this gun, an art killing machine! But luckily nothing went too bad.

Dacra gave me another space, which was a defunct artificial flower shop in this fancy mall.

We got a whole bunch of weird outsider friends, actually, Ben Locicero was one of our characters. He was running the Himalaya ride. I think he had fake teeth, or we colored his teeth black with a permanent marker or something crazy to do it. But we decided this flower shop had this weird round room when you entered and we were like, what should we put there? I think a Gravitron! So the homemade Gravitron, which a couple of people fell out of was built, and yeah, we did an opening and a closing party that were both really well attended.

Aramis: As an outsider coming into that show, I thought it kind of recreated a Paul McCarthy moment. That was the vibe. That's something I feel like a lot of other grad schools would love to claim that they bring in outsiders and get people to make art and open up, but that's not what happens. When you have a bunch of people who are subversive artists who are friends with people who know how to do things, there's no real black-and-white conversation about it. It's just all gray, let's get together and do this big event, and it will happen.

Justin: It was fun. All the materials were recycled from other projects. I think half the wood we used was borrowed from the *Collabo* show that was a little earlier, where we made this crazy ramp thing, but all that plywood got taken apart and put back and reused. So, it was always about being as frugal and resourceful as we could be.

Aramis: It's funny, those years were from around 2006. I was a specific type of painter and a lot of my friends were not doing that. I was the only person doing whatever I was doing.

Justin: Yes.

Aramis: But everybody was doing their own thing and it encouraged me to collaborate with a lot of them. In the spirit of collaboration, I was just getting to let go of my own bullshit and it was one of the reasons I was able to move on and do an independent space later. I realized I don't have to like everything, but I have to accept everything.

Justin: It was like that, and nobody stepped on each other's toes. There was a bit of respect for one another.

Aramis: It was very inclusive, everybody was welcome. It wasn't the art world per se, but it was the art world for us. And one of the things we talked about last night was my three favorite shows that I saw at independent spaces, obviously one was the gun and knife show!

Justin: Oh yeah, we called it *That's Not a Knife* at the Little River Yacht Club. The name was from *Crocodile Dundee*!

Aramis: It was one of the most dangerous art shows I've ever seen.

Justin: Seriously. We turned the gallery into a firing range and put a chain link fence up to keep the viewers outside.

Aramis: I remember I fired something that made Twix bars go through a piece of plywood.



Justin H. Long, *Nutella Sinbad*, 2006



Justin H. Long, *Nacho Cheese Homer*, 2009



Leon Cortes and Justin H. Long, *Zip Gun*, 2011



Robert Lorie, *Crossbow*, 2011



Funner Projects, *That's Not a Knife*, 2011

Justin: That thing was crazy. It was a homemade shotgun that a friend from Costa Rica made and then smuggled into the country in his luggage. It had 100 rounds of 12 gauge shells that I filled with Walgreens candy. So, there was the Twix, gummy bears, and Double Bubble..

Aramis: I had never seen anything like that before.

Justin: Yeah. But that was insane because Juan, who worked at the de la Cruz Collection, took some pictures that night and showed them to the curators. The de la Cruz project room was a hot commodity, especially for the Basel show. And I guess they reviewed the applications and then Juan pulled out his phone and was like, "Hey, this just happened the other night." Rosa was like, oh my goodness, that's awesome! So we ended up being slotted right into Basel with an insane giant crossbow. We were shooting two-by-fours at the wall that housed the control panel for the elevator. They were like, please do not pierce the wall and blow up the elevator!

Aramis: Rosa made some incredibly unusual choices, and I'm very grateful for it.

Justin: That was the prime, 2011. We had Jeffrey Deich, Eli Broad, and everyone was deathly scared of it! They're like, this shouldn't be anywhere near this museum or any art.

Aramis: The other shows I loved were at Locust Projects, which always really surprised me. The shanty town installation...

Justin: Clifton Childree.

Aramis: Clifton's show was phenomenal. It completely transformed the space into this rickety, haunted, dangerous sea-themed village.

Justin: And I think there were hidden passageways and secret rooms that the public never found. They must have let him use the space for two months to build out the craziness!

Aramis: It was like he took the entire set of Robert Altman's movie, *Popeye*.

Justin: After it was towed by sea to Miami. Everything felt wet and smelly.

Aramis: I think that was the only art installation I ever crawled on my knees through... because I had to! Then the other one that I really liked was Scott Murray's 2020 Projects. There was a work by Matt Schreiber and Daniel Newman that was wild.

Justin: Right, they built a plywood room inside the gallery space that had the snail entry.

Aramis: It was kind of creepy.

Justin: That was insane.

Aramis: And you would go in and you had to sit there for 20 minutes waiting for your eyes to adjust. Once they did, you started seeing all these low-frequency lasers projecting crazy psychedelia and weird patterns on the walls. It really felt like you were tripping without doing drugs... in the dark.

Justin: That was a wild time. Daniel Newman was a cool outlier who kept doing great stuff.

Aramis: He was always just coming out of left field. He always curated really good shows and brought in a lot of people from the community to participate in them.

Justin: The *SCHADENFREUDE* show, which I think both of us were in.

Aramis: It was like an Aidan Dillard film that had all these weird characters that came together. It was an interface of established artists who were doing more traditional of art with real weird outliers. It was just a really fun time. Still to the day, I don't see stuff like that. And when I visit a lot of alternative art galleries or artist-run spaces in other cities, I just don't see that level of "anything goes", but it's got to work.

Justin: That was such good wild experimentation which we talked about with Aiden... him kayaking in the pool at the *Boyz of Bazel* show at Carol Jazsar's. But just how that came together, it was like, let's make a shirtless calendar of all male Miami artists, we've got to raise some money because we want to buy this ice sculpture of a naked woman!

Justin: No, but they did it so well. I think Pres did the layouts for the calendar, and it looked pro but it was made at Walgreens.

Aramis: I used to have the calendar, but I don't know what happened to it. I would love to have a copy of that.

Justin: Yeah, I haven't seen one in a while. Kevin Arrow pulled out the poster for me the other day and he was asking who the different characters were.

Aramis: I'm going to have to blackmail him for the calendar. I'm sure he's got it.

Justin: Oh yeah!



Funner Projects,
That's Not a Knife, 2011



Installation of Hugo Montoya's, *Cause Living Just Isn't Enough*, at Guccivuitton in 2013.



Funner Projects, *That's Not a Knife*, 2011

DOMINGO CASTILLO

PROGRAMMING SPACES FOR ARTISTS

CONVERSATIONS



TIFFANY CHESTLER

Photos courtesy of domingo castillo

MAKING MIAMI

domingo castillo: I know that you had a big role in fostering a number of different spaces, projects, and artists during your time as an employee at Dacra. I want to acknowledge that and also know a bit more about what you did because it's something I always found interesting due largely to the fact that you were at work.

Tiffany Chestler: This whole project has allowed me to reflect a little bit on what I did when I was working for the Design District developers...did it make a difference? Not make a difference? I think it speaks to things that we've just been discussing overall. It was work, I was at work, but my job description did not initially include programming spaces for Miami artists. I pretty much wrote that in! It was a combination of seeing a need and realizing I had an opportunity to fill that need. The company had some empty available spaces, and I knew of so many people who could use those spaces to flex their muscles as a curator, or an artist. It was all kinds of different people and projects that came along, yours included. Yours were some of the weirdest, and most non-commercial driven, I guess is the best way to put it! You came to me with *the end / Spring Break*, and I also remember a project you were involved in through Angela Valella, *THE NIGHTCLUB*, that was, shall we say, interesting. I don't want to speak for Angela, but my recollection of that project was that she came to me and was a little like, "What, what the fuck?" You know, about you!

domingo: Yeah, that was this show *I'm Open to the Idea* that was co-curated with Carlos Rigau and was part of Angela Vallela and Odalis Valdivieso's, *THE NIGHTCLUB*, the space that Angela was able to secure next to Harry's Pizza. It was a 2-story design studio but they left all their stuff, literally piles. Material samples, a ton of booklets filled with CDs, furniture, half-finished designed objects, receipts, plans, pretty much everything. It was overwhelming! Instead of trying to clean anything up we just pushed the ethos of the show's title and accepted this found reality of a business gone bankrupt. I think Angela didn't like the fact that we didn't clean the space or do any crowd control which eventually mutated into something we could have never imagined. People wrestling on top of a mountain of trash, a very drunken dance party, other people just grabbing whatever they could fit in their bags and hands, all the while Cristine Brache organized a meditative live/interactive video performance from China that happened in a back room. It was great!

Tiffany: Yeah, I was like, that's domingo! What were you expecting? One of many 'out of the box' projects that took place over the years. I was very fortunate that there was no micromanaging of the projects I was putting into spaces. It was almost this weird playground that became accessible to me. It allowed for a variety of things to happen, from a variety of viewpoints, and a variety of explorations about what art is. It was just not formalized within the company for quite a few years, and I think that that experimental side of it came through and is what made it interesting to people.

domingo: So when did that other part of artists asking for studios happen? Because I noticed that what ended up happening in Miami is that spaces like Swampspace, Bas Fisher Invitational (BFI), Dimensions Variable, Locust Projects, and to another degree Spinello and Primary stem from the support of having access to subsidized space that also happened to be centrally located. Because for a short while, everyone was literally on the same block. Could you fill in some blanks for me and provide a bit more context?

Tiffany: When I started working for Dacra, the House guys already had a studio space in the Design District. I knew them, but I didn't know them that well. I got to know them better because their studio was right next door to where the [Robins] collection was stored. That is how I came to know Tao [Rey], Bhakti [Baxter], and Martin [Oppel], and they helped me out from time to time, they were my first art-handling crew! Then Naomi Fisher reached out to me about possibly getting a studio for her and Hernan Bas, and after Naomi, Wendy Wisher reached out to me with a proposal to support an all-female artist-based studio. Wendy was someone I used to hang out with. A lot of it just had to do with timing. If space was available and there were no super long-term plans, they were like, okay, we can probably make this work for a little while. The whole philosophy was that full spaces are better than empty spaces.

domingo: yeah, that makes sense, it's always so perplexing to me how familiar it is at a certain point... its just the people that happen to be around and nothing more. I also saw that these project spaces all started as artists were looking for studio space and eventually realized that they had enough to spare to start hosting exhibitions. It's really just wild to see all this in hindsight because it essentially provided space, at a time when artists in Miami were tasked to become administrators for their non-profit spaces in order to make "an arts scene flourish." You know because the Knight Foundation really wanted to support the non-profit sector and not necessarily individual artists.

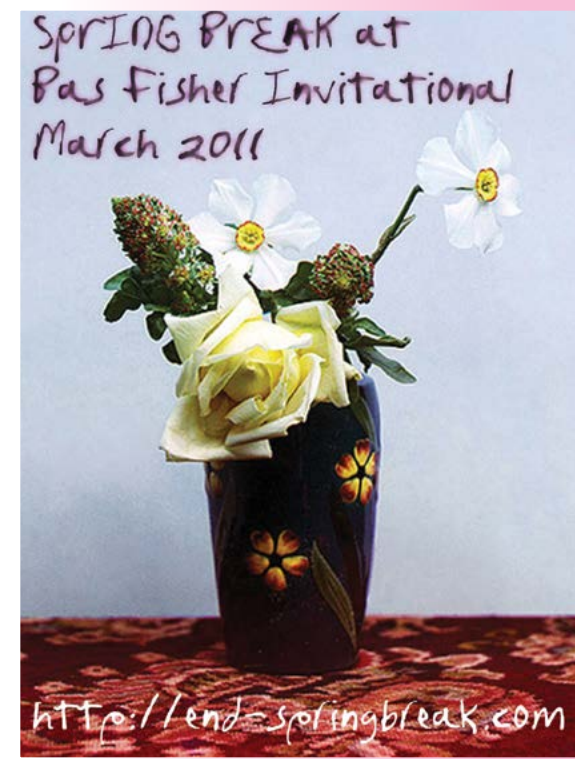
Tiffany: Yes, absolutely, and it just kept growing for a while. More artists and galleries started to become interested in being in the Design District. I didn't know Oliver, but Oliver knew Craig [Robins], and had known him for years. Oliver was the one who contacted Craig directly about getting his studio, between Craig's contacts and relationships and my relationships different people came into the mix. The Moore Space, which was a really important anchor for everything that was happening, came about through Craig and Rosa's [de la Cruz] relationship. They're all just these organic things happening. There really was not a big formal grand plan. As far as developing the Design District into a viable real estate development, yes, obviously, but during the period of time we're talking about as far as arts programming, it was always very organic. Programming one artist would often lead to me meeting a new artist or curator who wanted a project space. I think I met you through Dana Bassett. Dana came into my life through an internship program at her school. She was a budding curator and arts administrator and she was also interning with a publishing/marketing company that was in-house at the time, and she was studying art. She came into my office and was like, "Next year, I'd like to intern with you," and I was like, "Okay," and I totally forgot about her. Then a year later she showed up in my office. She was like, "I'm back. I'm here to intern for you." I was like, "Who the hell are you?" She was more tapped into the younger artists coming up, and she helped me make lots of new connections and brought a lot of great young artists to the neighborhood. Tao Rey was also a great source for connecting with young artists. I would say I had a lot on my plate, but I also put a lot on my own plate. As I mentioned, I was hired to oversee and curate an art collection but nobody ever said anything like, "You shouldn't be doing that (programming), or this is stupid."

domingo: Exactly, you were putting these spaces to use and in the long run it just allows for these more organic relationships and processes to happen.

Tiffany: Absolutely. There was a recognized value in it, and I think it wasn't impacting budgets and bottom lines too much, so why not? It just made things happen, and it gave the neighborhood a cool factor because that's what artists do, you all are cool!

domingo: It's interesting how this process becomes a model that only elevates the company's brand. Sadly all this movement and visibility only ended up working for the real estate developers in the improvement of their tenants, because it really didn't change or help create a real sustainable economy where artists could survive through their work.

...in the long run it just allows for these more



organic relationships and processes to happen.



RYAN TRECARTIN

REMEMBER WHENS

CONVERSATIONS



ASHLAND MINES

Photos courtesy of Lizzie Fitch and Ryan Trecartin, MORÁN MORÁN and Sprüth Magers.



Ashland Mines: What's up? Hi. Rydell, I miss you. Are you in America?

Ryan Trecartin: I miss you, too, Ashland. Yeah, I'm Ohio right now.

Ashland: Oh cute, I want to do that. So, what are we supposed to talk about?

Ryan: "Remember Whens"...The Miami.

Ashland: Oh, right. Um, our story is from 2008. I don't really know if we belong in this book. The theme is pre-

Basel Miami art scene history. They are focusing on the legacies of the artists that were around before the fair started. From what Katerina [Llanes] told me, it sounds like there is a need to make that clear. I mean, obviously, Miami had an art scene before Basel. I think their goal is to bring clarity and attention to these artists and describe some of Miami's larger pre-fair art contexts, because for some reason there are people who perceive it all the other way around.

Ryan: Weird, so a narrative Mandela Effect emerged at the Basel and we are part of the problem? This makes sense, there's been rumors about the Art Basel community. Something about the game Ink, Pencil, Eraser. I wonder how this false origin story travels. Like, does it dress as a fact, an intuition, or a feeling? I guess it doesn't matter. What you said makes sense. We do not belong in this book. Do you know when Miami Basel started?

Ashland: Exactly? That, I don't know. Maybe 2002?

Ryan: I hope so, that's funny. I think 2008 was an actor in 2002. Belonging where we don't mirrors the era. Maybe the book wants visitors — 2008 is a good guest for that. It was a time behind the line — a year of walking backwards into understudy plots with actors who play actors. But we were not acting because something about the thing just fit.

Ashland: 2008 was yall's task year to bring a bunch of fake actors from Los Angeles to Miami to pretend to be real actors while shooting a borderline-"actual" reality show about auditioning real Orlando show-kids for a fake movie, right? Or am I confusing projects and cities and time frames? I think going forward we should just pretend I'm not senile and can remember specific details about our lives 15 years ago.

Ryan: That feels based on the true story. I mean that house was all premise and situation.

Ashland: Yes. You, Lizzie Fitch, and Ria Pastor lived in a house, but you guys were also developing a project the entire time. In my memory everything in, and around, that house was the movie set: the rooms, yard, van, driveway, porch, and pool. The functionality of all these things was secondary to their purpose for the movie. You and Lizzie redesigned every room, including the ones we were sleeping in, multiple times a week, for like an entire year. Everybody was coming and going from LA and New

MAKING MIAMI



York and other places, staying at the house to "act in Ryan and Lizzie's movie" but it was more like we were just thrown into this weird claustrophobic yearlong summer camp. There were no call sheets and no schedules – if there was, I don't think I was aware. Seemingly at random, usually at night, things would boil into a situation where we were suddenly in wigs and being fed lines from a script and being driven around in a camper van on a lot of energy drinks. Like, buzzing teeth

levels. Your porch was also an airplane. I think we probably assumed all this work was somehow related to Basel. But it wasn't, was it?

Ryan: We moved to Miami because of The Moore Space. That place was so great. It was Rosa and Carlos [de la Cruz], Sylvia [Cubiñá], and Ibett [Yanez] who invited us down. Our Moore Space experience basically changed our lives. It was totally transformative and special. We freakin' loved working with them.

Ashland: Oh yeah, right, I remember this part. How'd that start?

Ryan: They put the movie, *A Family Finds Entertainment* (2004), in a group show called Metro Pictures in 2006. They offered me a writing residency while the show was up. The script I started writing during that time became the movie *I-Be Area* (2007). Oh, damn, I miss writing in Miami. Peninsula energy is a windy condition for me and wind is my favorite weather. What is your favorite weather?

Ashland: Yeah. Wet, windy, hot. That. Wait, I didn't realize that you guys were there in 2006 too?

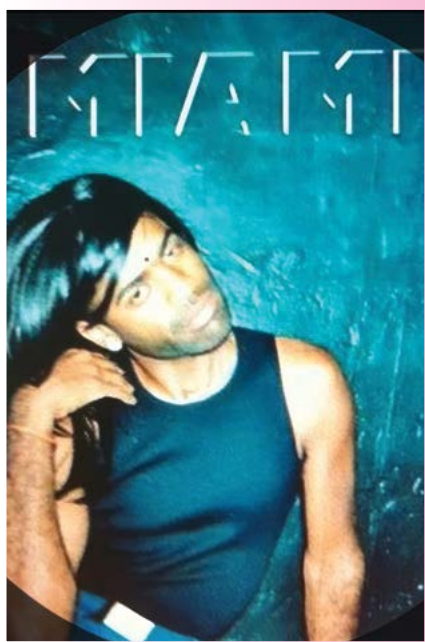
Ryan: 2006 was just a multi-month visit. Lizzie joined for a few weeks of it. She packed the van full of props and paintings that she made and then drove down from Philly. We booked a multi-bedroom suite at the Fontainebleau. It had a building under construction. We asked for their best "tower build" view, something with a "crane facing" balcony. They gave us a discount. Remember the Ramada Omar [Raúl de Nieves] scene from *I-Be Area* (2007)? There was a hotel inside the chalkboard channel. It featured a "pause your own conversation twin scenario." That was shot then. I saved most of that shoot for *Any Ever* (2010). *Roamie View: History Enhancement* (2009-2010) was written around it.

Ashland: That was then?

Ryan: Yeah. 2008 is when The Moore Space offered us a more involved residency/ commission. This is when we moved to Miami. Wait, after Providence, a group of us were deciding between NOLA and Miami, but not really because no one wanted to go to Miami.

Ashland: That makes no sense – not wanting to move to Miami.

Ryan: I know. After Hurricane Katrina, Lizzie and I tried to make Miami happen, but we were not convincing and our friends said no.



Ashland: Maybe that was part of it, no one saw it. Sometimes Miami is a swamp hiding below the horizon.

Ryan: Like: "I'm a series of wetlands and sandbars but people who don't know me yet assume I'm a vacation and like to think of me as a mall?"

Ashland: Like that. For example, this thing I think Katerina is focusing on with her show where it seems like the art scene she wants to highlight was somewhat hidden in certain ways – even if it was actually not hiding at all. Does this "Miami hiding in plain sight" thing have anything to do with why you wanted to live there?

Ryan: Probably, yeah. I guess we like ghost mode friendly places with transient traits. I think we tried to not know what the Basel was until we moved away. When we lived in Miami we were all bubbled up and project possessed. We spent that entire time growing movies.

Ashland: That's all I know. From the first time I was there during Basel, you guys were like: "Oh, what's that? We're not going to that."

Ryan: That's funny – Lizzie still says that – just kidding! We did the Basels once we moved away. My first time was in 2010, the year DIS threw those DISfunction events at ROKBAR with OHWOW. That was fun. Favorite Basel yet, still.



Ashland: I always want an excuse to go to Miami. Last year was the first year I haven't gone to Basel since back in the day. Actually, that's so crazy, I've gone every year since you and Lizzie first moved down in 2008. The DISfunction year was so lovely. Those first years of Basel were so rough and scammy and like duct-taped. Like kinda anything was possible if you convinced the right people. We did so much ugly stuff... a dream. Now it's like Miami Coachella sponsored by unknown crypto coin type scammy – totally different. Anyway I miss the beginning – well our beginning down there.

Ryan: Yeah, me too. Do you miss that chaotic building energy?

Ashland: I mean, I don't think of it as a thing that was chaotic.

Ryan: Maybe I mean playful and generative.

Ashland: My memories of our time in Miami are so peaceful.

Ryan: Completely. It was so loving. It was love, and I loved it.

Ashland: Yes, very much.

Ryan: I just looked at some peaceful photos of us at Twist during one of our first Miami nights. That super relaxing journey night our "also-selves" went on a date. That was heart glue for me. I remember thinking I would never visit nighttime as a man ever again. Which, obviously, I did. But yeah, that night is still alive in my soul and it changed my gait.

Ashland: Yeah, that night was special. Wait, where did you even find those pictures?





Ryan: I typed “BTS Miami” into my photo from the phone and the only thing I found was photos of photos in a physical photo album book from a one hour window of that night. I forgot about how Miami was before I even had a smartphone. I wasn’t taking digital photos.

Ashland: Yeah, anything that I have from then is completely gone – lost with Myspace I think.

Ryan: Remember how back then you could sense abandoned BlackBerrys? Basically you would find a BlackBerry once a week. And then we would feed it to the movie, or maybe it was more like the movie kept eating them.

Ashland: A businesswoman's phone kept falling in my lap. That house was somewhere north of the new Target right?

Ryan: Yeah, 23 NE 46th Street. I cannot believe we rented that place off of Youtube.

Ashland: What? How’d that happen?

Ryan: I was in Philly collecting images of Miami pool styles when this “for rent by owner” video popped up of a house with a pool in walking distance of The Moore Space. We shared it with Silvia, she talked with the owner, and we signed a lease. Remember the tone of the neighborhood when we first moved in?



Ashland: You tell that story.

Ryan: The general vibe was homes mid-flip. Our street had that sad, speculative smell wherein the last two years of affordable rent started a month ago along with a newly formed HOA. Anyways, I don’t know what the area was like before 2008 so this is just a story. Many of the homes around us were vacant. Some were actively undergoing renovations and paint jobs. Others sat fixed up with a “for sale” sign while other less fixed up ones sat with a “for rent” sign. Scattered throughout all of these empty “homes in waiting” was a mix of home renters and homeowners. The area was maybe 5 blocks from The Design District. We are still in the part of 2008 that looked like 2006. August hits and we enter the shoot phase of production. On pretty much that exact same day, somewhere in August, we were like: “Weird, what string of holidays are happening right now, why is all the construction paused?” After August, the neighborhood turned into a foreclosure sign popcorn machine. It was mostly houses that were already empty – they just became a different kind of empty. Some of the homes that had people actually living in them sadly went empty as well. It was so strange, but for us and the street we lived on, this “walk it back and crash shit” generated a perfect environment for a magical production bubble. Our street now had like a million public mango trees – the stray cats were so happy. After weeks of lonely empty houses, people started



squatting a few of the ones neighboring us. Neighborhood rules weren’t longer enforced and the squatters squatted successfully for at least a year, which was beautiful. Everyone had empty lots as buffers. All the noise we made, all the things we broke, and all the yard and pool fires we started happened with not one complaint. I freakin’ loved it.

Ashland: Oh, yeah the crash. I...forgot? Like forgot the entire cultural political context of that time period. Weird, but kind of clarifies a lot.

Ryan: Right? I see the Miami skyline in the memory and it’s a littering of construction sticks. Busy active cranes making or fixing something new. Now we are in a later month. There is a day near here where they all just stop. I remember it happening in total unison, a sudden shift in the texture, but it was probably a month-long die-off process.

Ashland: The only way I’m making sense out of the fact that my memories of our early Miami days just gloss over most of that is that the house and the project was such a bubble.

Ryan: Well, don’t trust my memory. When you mentioned Target I thought about walking through The Design District to get there. Wait, we looked crazy in Target back then. The employees had us memorized. The whisper track was something like: “Who are these idiots who come in here daily, with no pattern to their schedule, and put twenty versions of the same throw pillow on a credit card during a recession?” And, it’s true. As 2008 ended, The Design District was funny. Some stores would play dead until there was an event. Event nights were exempt from dead play. Some stores were temporarily gifted to artists – which was pretty awesome. I remember Naomi Fisher organizing shows in a mall. Some stores were simply closed for 2 years, or, I don’t know, maybe they died. Oh, and those newly finished shopping centers with unfortunate recession timing. Jim Drain gave us a list of all the good ones. So animation. So empty. Great landscaping. The best lighting design. It was abandoned Second Life with Britto sculptures and our actual bodies.

Ashland: Yeah. Weird that I wasn’t really conscious of it at the time. Maybe I’ve just forgotten that head, but this makes sense. My introduction to Miami was in the middle of a giant capital crisis and the city was fully dysfunctional. Half of what I fell in love with was the city economy stumbling around trying to catch its balance I guess. Feels funny to be nostalgic for that time but it was definitely a freer moment for people living like we have. Existence seemed very possible. I still love Miami, of course, but it’s crazy how different it is now. It seems so obvious – putting two and two together – but I never really did back then. The time we spent there, and the time period that was spent there, didn’t have to happen that way – but it did.

Ryan: Yes, I felt a profound sense of love and protection in those years. The entire scenario seemed in rhythm with our desires and needs – almost as if we were designed to make use of it. Lube was never needed.

Ashland: Lube is gross.



Ryan: Yeah, I regret saying it. Oh, here's a time when Miami said: "Don't you love it here? It's literally magical." Our rent was \$2,000 a month. One day our landlord calls us up and proceeds to cut it in half — without a prompt. The neighborhood was actually that empty and it made him nervous.

Ashland: That's insane. I forgot that happened. Do I have a memory of you guys using the driveway as a bedroom. Did that happen?



Ryan: Yeah, people slept in our yard, mainly Sarah [Ball]. I think Leilah [Weinraub] did that once. The front yard became a set graveyard — a production dump. From August 2008 to August 2009, the neighborhood was fine with our unincorporated rural look. But by late 2009, we received a property in violation of code notice. For most of our

Miami time, we were totally unwatched, but the closer we got to 2010, the more things shifted back to the way it felt and functioned when we first pulled up. The witchy part is how it mirrored the arc of our production from move in to move out.

Ashland: Wait, you guys were there for that long?

Ryan: Yeah, no. The dates imply three years but it was only two. I know you were also living in LA, but my memory says you were living in Miami full time with us. That's how Lizzie, Ria, and I tell it. You know what I mean?

Ashland: Yes, I do. I claim that too. I still claim to live in Miami. I still live there.

Ryan: Yeah, I still live there now too. Hey, you gotta start a "remember when."

Ashland: Ok, I'm remembering a lot about the house now. Mosquitoes around the pool, the lawn grass full of lizards, and those plants that robotically retract their leaves when you touch them. A main thing I always remember though is Lizzie digging up the backyard to unclog the septic tank herself. I didn't know how she was unclogging that thing with her own hands while we were all staying there. Like it had all of our shit combined. I didn't want to know what's happening at all, but she's so cool. Do you remember that?

Ryan: Wow, I forgot about this. That shower wanted to be a toilet so bad. It was obsessed with group poop. Lizzie is brave, she solved that shit more than once.

Ashland: Yeah, who would do that, at a rental? Like who would ever? I would never. I'd be like: "Okay, you landlord guys need to come fix this problem." But she's like: "No, I can do that." She figured it out and I'm still proud of her for that. Shocked, horrified, and very proud. I thought I was gonna visit you guys this summer. My service is weird, whatever, I guess I'm going to check into this hotel. Love you.

Ryan: I love you, too.



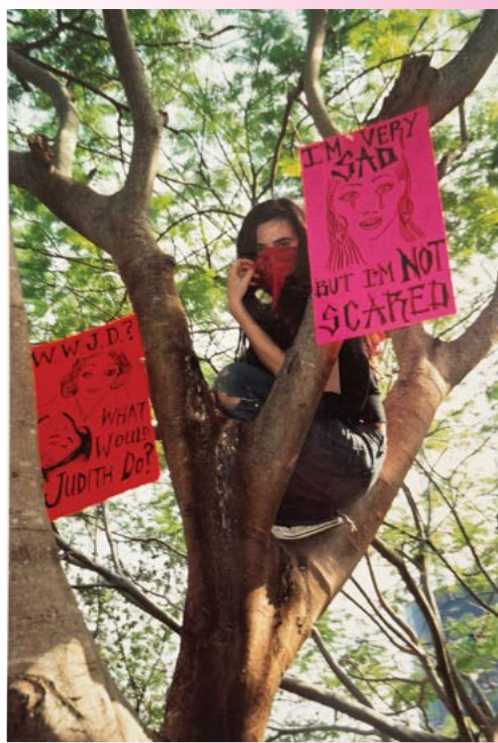
Ryan Trecartin, video stills from, *Sibling Topics* (section a), *K-Core aINC.K* (section a), *P.popular S.ky* (section ish), 2009



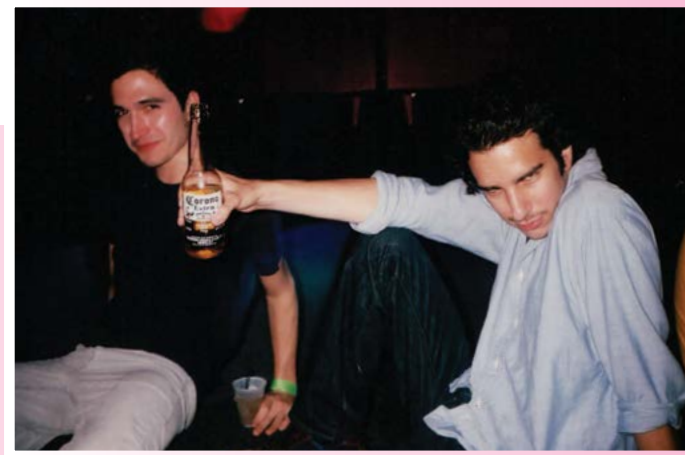
NAOMI FISHER

COMING OF AGE IN A NEW WORLD

CONVERSATIONS



Naomi Fisher, Naomi Fisher at FTAA protests, 2003



Naomi Fisher, Lazaro Hernandez & Alejandro Cardenas at Revolver or Pop Life, early 2000's.

ALEJANDRO CARDENAS

Photos courtesy of Naomi Fisher

MAKING MIAMI

Naomi Fisher: I selected you out of all of the artists that we have shown at Bas Fisher Invitational (BFI) because your personal and artistic history encompasses so much that's both symbolic and symbiotic with being an artist from Miami. From being born here and going to school, leaving, coming back, all of the kinds of transient things that happen in between- I think is a very symbolic way to be an artist from Miami. So I wanted to discuss this, starting from high school to college collaborations versus solo work, art versus fashion, and the challenges and rewards of shifting between many things that you care deeply about. Let's talk about when we first met you were in ninth grade and I was in 11th grade at the New World School of the Arts. Do you have any memories pop up of that time?

Alejandro Cardenas: Oh my God. Where do you begin? I think that the most relevant thing to this subject, and not necessarily a specific memory, but more about looking back and appreciating the context. When I was at an age where I took for granted what a unique and strange construction our school was. It's shocking looking back on it how many unique and talented people were in the same place at the same time. It's not something I've even come close to experiencing again. The variety of points of view that people in the arts program at New World had was amazing. We were all very young but already weirdly developed people and artists even though we were only teenagers. And the fact that an institution in this context existed to nurture us is so crazy and special.

There was this very special character to everyone at New World, and looking back on it, it's one of those "what was in the water" situations. I just wonder what it was- I think Miami played a big role, but it's almost serendipitous, how do you explain it?

Naomi: Looking at the changes in education now, I think so much of it is a fortunate moment where public schools were a little better funded.

Naomi: When you were at Cooper Union, you formed a collaborative group called Lansing-Dreiden with Diego [Dueñas], Jorge [Elbrect], and Keith [Riley]- all four artists from Miami. I was curious that after you left school, you still stuck with these Miami artists. Was there ever a consideration of including someone who wasn't from Miami or was this just always the core nexus of the group?

Alejandro: I think part of it was familiarity, right? Where you grow up. I've known Jorge since we were in second grade, same with Diego. Keith, I've been friends with since high school. I think when you develop as an artist from a very young age with a group of people, you have a common language that I did not have with other people at Cooper Union. There were really cool, talented artists in my classes, but there was a different character to their interests, practice, and aesthetics and another big part of it was their sense of humor. It's really hard to explain the Miami sense of humor, but it is a thing.

Naomi: Oh yeah.

Alejandro: Humor is extremely pervasive and I think once you grow up in Miami, it's really hard for your humor to relate to other people. There was a seriousness and a lack of openness and sarcasm with a lot of the other kids. Whereas Jorge, Keith, and I would just crack each other up all day. I think the Miami sense of humor is extremely dark and sarcastic and we could call it politically incorrect. But I think that subversion creates a different kind of expectation out of what you want to see in art. I just didn't relate to the kind of conceptual push that was happening at Cooper. It was very postmodern. It

was based on critical theory, institutional critique, and all this stuff and it was anti-aesthetic. Meanwhile, all of us from Miami were extremely into aesthetics, narrative, and subverting this very rigid way of understanding art and society because we were also into punk, playing in bands, weed, and all that stuff.

There's this kind of tropical island character, a slacker character in our humor and interests. Even though we were pretty aesthetically sophisticated, maybe that's the saving grace and the irony of it, we were very lowbrow, but we had extremely highbrow ambitions. It felt completely incompatible with Cooper and I think with the New York art scene at that time.

Naomi: During Lansing-Dreiden days you also decided to focus on your solo artist career and we did your first show as a solo artist at BFI called Viviana Died. The foundation for all the characters that populate your work were present. Can you explain the origins of the characters that you were using then?

Alejandro: Well, that show was really interesting because it's a very specific story that I was illustrating. Which by the way, I still do because all my work now is set in the same world. So this was a very early kind of prototypical version of that approach and it's a story based on the afterlife of one character who's a librarian who dies with her library and there's a mystery. It's funny because it's a very linear story. I'm not going to tell you the whole story, but it's a linear beginning-to-end story with some specific themes and I think that it was really cool to do the show with you because I was able to explore it visually.

I think it was one of the first explorations of this narrative, with a little bit of Lansing-Dreiden thrown in there. This idea of not giving away the story, but putting enough of it out there to create the question for one to have this identifiable experience. I know that all these things are related and these characters are recurring and they're in this situation, but I don't actually know what's going on. It's kind of hard to talk about because I think it's almost too linear looking back on it, a little too obvious. The form of the work was not what people were interested in back then.

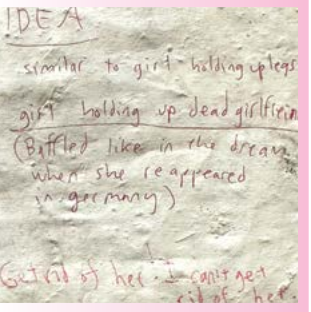
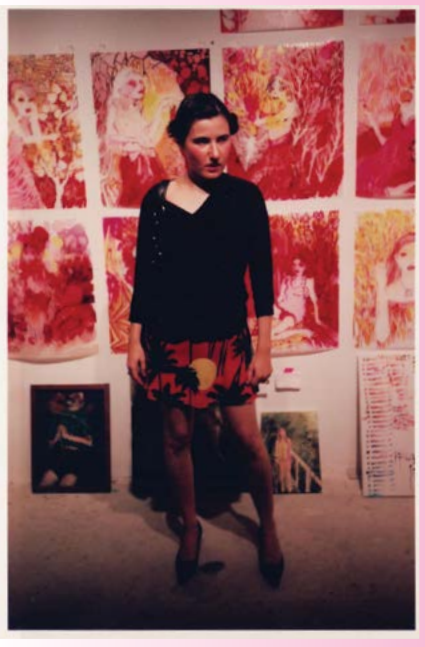
I got criticism that it was an illustration and I got that even when I was showing with James Fuentes. I think it is a limited way of looking at it, but I think looking back it makes sense for the time. I think for me the takeaway was very much about using this format of an art show to create a somewhat complete picture of an idea and I think in that sense, it was successful.

Naomi: Totally.

Alejandro: It's something that I still try to do to this day, where my shows are thematic, they're cohesive in that I have recurring symbols and images and it's meant to be very specific. They're extremely thought out and planned, and that was present even back then. It is strange that so many of us already had these very distinct ways of making art even when we were teenagers, we were already developed artists. I don't know how that happens. It's like a crazy mystery to me.

Naomi: Even I think about your high school senior project where you had the most hilarious drawings that were conceptual art jokes acted out with your stylized characters...

Naomi Fisher, *Naomi Fisher in her studio in the Design District*, 2004



Naomi Fisher, *Oly Vargas and Jenna Balfe at the FTAA protests*, 2003



Naomi Fisher, *Naomi*, mid 2000's

Naomi Fisher, *Jessie Gold stabbing a machete in Naomi's wall before the house was torn down to make way for a condo tower*, mid 2000's



Naomi Fisher, *Naomi dancing in the ocean during a hurricane scare*, 2003



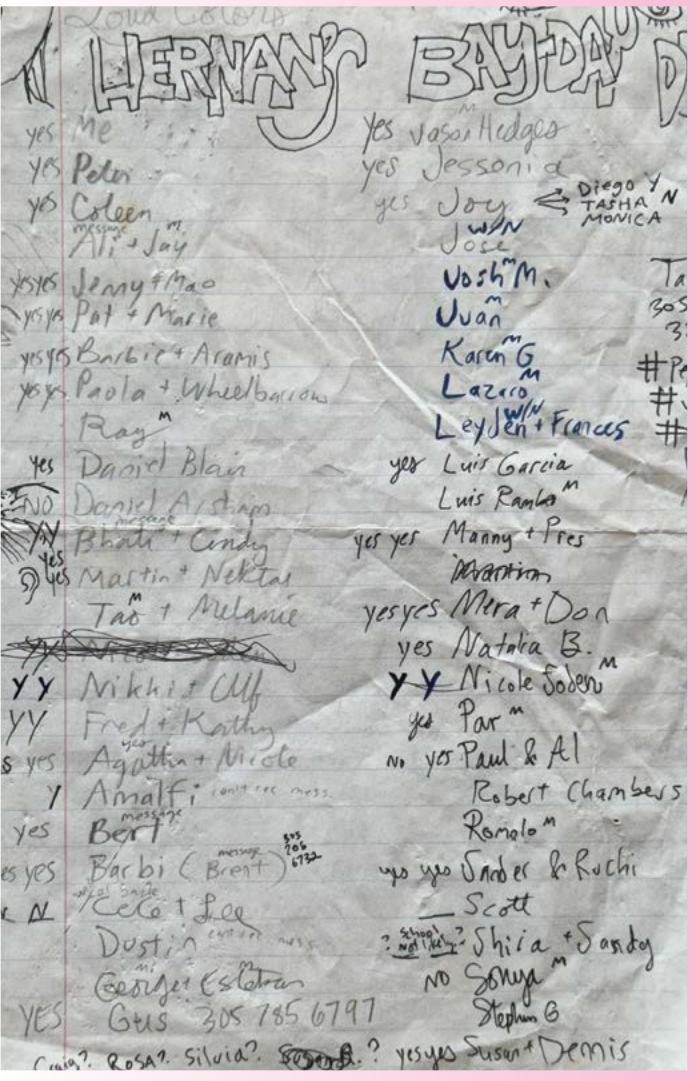
Naomi Fisher, Javier Hernandez, mid 2000's



Naomi Fisher, Hernan, Gus, Tara, Javier, Jessica, Daniel, mid 2000's



Naomi Fisher, Dancing at Revolver, mid 2000's



Alejandro: Yeah, Proposals for Senior Showcase was the piece, I still have it.

Naomi: I remember thinking, "Oh my God, Alex can make this work for the rest of his life."

Alejandro: It is hilarious.

Naomi: But you were fully formed then, and everything you've done makes so much sense to who I knew in high school, which I don't think you can say about many people.

Alejandro: But weirdly you can say that about a few people we went to high school with.

Naomi: Myself included.

Alejandro: I see your work like that, Jorge's, Keith's... There is a deep resonance with the Miami that was.

Naomi: Did BFI play any role or influence in your art practice or inspire anything or the exhibition?

Alejandro: I think the primary one is the fact that you showed my work!

Naomi: Yes of course.

Alejandro: Because I think even then I knew like, "Well, nobody wants to see this shit, but it's cool that they want to show it" and weirdly enough, it was a conduit to me showing in New York.

Naomi: Because James saw that show.

Alejandro: Exactly, he's the one who was like, "No, this is good. I'm going to show it." And I was able to continue to show with him. I think it's extremely important for that type of art space to exist because you can't just have top-tier and middle-tier galleries, you need to have experimental punk kind of spaces that will show things that are unconventional. I think we probably live in the most conventional time of all because everything is so visible and it's so easy to see what gets traction and positive feedback and what doesn't. This creates a homogeneity in terms of what can be shown and what people are interested in doing. I think spaces like BFI are all about taking chances and showing work that is different, challenging, and unconventional. So without that how do you move forward? There has to be a space to propose new points of view and new ideas and not just things that are going to sell. So I think my show at BFI was extremely important... because before that I couldn't really show.

Naomi: Yes.

Alejandro: I think Lansing-Dreiden had opportunities to show, but I feel like the work we were making was very different than what I wanted to make as an individual, and the ability to really indulge and make something exactly what I wanted was extremely important and fortuitous.

Naomi: Well, one thing I think is so interesting about your practice over decades is that you've oscillated between having a solo practice and being part of a collaboration, whether it's Lansing-Dreiden, or Proenza Schouler. Is there a reason you chose to swing between the two or something you get out of one versus the other?



Alejandro Cardenas, *Spear House*, 2021. Collection of the Institute of Contemporary Art Miami. Courtesy the Artist and Anat Ebgi Los Angeles/New York.

Photo courtesy of Matthew Kroening.

Alejandro: They are very different ways of being. I think for example Lansing-Dreiden really came out of our friendships and our shared interests and feelings of not fitting in and having ideas that weren't necessarily what anyone was interested in. Working with Jack [McCollough] and Lazaro [Hernandez] was a learning experience. They have very focused ideas about what they want the collection to be about and it made it easy because they were so specific, which was extremely important to my development as an artist.

The simplest way to explain it is they are very specific, where they'd set up a chess board let's say, and then that gave us the freedom to design within that context and then output a collection that is very cohesive. It's almost like in limitation you have more freedom. I do the same exact thing when I am working on an exhibition.

That taught me a lot about how to apply these structural ideas to my sculptures and all my shows have very specific frames that I designed. I do all my own typography, so it's a very 360 kind of way I design the show in general, and then that comes straight from fashion because that's not something a lot of artists do.

Naomi: I see that quality of you forever because even Lansing-Dreiden was so focused on not just the exhibition or the framework, but then the performance and everything was interrelated, and what you were doing in high school, even down to your sketchbooks, was so focused.

Alejandro: I have ideas about where all that stuff came from, but I can definitely say if I had grown up in Minnesota, I wouldn't have had the same perspective. I think Miami has this perfect balance of high-low culture where both exist simultaneously. It's pretty awesome that you could have these totally rough, like punk and down-to-earth experiences and also experience this high-end side of life. You have got to have those extremes, especially when you're young. There were the Arquitectonica buildings that were colorful and postmodern, super huge, cool. They had all these crazy colors and the hole in the middle with the palm tree. I remember that vision coming over the causeway on the school bus with Power 96 blasting for two hours at six in the morning. You would just see water and forest with these colorful monoliths coming out of it, that is one of the most important visions I've had in my entire life.

I think Miami has this perfect balance of high-low culture where both exist simultaneously.

Naomi Fisher, *Naomi on the roof of the Buena Vista Building in the Design District*, mid 2000's



Naomi Fisher, *Alejandro Cardenas, Jenna Balfe, Lazaro Hernandez*, mid 2000's

It's pretty awesome that you could have these totally rough, like punk and down-to-earth experiences and also experience this high-end side of life.

CATHY LEFF

THE WOLFSONIAN IDENTITY OF OUR CITY



CONVERSATIONS

MICKY WOLFSON

Cathy Leff: Micky, we are being asked for our perspectives on Miami's cultural development, especially as it relates to Art Basel| Miami Beach and focusing on the period 1996-2012. The Wolfsonian opened its doors in late 1995; so, shall we start then? What in your mind enabled that institution and others to enter the cultural domain?

Mitchell (Micky) Wolfson: Well, I would like to make a provocative statement. Miami is a colonial city. We were colonized from the beginning. People saw the city's possibilities, a lot of possibilities. Art Basel glimpsed what might be. And they, in a wonderful way, exploited that potential. So, did I. I could have put The Wolfsonian anywhere. But I chose Miami Beach because I'm a missionary, as is Art Basel. I was inventive. I had no fear. Nor did they. Look at their track record and look at what they are achieving. We were a perfect territory to be colonized, in this case, by the arts. It just so happens that The Wolfsonian and Art Basel| Miami Beach appeared in the same period. What do you think of that?

Cathy: Well, The Wolfsonian was up and running before the first fair in 2002. It also was getting global media attention. Fair organizers were coming to Miami for several years before their inaugural show, meeting with city and cultural leaders and collectors. Like you said, examining the possibilities. There were important collectors here and an international buzz about Miami and Miami Beach: its emerging arts and cultural scene, the music, fashion, and film industries; the Art Deco preservation movement, not to mention the images of Miami Vice—all these combined, with the club scene, drug scene, tragic AIDs epidemic, helped define Miami in the 1980s and 90s. It changed after Gianni Versace was murdered around the corner from The Wolfsonian in 1997. Ocean Drive was then a glamorous European destination and the seductive backdrop for international image-makers. You were a big part of the preservation movement. Miami Beach for sure was transitioning from a party place defined by nightlife, beach life, sex, and drugs to something that was becoming a little bit more serious about itself. It began to take its architecture and history more seriously. Culture and creativity were not only seeded but blooming. So, I think, maybe your use of the word "colonization" works both from people on the outside and the inside. You were an insider, and you saw there was a ripe opportunity to make your mark, right?

Micky: Yes! And we were seeking to create an identity. As Miami's identity had always been made by the colonizers--or others--we didn't have a chance to create our own. But what we did was like that song from Pal Joey, "plant you now, dig you later." It was a collective movement. It was a collective consciousness. It wasn't spontaneous. It was a drive to change and to make something. And we could only do it if we joined together. And that was the wonderful thing in Miami. How many associations? How many individuals? How many people and organizations joined together with this collective consciousness? Now we really do have an identity, but it started in that period. And Art Basel, of course, was a sign of approval and general worldwide acceptance.

Photos courtesy of Wolfsonian FIU

MAKING MIAMI

Cathy: Well, I would say we had multiple identities, over time, and some came and went and maybe never took root. At one point, Miami was an exotic place to travel, then a tourist and beach destination, a retirement community, and a place for immigrants and refugees. We welcomed it all. We always have had our share of dreamers, schemers, and propagandists. Our identity was frequently commodified. Maybe that’s why your vision for The Wolfsonian made so much sense here.

Micky: The colonizers!

Cathy: Miami seemed to glamorize what you call colonizers. But you well know how much our city offers. The natural environment is lush, the light is stunning, and the colors of the Art Deco district were so beautiful. The ingredients were there. Maybe it took outside recognition to give the locals confidence. And even though you were sort of on the outside, you were an insider, too. You grew up here, but you weren't here all the time. You saw it probably from different perspectives, don't you think?

Micky: Yes, but you couldn't take the kids out of Miami. They're so in love with it because what's been built is like an imperial city. We're a world-class city economically, technologically, culturally, socially, and medically. In business, too - banking, insurance. All that developed in the period in which we're talking about because we were given an opening. We were given a chance to express ourselves because we had a like-minded and empathetic new population. People had empathy. Especially with the Cubans. Do you remember? When the Cubans came, the empathy that was expressed is very little spoken of today. But the community accepted and took in new immigrants. There was a real sense of community, and that has stayed with us. Perhaps less intense in the beginning, but it did show the city's willingness to join and cooperate in this collective consciousness.

Cathy: I think you’re saying the period around 1996 to mid-2010s was a period when Miami's identity started to shift and take root, and it's still going on today. So, what happens when the so-called colony becomes permanent?

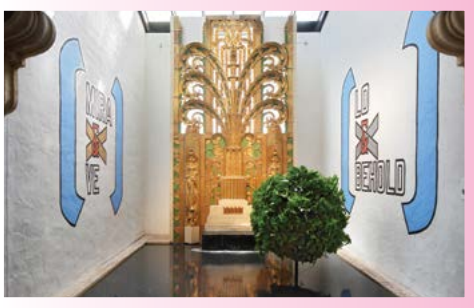
Micky: There are dangers. Look at the “ex-colonial” world. The colonies, at a certain point, took the wrong direction and went off unilaterally. If you look at the tragedy of those times, you can see the dangers that are obvious also for us. We can make terrible errors and take the wrong direction.

Cathy: In your mind, does the usage of “colonization” have a negative connotation when you speak of it? Because somebody reading this might not understand what you mean. You look at the world through the language of your collection and lens of the institution you created. What do you mean by “colonization?”

Micky: My interest is not in the word but the result. It’s both negative and positive. We’re in a period now, in the crisis period, where we could go the wrong way.

Cathy: Culture has been anchored, but it also is threatened by the affordability crisis. Intentionally or not, I think Art Basel indirectly contributed to that.

Micky: They were imported. And you know, I can criticize what people are doing for what Miami became, even though it developed an identity. There were negative criticisms of the city and there were criticisms of former colonial states, which have gained an identity, and which are highly criticized. The result, indeed, looked good but, in fact, it was negative. I won't go into the price of overdevelopment, the social impact, or the resulting transportation gridlock.



Lawrence Weiner, (LO & BEHOLD) (MIRA & VE), Site-specific instalation for Art Basel Miami Beach, 2006

Cathy: But that's what I was going to say. At a certain point, at least on South Beach, people came in and recognized the opportunity. You wanted to do something in your home state. You saw an opportunity. So, you were, so to speak, a good colonizer. You didn't have intentions to exploit or harm. You and many others were bringing resources not extracting them.

Micky: Yeah, that was me, but look at those who tore down the historic architectural Art Deco properties...With the errors we're making now and the lack of zeal for preservation, people seem more interested in money-making, ornament rather than substance. We have an identity but we're not safeguarding it, as far as I see. We are being sloppy, and we're not being rigorous at all in maintaining the aims and the goals of what was meant to be. We've been irresponsible ecologically. You know better than I.

Cathy: I think everybody values the impact of Art Basel. It brought people to buy art, which was a good thing. It bolstered the economy and confidence of the city. It put Miami's cultural richness, diversity, and beauty in the spotlight. But then, one could say the City’s success has resulted in some of the inequities we see today. Do you agree?

Micky: Well, I do, but I think, we're not being cautious, and we're not being scrupulous and engaged in the mission. The city has developed. We have wonderful indications of the city, the hospitals, the foundations, wonderful things. But we really are a little lax in the maintenance of what was hoped to be.

Cathy: The Wolfsonian provides a valuable historical perspective and context to understanding the forces were are at play in the past and are relevant still today.

Micky: It's the documentarian of our time. Don't ever let people think it's a museum. It's not the “house of the muses.”

Cathy: Do you think you could have the Wolfsonian in any other city? It's an amazing success story. The Wolfsonian provides an invaluable historical perspective and context to understanding the forces that were at play....

Micky: Here is where it was meant to be.

JENNA BALFE

RADICAL SUBCULTURES OF OUR CITY

CONVERSATIONS



MAURICIO ABASCAL

Photos courtesy of Jenna Balfe

MAKING MIAMI

Jenna Balfe: Hi, my name is Jenna Balfe and I will be talking with Mauricio Abascal about the early art scene in the late 90s, early 2000s in Miami, Florida.

Mauricio Abascal: That's right. Hello.

Jenna: Hey, do you want to start with the beginning for us, which was New World [School of the Arts]?

Mauricio: I want to first acknowledge that, Miami is a relatively big city. It's a much larger city now than it was at that time. There were probably several different artistic subcultures in the late 90s and early 2000s. I don't want to suggest that we were the only one, but this is the one that we were part of. And in comparison to a lot of what we would see out there, it was unique in some ways. I definitely interfaced with other sorts of art scenes like the graffiti and mural scene. It's obviously far less say, like interfacing with conventional society, dance scenes, music scenes, whatever. But in particular, this art scene that we are going to talk about is one that focused more on contemporary, fine art, and radical takes on fine art, etc. My introduction to it was when I went to New World College downtown. I think I was 17 or 18 when I started going there. No, I was older. I was 19. So it's like 1999.

I'm a punk ass kid, from Miami. Super weird, very queer for the time when no one was being queer. And I started going to New World and experimenting. They were pretty loose with what would be called art there and the curriculum. So got to do a lot of experimenting. And while I was there, I met so many people. A handful of people were like me- young artists that were frustrated, sort of rebellious, and wanting to break shit down. And also frustrated because none of us had any money! We could barely afford a place to live, much less have studios to work in and galleries to present our work in and all that sort of stuff. So it became a thing to have art shows out of your house. And if you could afford it, to have an extra room that could be your studio or maybe share studio space with someone else. So there were some old abandoned warehouses that were unbearably hot in the summer because there was no air conditioning, no toilet or anything, but at least you have a place to work on your large sculptures or paintings or whatever! So I'm sure you remember this clearly, but there were these few individuals that rented a, what was it? Like a three or four-bedroom house?

Jenna: Yeah. Maybe a five-bedroom!

Mauricio: Yes, a five-bedroom. It had a sizable backyard and was just off Biscayne Boulevard on 23rd or 24th street.

Jenna: It was.

Mauricio: And they fit this description of kind of punky, mostly Hispanic descent, kind of weirdo, rebellious artists that like wanted to experiment a whole bunch and wanted to be collaborative in art making. They did not have the income to have these nice fancy art studios and didn't have the notoriety or fame yet to be invited to show in nice white wall galleries. So they showed at their house.

Jenna: And it was called The House.

Mauricio: Yes, The House.

Jenna: Pretty clever. And I remember it was all boys. It was Bhatki [Baxter], Martin [Oppel], Tao [Rey], and I think Daniel Arsham.

Mauricio: Daniel Arsham, yeah.

Jenna: And then next door it was "the girl's house," which was Naomi [Fisher], Ali [Prosch], and Hernan [Bas] who lived there. I spent a lot of time there also. I remember a little bit of rivalry between the houses, which was interesting. The boys had this sort of real frat vibe to it in a weird way, but obviously nothing like a real fraternity, but a little bit. And I was just so amazed that there was a house that my friends were renting; I was just a young person being amazed at their ability to do that. And a lot of things happened. This was around 2000 to 2004 maybe? I felt like I was living a million different lives there and always wanting to be part of it.

Mauricio: Jenna, you cut out for a second. Repeat what you just said. Always wanting to be part of it?

Jenna: Yes, I wanted to be part of it, but it did feel a lot like a boys club...especially at The House. I love them and I was happy to be part of it, but that was a thing. I hope no one gets mad at me for saying that, LOL! Personally, I hadn't found my specific practice just yet, but there are two things I wanted to mention. One of them was the end of those houses. I remember they got the notification that they were going to tear it down, and Naomi's response was "Well, we're going to just have the end all be the craziest photo shoot of all time!" And she invited a bunch of us to go nuts with fake blood and machetes and sledgehammers. So we were destroying her room, covered in blood - some fake some real, nearly dying like every 30 seconds, but it was just kind of wild mayhem!

Mauricio: There was this real blood at some point, right? Didn't someone get gashed by one of the machetes?

Jenna: Yeah, I think Romulo [Del Castillo] was there. I think he got gashed, I think I got cut. But it felt really honest to what the experience was, just kind of this beautiful violence in the acts of being ripped from something that felt like the game.

Mauricio: Almost like a grief practice too. Knowing that this place was going to be torn down and with it those four or five years of this sort of punky collaborative art community was being destroyed as well and dispersed. And so how better to celebrate that than with machetes and sledgehammers and fucking real blood.

Jenna: And I think it felt like that for everyone involved creatively. That shit was gorgeous. I did remember another thing that happened around this time, which was... Do you remember when I did the Kurt Cobain tribute show?

Mauricio: Yes! That was a little later when friends of ours started being able to rent actual warehouse spaces. That was Manny's space, right? It was Manny's warehouse space.

Jenna: It was always what I wanted to do. I wanted to bring people together and I was obsessed with Kurt Cobain and it felt really cool to me. And it was at a Dacra space. That's a good way to summarize it. Do you remember how easy it was to get a space there back then?



Photo courtesy of Naomi Fisher

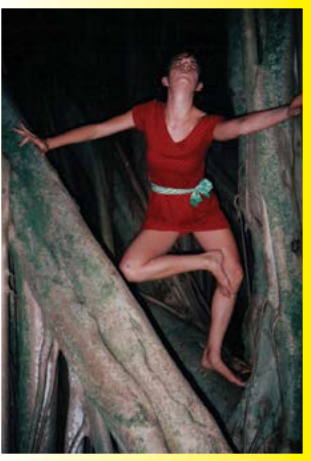


Photo courtesy of Naomi Fisher

Mauricio: Yes! It's really fascinating and horrifying too, because now being older and understanding better how society works and how real estate speculation works, we didn't realize it at the time because we're all in our late teens, early twenties, mid-twenties. But to us, what it seemed like was like was, "Oh, sweet. They're recognizing that artists are needed in society and that we do cool shit, and we push the envelope and all this sort of stuff. So they're giving us free spaces to work in and to show in like free gallery spaces and free studio spaces!" And we thought it was just the tits because we could never afford to pay for these spaces. And then here we are, Naomi had a space and tons of people, who else? There was a bunch of people that suddenly had these spaces, big beautiful studio spaces, with air conditioning and everything!

Jenna: Everything. And it was so easy. It felt like in my young little mind, I definitely had a sense that it was some bullshit, that it was some gentrification thing, but at the same time it was great for us and it developed this entire community. It's just frustrating though because all of this did spring up in Miami and there was a lot happening, and then it feels like Art Basel came to town and just kind of like, I don't know- wiped it out?

Mauricio: It decimated the connections, at least within this art community that we're talking about. It tore everybody and everything apart and really celebrated some people, really incentivized some people and pulled them directly into the art speculation market. And then the rest of us that were like, "Nah, dog, I don't want to do that shit with my art." I don't want to sell that stuff, or I don't want these people speculating fucking hundreds of thousands of dollars on pieces that I produce from the tenderest parts of my soul. Some of us chose that path and some didn't. Now our friends were in the VIP section and it was harder to access them, and it felt like a dissolution of our tribe. First by the real estate speculators and second by the art speculators.

Jenna: I remember it was after I did that 10-year anniversary show, and I had everyone in it, every single person we knew- Hernan, Bhatki, Naomi, you, me, Esti [Estibaliz Montañez-Brooks], Tao, Ali, all the homies. And then I remember Naomi was like, oh, you should have a solo show at the gallery. And I did that, and I was just like, I don't know. I remember Fred Snitzer came and said I should do something in the project room. And I decided I was just going to go to school in Massachusetts.

Mauricio: Both of us kind of left Miami. I think that's part of what informed our choice. You're back in Miami now, I'm not. But part of what informed us leaving was how quickly it broke apart. A bunch of folks felt deeply hurt by having touched that actual collaborative creative community and been a part of it. We saw that we could build something grassroots with no money and no fame, and we just watched it be like torn apart by capitalism and speculation in particular, it was really disheartening.

Jenna: Yes. I've watched it happen again and again and again. Even more recently with the 777 mall. I know this is outside of that situation, but I do think it's relative. We had a studio downtown from 2018 to 2021, almost. They got us in there and we were doing all this great stuff, and then suddenly "All right, everybody it's time to go!" We're going to do something real with it now. And that's always the vibe. It's like the real respect for art and the community that supports art is just not there on a money level, I guess.

Mauricio: Just to say one more thing, I realize now in my later years that there's two totally different worlds that people might be referring to when they talk about fine art or high art, or just art in general. There's the art that is for entertainment, for

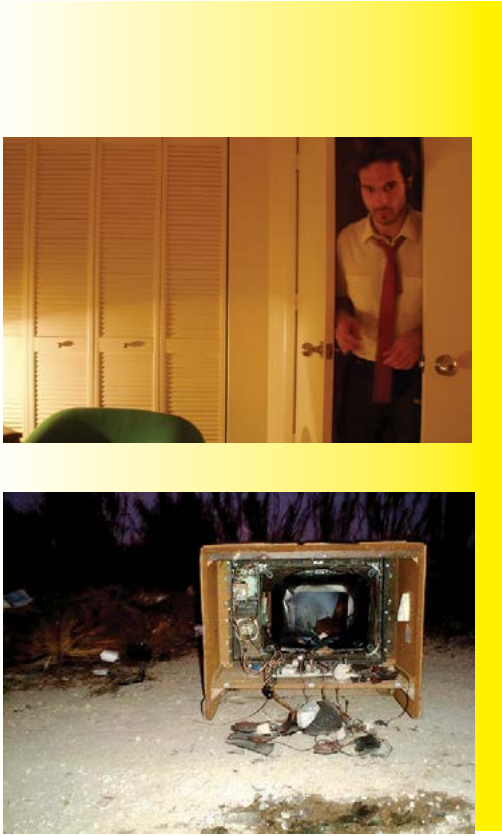
speculation, for the arts business, and great, I'm glad that exists. It's a way of distributing culture, sometimes pedaling culture, but that's fine. I'm not saying that it's all terrible, but there's something completely and utterly different from the real thing. It's like you and I getting together and it's painful if I don't express these subtleties that I perceive in the world. It actually kills me a little bit if I keep quiet about the things that I perceive about these beauties that I can synthesize and I have to convey them in some form or another. And sometimes, language doesn't permit me to.

What comes out of that is a completely different beast. And it doesn't want to be part of commerce. It doesn't want to be part of speculation and capitalism. It doesn't want to be part of any business or anything. It just wants to be shared among people. Sorry to wax poetic on it, but it's just something that's freaking clear to me. That's how I want to engage with it. And it doesn't mean that I'm better than anybody else, and that's not what I'm trying to say. But I think that you and I and several people we know have been confused by that dichotomy over the years. And hopefully, we're able to see it more clearly now and work from there.

Jenna: Hopefully. It's tricky because I'm trying to live off of my art, and I do think that there needs to be more support, more structures in place so the artists can not just create great art, but create crappy art and go through their process in a way that's more honest and functional and real. Now it's just make the best thing or be forgotten. Be a generational hero or your trash. That's such a privileged and myopic and shitty perspective, and it's one that's the most loudly championed by collectors and galleries and labels and everyone. That's what I got. So thanks for listening.

Mauricio: So much more to say here, but I think that's it for now.

Jenna: I know. Signing off!



Mauricio Abascal, video still from *Dragonflies & Bluejays*



Photo courtesy of Naomi Fisher

RHONDA MITRANI

SYNERGY AT THE MITRANI WAREHOUSE

CONVERSATIONS



Mitrani Warehouse, Mural by R&R
Studios, photo courtesy by Robin Hill

CAROLINA GARCÍA JAYARAM

Photos courtesy of Rhonda Mitrani

Rhonda Mitrani: I'm so excited that I get to reminisce about this time in our lives, in the art community with you, one of my dearest friends. So many people came through our warehouse, but I am the luckiest knowing that our friendship is rooted in that space. Do you remember when you walked through the doors to share the idea you were developing with your partner?

Carolina García Jayaram: I remember it like yesterday. There was an open staircase and that infamous conveyor belt just as you entered to the right and I was with my LegalArt co-founder Lara O'Neil. We were first-year law students at the University of Miami. Neither of us grew up in Miami and were totally unfamiliar with Wynwood. So here we are rolling up on this unmarked warehouse in the middle of this basically abandoned neighborhood where there's nothing around but other unmarked warehouses. I found it - and you - because my boyfriend at the time, the artist Jason Ferguson, told me that you had available space where his studio was and we were looking for our first office for LegalArt. As soon as we walked in, there you were. It was this instant, energetic connection I felt with you. We went up those stairs, and you were chatting about your vision for the building. First, you introduced me to your co-founder of the documentary film festival.

Rhonda: Juan Carlos Zaldivar, from *The Florida Room Documentary Film Festival*.

Carolina: Upstairs, you showed me your sister Dina's space, then her former husband, Andres' studio, and Jason's which he shared with his creative collaborators, Brandon Opalka and Christian Curiel, of Fe Cu Op. Being there, we felt for the first time that LegalArt was going to become something. I really felt like this was an official beginning for us in so many ways; being part of this community and understanding what was taking shape in Miami. You were pivotal in that, in introducing me to that community that shaped the next many years for us.

Rhonda: We were grateful to have met talented risk-takers like you, who came through the door because we hardly advertised - it was always word of mouth. And that happened for 18 years.I don't think Magnús Sigurðarson wasn't there yet or Kerry McLaney. We also had Ecoist, a handbag company that used recycled gum wrappers, and who went on to start Plant the Future with Paloma Teppa.

Carolina: Oh yes, I had one of those bags! We all did - which is what was so beautiful about that period. It was truly a grassroots movement that used whatever scraps and resources were around. We were young, and we had all this time and many creative people around us who we supported and who supported us. There was a beautiful openness that was unique to Miami with different disciplines coming together in a way that was not at all pretentious. And your space, the Mitrani Warehouse, was emblematic of the idea that so many different kinds of people without any preconceptions, creating the perfect conditions for collaboration. It was bubbling up all over Wynwood. You had Rocket Projects opening down the street and Box, Locust Projects, and Dustin Orlando's space, all these really cool artist-led initiatives. Up the road, the Design District was just closed-up buildings for the most part, waiting to be discovered. These neighborhoods did not exist as they do today. It was all because of people like you and Dina who happened to have access to a space, and had a vision and a willingness to let it flourish organically.

MAKING MIAMI

Rhonda: It was so organic because we had taken this old warehouse that my parents had since '79. Dina and I decided to dedicate our time to creating this gathering space for the arts. We had a vision and we worked well together. We got lucky with our good synergy. We had no set agenda, but we were mindful in how we curated the studios. It was an eclectic mix between art spaces like Alejandra Von Hartz gallery, a theater company, indie fashion designers, and a post-production studio. The mix was key.

Carolina: Yes. And it exposed Lara and I to what the art community was experiencing in a quickly changing landscape and what artists needed. When we started to get grants and national exposure, I quickly learned that no art schools in the country were teaching business skills. There was no discipline around the business of art which is why LegalArt resonated at the time. And then in comes Art Basel which introduced what was happening in Miami to the rest of the world. This was the catalyzing moment that propelled the city of Miami forward culturally. We had the conditions for that to happen. We had the serious collectors, visionary landlords, many talented young artists and curators, and people like Lara and I, or Michael Spring from [Miami Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs] who were the support systems for the community, all coming together and feeling free and open and experimental. It was such a cool and heady time and I look back now with a deep appreciation for so many people who took those risks.

Rhonda: Timing is everything. Everyone in that neighborhood was doing their thing. Tony Goldman was a big part of the spark that lit this movement. When you shared the concept of LegalArt with us, we understood that it would be an integral part of not only our warehouse but the art community. The possibility hadn't existed for artists before and we hosted mostly artists. And then it evolved into Cannonball, which was an incredible organization for Miami.

Carolina: From the beginning, LegalArt was a response to what the artists needed. I remember my friend, the artist and co-founder of Dimensions Variable, Frances Trombly, telling me, "We have nowhere to work because everything's so expensive." So, after we left your warehouse, we went on to build a really affordable residency program with another generous landlord, Chris MacLeod, who had the foresight to understand that artists are the ones who really build a neighborhood. Our then-board chair, the artist Daniel Arsham, designed the space and it was there for several years. Artists paid \$100 a month for everything - rent, Wi-Fi, utilities, the whole thing. By then I was living in Chicago and Chris Cook was doing a great job running what became Cannonball. It's challenging now because the city has gotten even more expensive, and many artists have left. That's why I'm so excited about your new building coming soon in North Miami!

Rhonda: We were lucky because we had this warehouse for so long and people would poke fun at us because we were basically non-profit. But the artists were committed to our space, our events and happenings. R&R Studios, Pancho Luna were there for eight years plus. It was not just a tenant-landlord relationship, it was a growing movement. I still remember driving to South Beach and convincing Marina Kessler Gallery to move to Wynwood. It was a risk, but the rent was cheap and the studios were huge! We were just interested in covering the bills and creating this arts community that began to thrive and it was such an incredible time for new ideas. One day Dina announced, "Okay, I'm going to open up my photography gallery", which is something she dreamed of doing after working in New York for so long. I thought, "Okay, I work in film and there's no space in Miami that solely dedicates itself to video art." So the Screening Room Miami was born.



Carola Bravo exhibition,
The Screening Room

before, it was risky and experimental. The Knight Foundation supported us which was very validating. What we built was a collective idea to design a unique neighborhood that focused on the arts. How do you feel it's gone since you have been there?

Carolina: Well, artists will always find places to work and make a community. And though it's become prohibitively expensive here for so many people, there's still a lot of us who believe in artists here. But what needs to shift is the notion that the bottom line of art is money, whether that's buying and selling work or attracting real estate investment. The bottom line value of art is culture and meaning. You can't monetize that, but you need to make it financially sustainable. We have to disassociate the money from the purpose, knowing artists are the soul of any great city. I hope that we can work with the city and developers to create subsidized housing and more protected spaces for artists and experimentation.

Rhonda: Absolutely. Dina and I are trying to do just what you're describing - to create art spaces that are affordable for the artists in the community.



Aziz and Cucher
exhibition curated by
Tami Katz-Freiman, The
Screening Room

Carolina: Buildings like yours inspire others to follow. What's the city we all imagine for our families, for ourselves as we get older? Is it a city that's just about another generic condo building, another theatrical Vegas restaurant? I don't besmirch any of that - that's fine. That's part of a city, too. But if you rob a city of its heart and soul, which is forged by local artists, you're going to get Vegas at the end of the day. We're a global city with so much creative energy, and not just among artists anymore, but innovators, tech folks, and entrepreneurs. The right ingredients remain, but the challenges become greater the bigger the city becomes, so your strategy has to change.

Rhonda: Well said. So...we can't wrap up this conversation without talking about the great time we had in the Warehouse parking lot. DJ Le Spam, so many drummers, so much dancing...

Carolina: Yeah, there were a lot of late-night parties... Might explain why it's hard to remember everything that happened!





Rhonda: There was as much dancing as there was art making in those days. We had a lot of fun and that can't be discounted because that energy of love, friendship, and community was the fuel that kept us going. We were very tight and we remain very tight, but let's see what happens next.

Carolina: I hope that as people learn more about what happened here, they understand the magic of that time must be protected and cultivated.

Rhonda: Thank you so much for today. I'm so glad we were able to look back at such a special time in Miami. When we were living it, we had no idea how significant it would be. It was an art renaissance. But we are committed to manifesting new ideas! I can't wrap up without saying that we're all very excited to see how this show that you and Vivek are putting together is going to turn out. The installations and this book, and we're so grateful that you're paying homage to what went down in Wynwood.

Carolina: We know that the exhibition can only tell so much of the story, which is why this book is so important to us. It opens the aperture from the show's focus to allow people to appreciate that it took a whole city and many different kinds of daring people who were invested in the arts, the artists, and each other to make it happen.

Rhonda: It was a really special time. Well, thank you. I love you so much.

Carolina: Thank you. I love you so much, too.

Rhonda: That was perfect.

...if you rob a city of its heart and soul, which is forged by



local artists, you're going to get Vegas at the end of the day.

TM SISTERS TASHA & MONICA LOPEZ DE VICTORIA

CONVERSATIONS



JIAE HWANG

THE WILD WEST OF THE SOUTH

Tasha (TM Sisters): The *Collabo* show! That's the moment to talk about! It was the first time I had ever seen everyone showing up. I think it was a space that was upstairs.

Jiae Hwang: Was it The House show?

Tasha: No, it was the *Collabo* show where everyone just would go and bring stuff and then paint on top of people's stuff and just mess up everyone's artwork. It was like no one had any beef, no one cared. It was just really fun.

Jiae: Was it Naomi and Hernan's space?

Monica (TM Sisters): I think it was next to Naomi in Hernan's space because they (or Bhakti) got it from Dacra, some random empty raw space there.

Tasha: Betty [Beatriz Monteavaro] and Gavin [Perry] were there and just doodling on things and we were putting up photocopies and drawing on people's stuff. If there was paint there, we would just paint a line over all of that, up and down it. Then you know it just kept getting plastered up with thick layers of everyone's artwork. At the end of that month... it's been so long, I can't remember how much time it was... 30-40 artists that just made stuff on top of each other's stuff and it kept going in layers and there were no rules and it was so fun! We blasted music!

Jiae: It was very fun to collaborate with other people that we'd normally see from outside of school.

Tasha: Yes.

Jiae: There were a lot of young kids who were still in New World like you (Tasha) and I, and there were other artists- older people who had already been established like Gavin & Betty. They were just hanging with us kids.

Tasha: We're the older ones now... the kids would come if we did something like that.

Jiae: It was so interesting to see how much random space we had access to.

Tasha: It was abundant.

Jiae: Also, a lot of them were unoccupied or just used as storage. So they gave us the opportunity to like, "Oh you want to do a show?" And we were like, "we just wanna like borrow it for one week!"

Tasha: You could talk to someone and they would say, "Sure we have this huge building. Can you do anything with it?" And they open this door and you think that's the room, but they're like, "No, no, no. This is just the entrance." Then another door would open and it's like a 5-story room!

MAKING MIAMI

Photos courtesy of TM Sisters and Jiae Hwang-Ruiz

Jiae: This was the beginning of gentrification and making the community more fun, attractive, and friendly. We all were young artists that would go to a bunch of raw warehouse districts and we would walk in the middle of the night looking for a little show that we found on a little flyer, like...

Tasha: “Is it that way? No, that's not the right number. Okay. That way, that door, okay, there's a tunnel down there.” Hahaha! “Let's see if it opens.” Ha!

Jiae: It was fun that a lot of people who were collectors, they were really excited about these kids who had just started to make art. No one knew them. We were still in school, but the collectors were like, “Yeah, we support you by giving these spaces, you can borrow them.”

Tasha: “We trust you.”

Monica: So the Collabo show, the one that I think was memorable for most of us was in 2005...

Tasha: Yeah, maybe? I'm sure we can look it up and see what year it was. But it was the first one and Bhatki organized it and invited us... Everyone was welcome to go in there and mess things up or add things or make it more beautiful or cut holes in random objects.

Monica: Yes.. and it was the show that Bhakti happened to be around when Hans Ulrich Obrist wanted to go in!! Then he put us in *Uncertain States of America: American Art in the 3rd Millennium!*

Jiae: Yeah!, I'm just thrilled by the amount of trust the collectors had given us, to a bunch of kids. How do you know we're not going to just...

Monica: burn it down??! Ha!

Tasha: Yes

Monica: You don't know what happens inside during the making. No one knows what happened inside. It was a bunch of punk artists and we were all just making whatever stuff we liked.

Jiae: But you don't even know our parents. We're not even 20.

Monica: Dangerous.

Jiae: No background checks.

Monica: I know! Yes, that was amazing.

Jiae: I love the trust that they gave us space to make things just for the sake of making.

Monica: That's what it was like to me, it's what made it so strong. I think we all had the ability to just play together and make disasters and clean them up and make them look interesting and it was fun to challenge ourselves and be inspired by each other too. Seeing Jiae's little drawings and the way someone could lay out space and then other people's colors and just how we all could layer it on top. That's why, Tasha, you and I decided to document that one and put the green screen up. We just showed up and people could make appointments or whoever was working there could get shot on video.

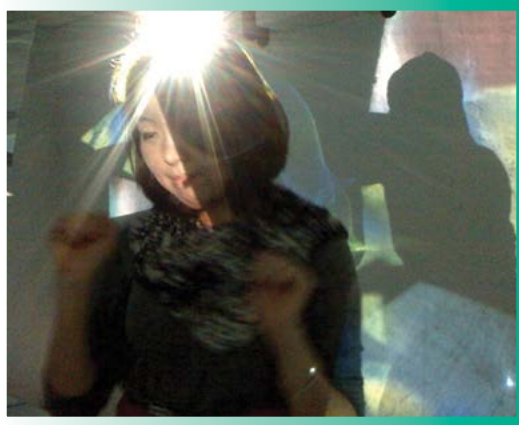


Photo courtesy of Juan Ruiz

Jiae Hwang, *Take My Hand To The Farthest Star*, 2006



Jiae Hwang, *RISE ABOVE* (installation view) 2012, Central Fine

TM Sisters & Samuel Lopez De Victoria, *Super Bolt with Bursting Bonus*, 2006



TM Sisters, *WHIRL CRASH GO!*, 2009, Locust Projects.

Photo courtesy of Stian Roenning

Tasha: I don't think there were appointments! Were there? I never had a book of appointments. Haha.

Jiae: You guys were that organized?

Tasha: Noooooo! We had it up and whoever wanted to do a movement in front of this green screen for us could. One that we barely even knew how to use, with all these wrinkles in it.

Jiae: “Let's make it greeeeeeeen!!”

Tasha: “We don't know, but we will just figure it out later”....

Monica: And later working it out digitally was a mess! The lighting, ugh!

Tasha: It was a little time capsule of what was happening and whoever showed up was open to make together.

Monica: I think it was cool that we all knew that it was a special moment in Miami's history. Everybody wanted to document it or keep it as a memory of something that we were a part of. I think a bunch of us said it was the beginning. Art Basel was suddenly a crazy planet that landed in Miami at that time.

Tasha: Well, that's why the name of that supposed TM Sisters piece was pretty much everyone's name!

Monica: Yeah, it was *Superpowers* with: this person, that person, this person, another person, etc. Shared forces. That was so fun because I felt like everybody did have a creative superpower and everybody was using it in the *Collabo* show. We all had different ways of interacting with our superpowers and passed it on and took it from someone else too.

Tasha: Well the point is, you hold onto this little burst of whatever came to them and you kept passing it on, not holding onto it. That was the energy that was felt throughout Miami at the time and it happened to be very distilled and very focused in that room, for that show. That was the feeling... someone would need help with something or advice or assistance or supplies or a tool. Everyone was a phone call away, “Hey, I need help with this or do you know how to do this? or where is this?” you know?

Jiae: Who has a truck?!!!

Tasha: Yes! “Who has a truck!!”

Jiae: Hahahahaha!

Tasha: And then a truck comes in an hour!

Monica: “I have to carry it across town!” and then, “Oh no, it doesn't fit where I thought it was going to fit. I need more help!”

Tasha: Or borrowing a projector or anything needed, you know. Everyone was completely generous with each other, including people who had spaces and supporting by showing... Everyone showed up to each others' happenings! Really supportive and I didn't ever feel like there was any...



TM Sisters, *Self-portrait by Tasha & Monica*, 2006

Monica: Jealousy?

Tasha: I do feel like everyone was supportive and I'm sticking to that. It was just beautiful.

Monica: Yeah.

Tasha: Dialogue was open, people were actively creating and it was the "Wild West" of the South. Who knew what was happening down here? There were so many resources available. Even though you had to work hard to make something happen, it happened because whoever was doing something was a hard worker.

Monica: Also, because we couldn't help it. The people who were making, made it because that's how we needed to communicate our art or just making it or just the process of making it. It wasn't fueled by money at all because that wasn't ever an option. Hahaha.

Jiae: Most of us were equally broke!

Tasha: We either went to art exhibitions because we actually knew the work ahead of time and really liked it. Or we knew at least there'd be pastelitos there, or something!

Monica: Ahh! And some wine that we could fuel our bodies with a little longer for free.

Jiae: I think most of us were just experimenting to find our magic in our own language. It was more like we were free to experiment without the burden of having the type of work we had to fit into because we were completely unknown and it gave us so much freedom to find our voice, find our magic, and just make and just go... to see how far we can go and I think that's what was most exciting. We didn't have alternative motives. We didn't even know people's names to impress. Hahah! That's how lost were.

Tasha, Monica, & Jiae: Ha! Ha!! Yes.



Test scene for TM Sisters & Samuel Lopez De Victoria interactive video (video game) *SuperBolt*, 2005



TM Sisters, *Future Time*, 2013



TM Sisters, *Superpowers* with Adler, Jen, David, Bhakti, Par, Chris, Christian, Brandon, Jacin, Ali, Joy, Martin, Gavin, Cooper, Natalia, Jason, Jay, Nick, Kathleen, Ellington, Bert, Tasha, Leyden, Hernan, Monica, Kevin, Ricky, Naomi, Tao, Robert, Paul, Daniel, Victor, Muriel and Mike, 2005



Debbie Attias rehearsing with performers in installation for TM Sisters, *WHIRL CRASH GO!*, 2009. Behind the scenes photo by ALLIGATOR JESUS.



Jiae Hwang, *Horizon Theory 2*, 2007

BROOK DORSCH

HOW THINGS HAPPEN IN MIAMI

CONVERSATIONS



Installation view of Ralph Provisero's *Traiettorie Architettoniche (or Everybody's got their own arrows)*, 2009 from *Celluloid Drag: Some Spaces Between Film and Architecture*, curated by Terri C. Smith, at Emerson Dorsch Gallery, 2009.

TYLER EMERSON - DORSCH

Photos courtesy of Brook Dorsch

MAKING MIAMI

Tyler Emerson-Dorsch: My first visit to your gallery in Wynwood was when I was working at the Miami Art Museum and went to see a show by Jay Ore, when did you start your gallery?

Brook Dorsch: I founded my gallery in 1991 in my small apartment off of Coral Way in Miami, at a time when most of the Miami art scene was based out of Coral Gables and Kane Concourse in Bal Harbor. The Coral Gables scene was mostly traditional Latin American, with the exception of Fred Snitzer and Genaro Ambrosino, who showed more challenging contemporary works. During those monthly visits, I met a number of younger artists, many of whom were attending the MFA program at the University of Miami under Walter Darby Bannard. After a few conversations and studio visits I decided to start exhibiting them in my 900-square-foot apartment. Some of the first shows were by Franklin Einspruch, Marc Aptakin, Jordan Massengale, Claudia Scalise, Brian Reedy, and later Darby Bannard as well.

Tyler: What was the most memorable show in those early days? Who were some of the artists that you worked and played with?

Brook: Definitely the Bob Party (a party at Bob Thiele's warehouse studio in North Miami) For the many Bob's in the group (Bob Thiele, Bob Huff, Bob Sindaleer, and Bob Chambers). I met Chambers at that party and while visiting Robin Griffiths studio we discussed an over-the-top show - that Chambers curated. It was called *Ball and Chain* and Chambers pretty much emptied out Robins' studio and house to recreate the dense and diverse collection that Robin had amassed over his entire life. We loaded 3 large 24' Uhaul trucks and packed the 900 square foot space that was my gallery. There were piles of cameras lined on a shelf, an outboard motor, furniture, couches, tools, manual grinding wheels for sharpening and tons of other stuff. Chambers created a maze within the space - it was immersive and overwhelming. The gallery was packed with this installation and people. It was a wild experience that was talked about for many years by everyone who visited that show. The exhibition went on to the early morning since people had to wait to get in. We took polaroids of groups hanging out on one of Robin's enormous couches that had been placed in the gallery. And it was a fully immersive environment into Robin's mind. As a sculptor studying at UM under Chambers, Robin kept everything - always finding value in all sorts of old items and detritus and as part of the materials for his sculpture.

Tyler: When did you leave that apartment gallery? How did you end up in Wynwood?

Brook: In early 1999 the landlord raised the rent, it was not very much and I could afford it, but I felt if I wanted the gallery to continue so I needed to buy my own space. In the fall of 1999, I put an offer on a 7000-square-foot warehouse in Wynwood. It was an old lamp factory. I had been looking in the area for a few months when this building came to market. It was actually two properties: a large warehouse which was an old lamp factory, and a small 3-bedroom house built in 1929. The house was actually a full-on crack house - with 3 rabid pitbulls and garbage all over the place. I was only able to get the house after the people who occupied it were arrested on other charges and



abandoned the pit bulls. And then once the crackheads were gone and we started having exhibitions in the main gallery and I was always showing the property around to people. I showed it to a number of artists, and we decided to start using it as a project space.

Tyler: What was the first show in the crack house? What was it like to open this very unusual home as an art exhibition space?

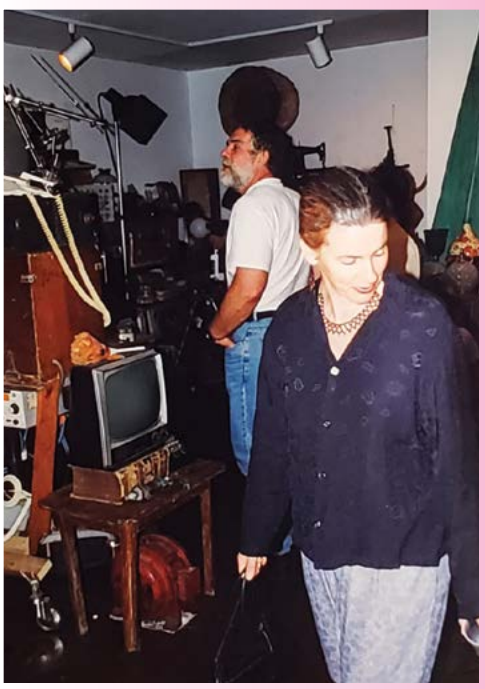
Brook: The show was called *Crack House* by Julie Khan and I. And they were photographs of that. Julie Khan had been taking over a number of years, a photographer, and she's also a video artist that I've known for a while. She did a show of eerie photographs, and we hung them inside the crack house on the walls that were covered in Latin Kings gang graffiti and slogans like "Good day to die" written on the wall. It was an ominous experience. At the same time we also had openings at the main gallery next door but the *Crack House* show was the big hit. I remember collectors like Marty Margulies and other big collectors coming to Wynwood for the very first time in the area and walking in. And Marty says, so this is a real crack house? And we said, yes, it is. And there was quite a bit of reference from the graffiti that was on the wall that we left intact. I remember standing outside on the normally very quiet street in Wynwood (since I was one of the only galleries there, besides Locust Projects, a block away), and it was quite a memory seeing a brand-new Rolls Royce parked in front of this crack house with a huge crowd of people looking to get in.

Tyler: Were there other exhibitions there as well?

Brook: The crack house had a number of other exhibitions, notably after that was David Rohn's *La Chateau de Pueblo* where David did a large immersive redecorating of the house and decorated it as if it was a model home. And then he showed up in drag as a realtor trying to sell the home and sell this modern community, this quaint community that he has developed in this former crack house in Wynwood, which was pretty prescient at the time for the amount of activity that now is happening in Wynwood. Prior to the time that this was happening in 2002, there was nobody really living in Wynwood, except for a number of artists.

Tyler: What else was happening in Miami during this time?

Brook: The *Chateau de Pueblo* was a major installation in the crack house space. It was also at the same time that The House gang in Edgewater was forming. José Diaz had Worm-Hole Laboratory in Edgewater even Box reopened in Wynwood for a short time. Eugenia Vargas was having these Home shows in her house near Davis Harbor. So there was really this trend of show art in houses, apartments, and small spaces. There was a lot of energy.



Ball and Chain, 1998



Tyler: When did the other galleries and collections come to Wynwood?

Brook: I believe 2003 after Wynwood was starting to become the main focus of the Miami art world. And this all started happening when I started there in 1999, 2000. And Rocket Projects, Bernice Steinbaum with the Rubells and the founding members of Locust Projects established the Wynwood Art District in advance of Art Basel Miami Beach, whose first iteration was 2002, mainly due to the September 11th attacks that delayed a lot of the shipping of all the artworks and had to be called off. But the Miami art scene was always morphing and slowly Wynwood became the center of the Miami art world for a few years. And we went from, I believe, about 8 or 9 galleries in 2001 to 30 galleries in 2003, to 70 galleries in 2007. And those were some of the years that I was the President of the Wynwood Art District. And it was amazing the explosion of Miami happening at that time, which really was just a great change and shift. It has now since dispersed. But that's how things happen in Miami.



LEYDEN RODRIGUEZ- CASANOVA

ACTIVISTS IN THE ART WORLD



Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, *Partition*, 2006. *Miami in Transition*, Miami Art Museum, curated by Lorie Mertes and René Morales.

RENÉ MORALES

René Morales: I believe you were the first artist I met when I returned to Miami in 2005, and I remember that first studio visit. I remember seeing the beautiful model you made of the home you grew up in, which was this subtle statement about how much Miami has changed. Soon after that, I did a few more studio visits and noticed the effect that real estate, particularly such a hyperactive, volatile, intense real estate market in Miami, has on culture, the development of art making, and the art community. That led to a big show at the Miami Art Museum (now PAMM) called *Miami in Transition* which was really about that same theme. That was one of those exhibitions that came out of direct conversations with artists like you. So I have you to thank for that. I'd like to try and get a sense of Dimensions Variable. What it is? What makes DV unique? What are your guiding principles for this institution?

Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova: For us, Dimensions Variable was something that came out of our practices. I have this history as one of the founders of Box, and it was a call to action at the time in the 90s to create a platform for the work being made here in Miami. We were partly inspired by the music scene out of DC at the time. It was independent and locally focused—it was about empowering the artists around them and giving a voice to new and emerging artists. It was a way to push back against the commercialization and corporatization of culture. With that in mind, we set out to do that in Miami. The Box was independent it was on our terms and our absolute autonomy. Ultimately, that model proved to be exhausting for me. Several years later, in about 2004, I had to exit the project but I think that spirit always stayed with me.

I met Frances Trombly before leaving Box and began focusing on our studio practice. Frances and I began to think about curating exhibitions that complemented what we were interested in, the kind of work we were making and looking at.

So we began to pitch some exhibitions to Locust Projects and David Castillo whom we were working with at the time. These shows, like Box were kind of the precursor to launching Dimensions Variable. We wanted to create an ecosystem in Miami to showcase the work of peers who needed more opportunities. At the same time to contextualize our work within a community, within our peers, but also nationally and internationally. Shortly after opening DV, we started inviting artists that we had met as we were traveling, on residencies, and exhibiting. Our studios were a part of that as a way to sustain our practices as we were also new parents.

As we evolve, it continues to be this idea of independence, freedom, and autonomy. But we have always asked... "How do you make, exhibit, advocate, and support work that may not always be accepted or acquired by the market?" And so it became this idea to create a platform that remains sustainable and independent—a place for experimentation and risk.

René: You know, I hear several things there that we can unpack. I'm glad you mentioned the DV structure, the model you all have pursued consists of artist studios conjoined with exhibition space. And I love what you said about how that model is very conducive to artists talking to each other, using each other as sounding boards, and helping each other think through their work. I think there's a great need for that wherever there's an artist community, particularly in a place like Miami, which is a very decentralized place geographically. When I first moved there in 2005, Wynwood was just starting to form, and it felt like a golden moment, there was a kind of critical mass of artists, and

studios within very close proximity of each other. And that kind of setting, particularly outside of the glare of really hard market and institutional attention, I think can be very productive for artists.

I've always felt DV has been such an important part of that ecosystem, but even more so when Wynwood became so gentrified that the artists got scattered out to the four winds. Right now having a home base, even as itinerant as it's had to be over the years, it has been very important, just the consistency of the institutional philosophy.

Leyden: Our mission has always been to support challenging and experimental practices and advocate for artists. If you advocate for artists, the work just follows—we want to try to create the sort of ecosystem that can give artists more agency within their community. Take a model like A.I.R. Gallery in New York, for example, it's a collective group of artists that are funding the project. They have been practicing collective ways to support a space that presents rigorous work and mitigates market and institutional attention. It functions independently to focus on the work. In a sense, that's what we're trying to embody.

René: In the case of Dimensions Variable, to argue that this space and a very handful of very small other spaces filter and in the process record the experience of Miami's developing art community. In a way, Dimensions Variable's history serves as a form of, or contributes to the archive of what Miami art has been. So let's step away for a moment from art and think about archives and why they're important, why projects like this are important in general, and why, it might be particularly important in a place like Miami.

Leyden: I've developed quite a fondness for archives, particularly with my conversations with my dear friend Anita Sharma, who's a professional archivist. Archives are so important, particularly with all the work that Frances and I have been doing throughout the years, we need to make sure that history is preserved. I think there's still a misconception about Miami—we all agree it's a young city. But there is rich history here and there has been for a long time. So we've just been more passionate about ensuring that all of these stories are told to better understand what our history is. When you have exhibitions that disappear



Outside view of Agustina Woodgate, *Endlessly Falling*, 2009 in the 1st DV space in Design District.



Installation view of, *10 A Decade*, featuring Tom Scicluna, Felice Grodin, Francisco Masó, Yanira Collado, and Geovanna Gonzalez.



from the record, they're not searchable on the web or are difficult to find because the books are out of print, it tends to degrade that rich history. I feel like in the past couple of years, Miami has been going through a process of believing in itself, understanding its history, and diving into its unique place geographically—the Caribbean, South America, and all the rich cultural places that inform Miami and its residents.

Within all of that cultural shift, we're focusing on ourselves more. There's a lot of talent here and Oolite Arts decided to focus on what's here with The Ellies Grants. Not just because it's great to support artists but because it's focusing on Miami finally. All of these resources, all of this attention on the artists working here. That was something that hadn't been done. We were always living in the shadow of other cities.

We're becoming more intentional in recording our histories, publishing, and in creating archives to make sure the city can find its history. We're doing our part to ensure that we're putting this information where people can find it just to try to continue to chisel away at this idea that the contemporary art scene in Miami started in 2002 with Art Basel. We want to end these misconceptions that continue to haunt us.



Erik Smith, *AABBCCDV*, 2012





We're becoming more intentional in recording these histories...



...creating archives to make sure that the city really can find its history.



SUSAN CARABALLO

WHILE WEARING MANY HATS

CONVERSATIONS



Susan Caraballo: I had some major flashbacks going through the flyers, press clippings, and programs. You designed most of them and did a great job! We basically had to do everything - from designing to writing press releases to cleaning bathrooms. That's what one has to do to run alternative spaces. I look back at that time and I am still not sure how we did it. How did we even make ends meet? And you and Carlos [Suarez de Jesus] started before I did. When did you open the experimental art lab? That was in Bird Road, right? And when did you move to Little Havana and start lab6?

Vivian Marthell: Ah yes! Carlos and I started the experimental art lab in 1995 and moved to the warehouses at Bird Road due to the fact that our neighbors in Kendall were not happy with the art we were drying on our lawn. At the time we were making huge tobacco leaves out of craft, paper and Rit dyes. This became the body of work titled *Urban Aborigines: Creating Organic Diasporas in the Mechanistic World*. We moved to Little Havana around 1996 to start lab6 and join our friends, Carlos Alves, JC Carroll and eventually you. You are right, we had to do everything!

Do you remember the crazy press kits we created and hand-delivered—from light up Saint Lazarus shrines to “welcome to the hood chancletas,” hair rollers and fly swatters? Remember the album press kits? The Tom Jones LP with panties included!

Two distinct programs that stood out for me during those years were our annual Babalú-Ayé celebrations and Café Neuralgia. They were a great opportunity to collaborate with artists of all genres and with the community at large. Remember the year you rented the Colombian jitney that would take people around Little Havana to all the art spaces?

Susan: You and Carlos were the masterminds behind those press kits. They were amazing and effective!

Yes, La Chiva Colombiana! Well, it was a communal effort between PS 742, lab 6, Pedro Portal's Studio, 6G Art Space run by Adalberto Delgado, Carlos Alves' Studio, Xavier Cortada's Studio who had a space near Brickell at the time, and maybe a few others. Our visitors loved riding it from space to space - several years before the Wynwood Arts Walk and at the beginning of Viernes Culturales. I think that was 2001, one year after we opened. Niurca Marquez and I started Artemis, the parent organization in 1999 and the space PS 742 in 2000, in an effort to support South Florida-based artists. Eventually, she decided to focus on her dance career. I later worked with Ever Chavez when he first arrived from Cuba, who eventually founded FUNDarte. And then you, Carlos and I started working together.

It was later in 2001, that we moved PS 742 to 6th Street from the original location on 8th Street, and took over the downstairs space and moved lab6 upstairs. Brigid Baker now runs 6th Street Studio in there.

Photos courtesy of Susan Caraballo and Vivian Marthell

MAKING MIAMI

VIVIAN MARTHELL

Surreal Saturdays was the series that I remember most fondly. It was held the first Saturday of the month and the program always included multiple artistic disciplines. I remember feeling that the performing and visual arts communities were so distinct. I really wanted to create a program that integrated both and thus Surreal Saturdays was born. And in 2002-2003, we had guest curators, every month, many of whom were also artists: Elizabeth Cerejido, Mark Koven, David Rohn, Michelle Weinberg, and many others. Looking back at it now, Surreal Saturdays were my first attempt at creating immersive experiences integrating many artists working in different mediums.



I learned so much running these spaces. It was my first foray into the visual arts having come from the performing arts. And years later, I became the Artistic Director at ArtCenter/South Florida (now Oolite Arts). I also learned very quickly how to make do with very little. It was like a “lived-experience” Masters in Arts Management. When I later went back to grad school for mine, I viscerally understood most of the scenarios they presented!



How do you think it helped shape you into the arts manager you are now?

Vivian: Well, I still consider myself an artist, creator, and collaborator even if my work sometimes involves spreadsheets :)

After lab6, Heather Maloney and I co-founded Inkub8, a collaborative film and performance collective. Then, I worked with Mary Luft at Tigertail Productions before moving to Toronto for a while to pursue studio art.

These days at O Cinema which Kareem Tabsch and I co-founded in 2008, my work still involves wearing many hats. Thankfully, I have an amazing team and we continue to work empowering, nurturing, collaborating with creators and arts organizations and presenting those works to our community. So, everything I’ve learned along the way feeds my vision for the future of arts and culture in our community.

Susan: I hear you. I am now creating artwork myself, multi-disciplinary, and always grounded in collaboration on some level. And I see my work as a curator also very collaborative and I definitely still have to wear many hats to pull things off!

Those were the best of times, as they say. However, I am grateful to have moved on and have more experience now to be able to support other artists and help their organizations and/or spaces flourish. I see the exhibitions and artist studios at Tunnel Projects, just down the street from where we were, and I just smile. Things transform, but luckily some things never change.

Well, I still consider myself an artist, creator, and

collaborator even if my work sometimes involves spreadsheets.



Juan Carlos "JC Agustin" Rodriguez inside of Wendy Wischer, *Within the White* installation, 2004

Photo courtesy of Wendy Wischer



Vivian Marthell and Carlos Suarez de Jesus in *Urban Aborigines*



CLAIRE BREUKEL

CONVERSATIONS



Bhakti Baxter, *Untitled*, 2007

SUSAN LEE-CHUN

Ed Young, *It Was Only a Blow Job*, 2008

Photos courtesy of Claire Breukel and Locust Projects

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF ARTISTS



Claire Breukel: Susan, we worked together at Locust Projects from 2007 to 2009. when Locust was on 23rd street in the middle of what is now called Wynwood. The area was completely different to how it is now. I mean, it's kind of crazy...

Susan Lee-Chun: You're right, sprinkled amongst the windowless warehouses Locust Projects was one of few art spaces in an industrial neighborhood. Brook Dorsch was a block away, Fred Snitzer and Kevin Bruk around the corner, and Rocket Projects and

Anthony Spinello less than a mile away.

Claire: The area was sparse and operated differently and we had the freedom to initiate projects to interact with the neighborhood. Do you remember Ed Young's rotating text mural series and a mural that said, "It was only a blowjob"?

Susan: Yes, he did four murals over one year. And that one statement piece had everyone talking about it in the neighborhood.

Claire: One day I was leaving the space and overheard a sex worker, who lived next door to Locust in a trailer, explaining the mural's meaning to her friend. She explained it in such wonderful practical terms and understood the work uniquely. It helped me realize that art reaches everyone and that everyone, through their interaction, adds to its meaning.

Susan: Yeah, that project turned out not only to be engaging to our neighbor, it turned heads of anyone who drove by- beyond our art community. Prior to working there, I felt that Locust Projects was one of very few highlights of the neighborhood because it was, a space founded by artists for artists. It was a project space to facilitate dialogue and interaction. I remember Jason Hedges creating a sense of community through his relational and participatory projects. I remember his one-night food project- the whole process of him cooking over a fire and serving people plates of lamb all night. His process facilitated interaction and dialogue between the artist and audience. It was an experience you had at Locust Projects and people came out to support it.

Claire: We do reminisce about the refreshing level of exchange that happened. It was a more intimate experience because the art world back then was smaller, so the opportunity to engage and attend all of our colleague's exhibitions was there. We saw this widespread community support with the exhibition *DREAM-CUM-TRU* by Clifton Childree which was overrun.

Susan: Can't forget it, because so many surprising things happened around that exhibition. One of which was that night the alarm went off, two police officers pulled up, walked in, and saw a figure in the dark and actually shot at it. It turned out to be Clifton's work...

MAKING MIAMI



Claire: It was a mannequin! It is incredible that Clifton found all the materials to create that show and worked in Locust Projects for a solid two months. His installation was a sprawling, satirical theme park, and visitors could go down a slide. Clifton did a performance during the opening, and the space was so crowded we had to close it down as the fire marshal arrived. His level of engagement and investment building an installation that he knew would get thrown away is so remarkable. Clifton is Miami-based, but most artists actually lived at, and had similar deep engagements, with the space.

Susan: That was a memorable work because people were welcomed to interact with the space. When an artist like Clifton is provided access to an open space, this is what happens— a project that pushes boundaries. It was like walking through the mind of the artist. Those moments are special and hard to come by, but I felt it was a common occurrence at Locust Projects. Do you remember Diego Bianchi's exhibition with the boat?

Claire: Yes, he placed a discarded “found” boat in the center of space as if it had been through a storm. We did everything on a shoestring budget then and we called artist friends, Lorie Beltran, Alejandro Contreras and Leandro Vazquez I think it was to help us dispose of the boat in a non-descript way after the show. We had an event beer sponsor Peroni, thanks to Lavinia Penna and I remember she loved the show and her calling a friend and saying, “I’m sponsoring this crazy show with an old boat and mud all over it you have to come see it.”

Susan: It was fun to have Diego Bianchi here and see him imagine the installation and bring it to life. A great part of working at Locust Projects was working with both local and international artists. Gean Moreno and Wes Charles were very active in expanding our local conversations to include artists outside of Miami.

Claire: You said something very important now: the involvement of Gean and Wes. When you and I worked at Locust, Westen Charles, COOPER, and Gean Moreno were still very involved in defining the vision and helping us seek out who to invite. Artists would apply and we also invited applications so having them involved was crucial to keeping Locust’s continuity. We tried to keep true to what the founders—including Elizabeth Withstandley who was then based in Los Angeles—were trying to achieve with the space.

Susan: Yes, because it was a space defined by artists and their mission was so valued and supported by the community.

Clifton Childree,
DREAM-CUM-TRU,
2008

Photo courtesy of
William Keddell

Claire: Gean, Wes, and Cooper also attended board meetings and really guided its artist-centric mission. Back then the board was a lot smaller with key people like Steven Lanster, Jorge Garcia, Debra Scholl, Amy Pollack, Dawn Fine, Debra Frank, who from the start provided consistent support for facilitating artists.

Susan: They really valued and loved meeting the artists.

Claire: We showed a range of artists as well. Magnus Arnason came from Reykjavik with his best friend, and they lived and worked at Locust for several days.

Susan: What I remember about Magnus's work is that he wanted to use a specific cooking browning sauce. It was an item that he felt was vital for the work, so we drove around town and finally found it at a local market. Whatever materials the artists needed to complete the work, we worked hard to get it. We would also reach out to artists and friends to help find whatever materials the artist needed all in the name of art. That was exciting!

Claire: That reminds me of the casket we sourced for Amber Hawk Swanson's real doll installation. I had to lie inside it to make sure it was the right size and Lorie Beltran drove me and the casket back to Locust. The installation consisted of a wall blocking us from the work with Amber’s naked real doll on the other side in a casket with a surveillance camera monitoring it. Visitors didn’t know we could watch them, and some people did the strangest things to that doll.

Susan: We also took Amber and her real doll to the XXX Convention to do research. It was the most fascinating experience because the interactions we had there had so

much to do with her work and revealed so much about her artist intent in real time. (This is where we also met Ron Jeremy!) These are the experiences I cherish from my time working at Locust—the engagement and conversations with our visiting or local artists.

Claire: It felt that everyone was involved in such an invested level, and there was such considered complexity around art production. Artists really wanted to produce works that were in-depth, meaningful, and experimental. You do still see it now and then, in fact Kerry Phillips recent exhibition at the Bass Museum of Art is a good example. Kerry is somebody who has maintained an invested creative ethic in her work. She had a great exhibition at Locust called *Vacuuming Gave me Carpal Tunnel* for which she sourced mountains of carpet.

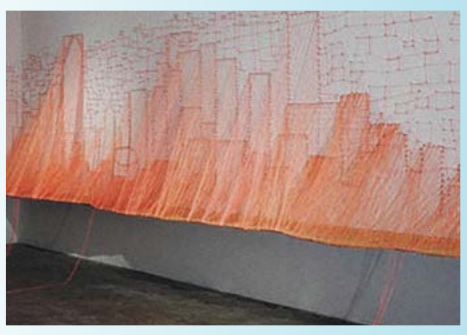
Susan: Together, we were able to work with a variety of artists to amplify their voice. What a treat!

Claire: We were fortunate to have been given the time and space to really forefront creative expression. It took a lot of hard work and appreciation for new ideas to create the groundwork for artists to come and experiment without the pressure to have to produce a product. It pushed us and it pushed them which was integral to the organization’s mission.



Amber Hawk Swanson,
To Have and To Hold,
and To Violate, 2008

Susan: I'm sure similar conversations are happening in a different way today, but what was so unique to that period is that it was homegrown. Locust Projects offered a space that artists needed at that time to create and converse. The current art climate and landscape is different now in size and impact. However, it's critical to preserve the memories and to know how it came to be, especially to understand Miami's evolution into an art destination.



Aili Schmeltz, *The Magic City*, 2008, Installation view at Locust Projects

Photo courtesy of Claire Breukel

Claire: You're right there are a lot more art spaces and layers to the art community today.



Flight 19 (also known as Experimental Skeleton), *Redivia*, 2007, Installation view at Locust Projects

Photo courtesy of Claire Breukel

Susan: You know Locust Projects to me was an artist-in-residency program, a live-work space for the visiting artist. I liked how we shared the time and space and saw the work come to life. How fortunate for all of us that COOPER, Elizabeth, and Wes created this place over 25 years ago. It is a reflection of their generosity to support and amplify other artist voices.

Claire: Absolutely. I also appreciated the immediacy of interactions, which is that the artist produced the work, and everybody got to see it in real-time. Curatorial intervention didn't predominate. It also allowed for risk-taking. If an artist "failed" we embraced that as part of the experience and the time with the artist was considered a warranted experiment and opportunity for discussion.

Susan: We as LP embraced the artist's process, the artist's mind, and the artist's voice. The raw, unpolished space was waiting for an artist came through and activate it. Locust Projects was special and foundational to our art community. It wasn't aiming to impress and out do itself or other galleries. Times have certainly changed here in Miami.

Claire: Yes, in fact we are sitting at Buena Vista café that didn't exist then.

Susan: And, we're now blocks from a high-end window shopping experience. Wynwood and Design Districts were not a tourist destination, it was a hub to artist studios and happenings. And, there was so much parking, and it was all free.

It also allowed for risk-taking. If an artist "failed" we embraced that as part of the experience and the time with the artist was considered a warranted experiment and opportunity for discussion.



ROSIE GORDON- WALLACE

THE ARTISTS, THAT'S WHERE MY HEART WAS

CONVERSATIONS

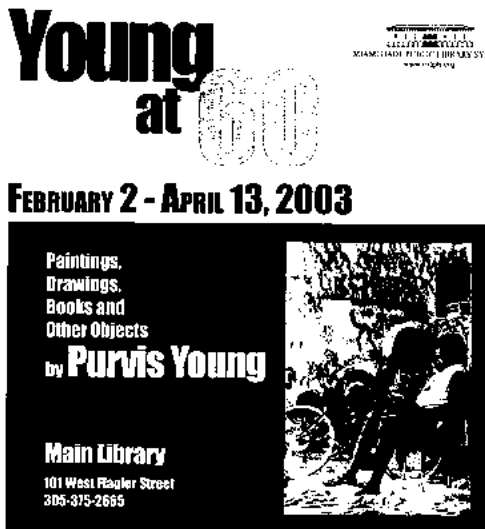
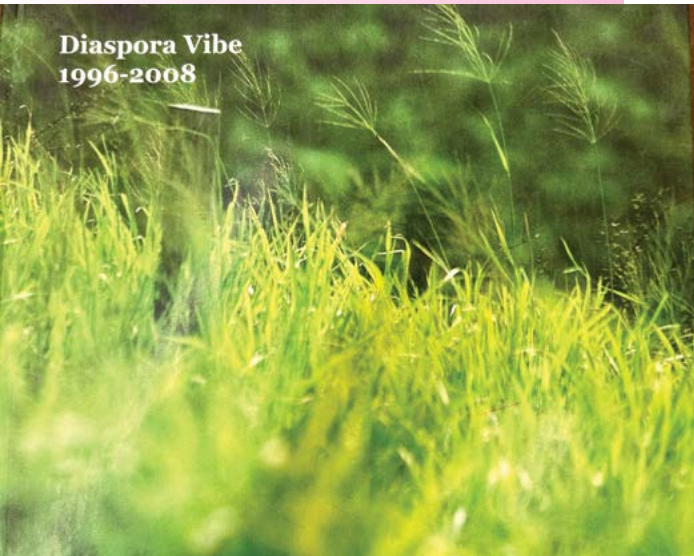


Image courtesy of Vasari Project, Special Collections, Miami-Dade Public Library System



Artwork by Rodney Jackson
Photo courtesy of Roy Wallace

BARBARA YOUNG

MAKING MIAMI

Photos courtesy of Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator and Barbara Young

Rosie Gordon-Wallace: Hi Barbara.

Barbara Young: Hello. How are you?

Rosie: Thank you for taking the time to see me on this rainy afternoon of September 1st.

Barbara: You're a ray of sunshine, Rosie.

Rosie: You are so kind. We have been tasked to talk about how we know each other and that to me is really pleasant because I remember you at the Miami-Dade, I'm calling it the Central Library.

Barbara: Miami-Dade Public Library, the Main Library downtown.

Rosie: That's right, and you were in charge there?

Barbara: I was in charge of the art services program which was a systemwide responsibility. At that time, I was probably also doing adult programming, which meant working with musicians, authors, small business and small claims, and tax programs, and all kinds of things like that. But the artists, that is where my heart was.

Rosie: Right. And still is. But it's interesting to me because I always thought you were the director of the library. You did so much. Over the years I would often visit my dear brother-in-law, Tyrone Hill, who worked with the library and was a project engineer there. I thought you were the person in charge of everything! (laugh)

Barbara: He was there and we were on the administrative team so I remember him at meetings.

Rosie: Yes. He, too, has gone too soon. Those early days were fun years. We're now looking at the late 90s/early 2000s and remembering the early creator organizations like Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator. I thought it would be just wonderful to interview you to hear what your perspective is on that timeline. What are some of the happenings that you remember from those years?

Barbara: Some of the things that I remember personally at the library?

Rosie: Yes.

Barbara: Well, we did lots and lots of different exhibitions. Many for Hispanic Heritage Month. Many for Black History Month. Many that were theme projects that were opportunities to think of commonalities. One of the ones that I remember from that time that had special historical relevance would be one that I curated with Margarita Cano and Helen Kohen called *Touched by AIDS*.

Rosie: I remember Helen Kohen, that giant of a lady.

Barbara: Yes. She was wonderful.

Rosie: She was a talented and kind journalist and so supportive of our artists.

Barbara: Yes. Excellent historian. But anyway, we did an exhibition called *Touched by Aids* and it was really a memorial exhibition to people that we'd lost in the community. It wasn't installed at the library. It was at Miami Dade College, but so important history-wise. Later, Helen, Margarita, and I curated another show called *Cultivated Under the Sun* at the library which kind of morphed into the Vasari Project, the historical archive at the library which is a very important resource now.

Rosie: It's more important now that we're talking about it! It allows us to highlight the fact that you are one of the founders of the Vasari Project with Helen Kohen. The Vasari Project to my mind is the first archival project at the library to preserve ephemeral materials and documents of our past, or is that correct?

Barbara: It grew out of the library's artists files and materials we had at the library from exhibitions and the permanent collection of fine artworks that we had from artists in the community, but it is ongoing now. Again, it was founded in 2000 and now there is a wonderful woman, an archivist named Stephanie Garcia who is in charge of it. The University of Miami also has a great archive where people can research area art history and other subjects.

Rosie: Because, if memory serves me correctly, both you and Helen were volunteers who worked on the Vasari Project at the library. And, when I say you, I'm saying Barbara Young used to work on this project at the library. Barbara, you organized many art talks and you would also do installations and exhibitions of young and emerging artists. You would give them a place and then we would congregate and have conversations after the exhibition was mounted and the opening took place. And I remember some of the artists that were shown... Onajide Shabaka, Carlos Betancourt, Gary Moore, Rosemarie Chiarlone, Purvis Young, Carol Todaro, and Dinizulu Gene Tinnie to name a few.

Barbara: Wonderful artists. Gene Tinnie worked with us on many projects. He was always a great library supporter with his own work and he helped us get an exhibition with Elizabeth Catlett. She was here with her husband Francisco Mora and that was very special.

Rosie: Yes. I remember particularly how fabulous that was and how packed the library was to see and to hear Elizabeth Catlett. We've done good work! Let's pat each other on the back.

Barbara: She was incredible. We have done good work! And it was great when you came Rosie, because you have been all over the place with outstanding projects supporting artists.

Rosie: Thank you, Barbara.

Barbara: You have done so much for artists. I used to love to go to your exhibition space. Walking up the stairs in the Design District, I never knew what I was going to see, but it was always inspiring.

Rosie: Thank you! It was really enchanting to spark our audience by pushing the work. We are from the Caribbean and people tend to think that we can only do sun and sea and flowers, but the young artists having graduated from some of the most prestigious schools have come back with a desire to push the envelope. And to your credit, the encouragement that you gave at the library and also the files you kept at the library for research, the records meant a tremendous deal to those seeking to learn.



Photographer Howard L. Bingham, Barbara Young, Muhammad Ali at opening of photography exhibition *Muhammad Ali, a Thirty-Year Journey* at Main Library Miami-Dade Public Library System.



Caroline Holder, *Home to Go*, 2002

Barbara: For the record that is true, but I think about the support you've given artists. You have created wonderful opportunities for residencies, international residencies, and things like that. That has been huge for artists in the community. You are brilliant.

Rosie: We have looked at the global south from the very beginning. This is a love fest because I love talking to you about this. I think that if our audience takes a pause to look back, they will realize that art has always been here. Much of the early days were nurtured by your work at the library.

Barbara: It does go back. People like Margarita Cano, my mentor, Helen Kohen and you were so important in my story. At the library we created a timeline and looked back at cultural activity going back to 1940. It was fascinating. There was a lot happening in Miami. This is a sun, fun, and all that good stuff place, but there has been wonderful art energy over the years.

Rosie: I agree and we continue to nurture though the schools. Like Design and Architecture Senior High and New World School of the Arts.

Barbara: And the Miami Dade Colleges, the University of Miami, and the Florida International University art programs. And people like you, you do so much!

Rosie: Thank you, Barbara.

Barbara: Yes. And you are everywhere. Each time I look up you are mounting an exhibition, or scheduling a program, or traveling to different places to network.

Rosie: Not so much anymore. We used to mount an exhibition every month at the Bakehouse Art Complex where we started out with five artists. Before we wrap it up, this has made me recall Purvis Young, who we both had experiences with. I know that he visited the library frequently on his bicycle.

Barbara: Yes, he loved to look at the oversized art books. At some point he started pasting his drawings into various discarded directories, ledgers, text books, wallpaper sample books, or other books that he found to make his own art books. He was great at salvaging and repurposing for all his work.

Rosie: These books are massive and are now considered masterpieces. Do you recall when the fencing that Purvis painted on the Beach was dismantled? No one knew or recognized that Purvis was a genius then. He did probation hours with me at the Bakehouse Art Complex (BAC). Jeffery Knapp introduced him to me and requested that I manage his hours. We left house paint out for Purvis and we were rewarded each morning with his drawings on the BAC wall. The wall recently has been painstakingly restored by RLA Conservation and today his mural lives on! And the work of so many artists lives on in the Vasari Project because of you.

Thank you, Barbara for your time and for traveling down memory lane with me.

Barbara: It has been an absolute pleasure.

Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator (DVCAI)



DAVID CASTILLO

CONVERSATIONS



AMY ROSENBLUM MARTÍN

CUBAN & CARIBBEAN INFLUENCE IN MIAMI

MAKING MIAMI

David Castillo: Amy, you and I met in 1997 at the Miami Art Museum (MAM), where you were a curator and I, recently graduated from Yale, was hired as the Museum's registrar in the Collections and Exhibitions Department. It was a special time in Miami with so much newness and so much energy around art and artists. I recall your work on the Carlos Alfonzo exhibition, meaningful to me as a Cuban-American and as someone interested in the manifold narratives in his work. For my part, it was a first close engagement with collectors in Miami, a close-knit group, many of whom supported the show and lent works to the exhibition. I learned so much during this time and got to know many of the early collectors and supporters of the arts in Miami.

Amy Rosenblum Martín: David, I was so excited to meet you on staff at MAM and remarkably still feel that way whenever I see you. We have always been intersectional equity activists in the art world, with one foot in academia and another in communities, with different connections to Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Diaspora. Our skill sets complemented each other from the get-go.

Regarding the Carlos Alfonzo retrospective, like you, I too loved working with local lenders and colleagues who knew, loved, and supported Alfonzo, who was an artist and queer immigrant without economic privilege. They regaled me with stories about his life and tragically premature, AIDS-related death. The exhibition, which traveled to the Hirshhorn, and its accompanying bilingual catalog honed my curatorial research and other museological skills. To this day, that book is a reference when I produce new exhibition catalogs. Tracing the trajectory of this Latinx artist's work and career—from the Museo Nacional, Havana in 1970 to the 1991 Whitney Biennial—sealed the deal that I was to be a Latin Americanist curator. Working with Olga Viso was a major highlight for me and we continue to collaborate.

David: Now that 26 years have passed since that first project together, I know for me, I remember your genuine and contagious energy for so many great artists, Carlos included. I think that's what bonded me to you and now I see this more and more in your work with numerous New York museums. For me professionally, that Carlos Alfonzo project is a full circle moment to the present, since it would be the work of another Cuban artist Belkis Ayon, that I would show this year (2023) at Art Basel in Switzerland, making me the first Florida gallery to have ever participated in the main Art Basel fair in Basel in the 54-year history of the fair. Somehow my Miami and Cuban roots have followed me and bonded with me on this art journey. I see this same organic love of art and artists in your path, which brings us to another early Miami collaboration we had at my gallery in 2007! At the gallery, you proposed a show of African-American, Latin-American, and Miami-based artists, all of whom have formed a big part of your career.

Amy: I love to see your Gallery thrive and show Belkis Ayón. I can't think of a more important oeuvre. Thank you for helping me think through her works for the checklist of my forthcoming, large-scale project about intersectional environmentalism. Another of your Gallery artists involved in the same project is María de los Angeles Rodríguez Jiménez. I began working with her thanks to you and yet another of your Gallery artists, Glaxis Novoa. You and I are blessed to share a beloved web of like-minded colleagues.

Structure and Stories was an exhibition I curated for your Gallery in 2007, a decade after we met. After six years in Miami (1994-2000), I left for graduate school in art history at Columbia, then I stayed in New York and in the early 2000s worked as a curator for multiple institutions, including the Bronx Museum and Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, before embarking on my independent curatorial career in 2005. With *Structure and Stories*, I was making sense of what drew me to certain art experiences in Miami, New York, and beyond, linking the theoretical and political (structure) with the personal, historical, literary, and humorous (stories). I have always been a curator who works in museums and that remains the only gallery exhibition I ever curated. I did so to collaborate with, honor, and celebrate you in the City we both identify with so profoundly.

In 2004, as a Bronx Museum staff curator organizing the feminist exhibition *Becoming Father/Becoming Infant*, I was told by a Whitney Museum curator that family was not valid curatorial subject matter. Yet my perspective was affirmed by Black feminism, so central in today’s art discourse; it was informed by Cuban artists, like Felix Gonzalez-Torres whom I cite in the press release. Speaking from and on the personal is centrally important methodologically to shifting the paradigm.

David: And last, I would be remiss if we did not mention your retrospective exhibition of Quisqueya Henriquez at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, also in 2007. Quisqueya being the first artist to be represented by my gallery, has a beautiful tie-in to curatorial projects you have done in New York with shows you did in Miami including our various collaborations.

Amy: Henríquez links your work, mine, the Bronx Museum’s and MAM’s with her manifold artistic treatments of both intellectual and quotidian life in the Caribbean. Her rigorous yet ludic conceptualism, aesthetic and design savvy, as well as her IRL community building represent our shared sensibilities and concerns. We resist easy stereotypes of the Caribbean and its art while representing the heart, soul, and braininess of the region.

I arrived in Miami concurrently with the legendary Cuban 80s generation. These internationally celebrated artists shifted Miami’s artistic discourse when they arrived after their initial exile in Mexico (1989-1994). Henríquez was arguably part of and definitely adjacent to that group of hundreds of prolific artists. Working with Henríquez connects you, David, and me to that potent chapter of art history. Her unusual, dual perspective of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean is evident in her particularly acute observations about the relationship of the region and the rest of the world in her art, replete with the sophistication of local humor.

Henríquez and I agreed on the title *Heap of Paradise* to satirize tourism as colonialism, for her survey exhibition, but it was rejected by the Museum, only to be adopted later by the artist as the title of an installation now in the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros. Collaborating with her repeatedly has challenged and grown my writing theoretically.

David: And again, we come back full-circle to those early years of collaborating, as *Heap of Paradise* by Henriquez was in her second solo show at the gallery (2007) and is the piece Patty Cisneros acquired from my gallery for her internationally recognized collection!

You and I are blessed to share a beloved web of like-minded colleagues.



THEA SMOLINSKI



Craig Kucia, *when i begin to forget, tell me things i never knew*, 2005

CRAIG KUCIA

Photos courtesy of Thea Smolinski and Craig Kucia

IT WAS A TIME FOR ARTISTS

Thea Smolinski: I've been laughing about us having a conversation about living in Miami together because I feel like anybody who knows us knows it's just going to be me talking.

Craig Kucia: Yes.

Thea: Okay. So we met in the spring of 2005 in Ohio, in Cleveland. I was working at a gallery and you were showing there and you were getting ready to head down to Miami for a couple of months.

Craig: Yes. I had a show at Kevin Bruk Gallery who started showing me maybe a year or two before that. That Miami art scene was kind of a growing thing at that point and becoming very popular. Art Basel was starting to do their fair in Miami, so it was a time for artists.

Thea: But it was still like fairly early days. Like Kevin gave us his apartment at the Flamingo.

Craig: Yes. I mean this was before Basel became really like Basel.

Thea: Yes. We were supposed to be there for 3 months. You had a studio and it was back in the days when Craig Robins was trading space for work. So you didn't have to pay, you were trying to convince me to come down with you. A big selling point was that we didn't have to pay to live or work for like 3 months.

Craig: Yes. I mean, I had to trade a painting.

Thea: Yes. That doesn't count.

Craig: Yes. It's not really. It was a small painting.

Thea: I think I was there the last time I was down there. I had sushi in the courtyard of that building, I think. There's like a Marni where your studio was.

Craig: Yes. My studio is now a high-end retail clothing space.

Thea: Originally, we were going to go just basically for the Basel season. We arrived in October and I think the plan was to leave in January, but I got a job right away, which I think was the other kind of really exciting thing about Miami in those days. New York and even DC where I'd gone to school were such established art cities that as someone just starting out trying to break into museums and just the culture in general, it was so much easier to get a foothold in Miami. We met right away people from kind of all over the place doing all different kinds of jobs and felt, I think like, really welcome and really at home right away. I started working at MOCA as Bonnie Clearwater's assistant while Esther Park was on maternity leave. I think I'm still friends with everybody that I worked with there and ended up being this really incredible community.



Craig Kucia, *obliteration of saddened words*, 2023

Photo courtesy of Jeff McLane

Craig: I went to grad school in England after going to my undergraduate in Ohio and Cleveland. So those options basically were moved to New York, or I guess the LA scene. There was a scene happening in LA. LA was so far away from the East Coast at that point, and even though I did go to England for grad school. I feel like the British art scene, which's now I feel like gotten really exciting in the last decade, but at that point, painting was not something people really understood why I was making paintings still when I went to school in England. So, the paintings that I actually made in England at grad school, Kevin Bruk saw and he was like, I'll ship those paintings from England and put you in this show in Miami. He sold those paintings and he was like, you should move to Miami because it's like exciting things happening here. So between England and going back to Ohio where I was from and meeting Thea, I just decided to go. He's offered me a show. I was going to do this one show. I was starting the show at Basel. He was slowly going from the early stages of Basel.

Thea: Oh! Those containers!

Craig: Yes. He first showed at those containers on the beach. I had a painting in that. Then the next year he was in Nada and I had two paintings in that. I think it was the third or fourth year, he officially was accepted by the Basel Art Fair. So it was just him and Snitzer Gallery. Basically were the only Miami representation at Basel. So I had 4 paintings at the first Basel that he was in. I did my show and like Thea was saying, the scene there was very welcoming. You didn't feel like you had to go through this kind of like the old New York art world to like get anyone to come to your studio and people would just come by and see what you were up to. I feel like all the artists were really different from each other. Everybody was kind of making very different work from each other and everybody was very open to that and accepting of it. So you didn't really feel like you had to be part of any sort of trend or type of making of art. There wasn't like a painting thing or a sculpture thing. It was just everybody was just doing all kinds of different kinds of art.

Thea: And some really DIY, artist-run spaces

Craig: There's all those spaces, there's galleries.

Craig: Yes. The artists really took the initiative to do something.

Thea: More than anywhere else I've lived, the collectors were so excited to be around the artists. I work with Alberto Chehebar and Jocelyn Katz here still in LA and we see them all the time. I think that was it. Like we were over Alberto's apartment all the time. The way that the artists and the collectors and the museum people mixed in Miami in those days was really special and really unique, and not something that I've seen really replicated anywhere else.

Craig: Yes. I feel like the collectors prioritized the Miami artists over just buying. A lot of times collectors are just focused on New York or LA artists. I feel like most of the collectors we knew there, the Miami artists were a huge part of their collection and they were big on supporting that to keep growing it.

Thea: Yes. But then also too there was such a great conversation with New York. I think Tom Sachs was in the booth with you that first year at Basel. When I left MOCA I went to the Wolfsonian and we did this great Lawrence Weiner murals, Lawrence and his wife just hung out in the loading dock and chatted with all the Wolfsonian staff for like a week, which was fun. So we stayed until 2009, which was way longer than we thought that we were going to. I think every spring we threatened to leave and like every fall we were still there and getting ready for Basel. Then I got into grad school in New York and we left in the spring of 2009, but are back all the time and still come down and still are in touch with all of our Miami people really.

Craig: Yes, there's still tons of friends from Miami.

Thea: I ran into Ali Prosch in the neighborhood last year. Our kids go to the same school, I think. It's just funny the way that Miami continues to show up in our lives in LA and New York and everywhere. But, yes, it was a good couple of years!

KATHRYN MIKESELL

FOUNTAINHEAD FORGES COMMUNITY

CONVERSATIONS



Photo courtesy of Antonia Wright

CLIFTON CHILDREE

Photos courtesy of William Kendall

MAKING
MIAMI

Kathryn Mikesell: You were saying that you feel like people know you from a certain period of time?

Clifton Childree: Yes. A lot of people are surprised. People who know me now see those crazy films that I made and they're like, "Wow, you made that?"

Kathryn: They're fantastic!

Clifton: It's surprising to them. They think I must be a lunatic or something.

Kathryn: I love it. Well, I was so excited about this talk because we were asking about the importance of these dates, but my answer was that 1996-2012 was such a special time here. It was a great time here!

Clifton: So maybe we come up with our own conclusion of what those years mean. We had a warmer community? I just remember it being more of a community than it feels like now.

Kathryn: Absolutely.

Clifton: But do you think there are more people interested in art now? But you don't connect as much to the people that are into art as you used to, or why does it feel like there was a stronger community before?

Kathryn: I don't know. It could be something about those years, that time period was really unique.

Clifton: Okay.

Kathryn: I don't think it's an inability to connect now. There's nothing negative about it. I just think at that time, Miami was so young and it was growing- everybody was so supportive of one another. There weren't any hierarchies. We were all doing the same things together, you know what I mean? We were artists, museum directors, curators, collectors, and gallerists. We were all in it together.

Clifton: I agree, we were very supportive of one another. When someone got a grant or a project somewhere else, we all promoted it! There was an excitement for that. And I remember in 2000, there was a little bit of comparing Miami's new art scene to other cities and maybe mimicking New York...it's kind of like how we were trying to make it real here. But Miami is different. So there's this element floating around- how can we make this a bigger art scene, a better art scene? I'm not saying it's a good or a bad thing, but there was excitement because no one knew if it was going to happen.

Kathryn: I think it's a great thing. I think everybody was interested in not duplicating what there was anywhere else other than duplicating success. But we were interested in doing it in our own way. The one thing that I say about Miami that's so unique to Miami is that, we are an international city with the eyes of the world on us, but we don't have the social order... I don't know if it's social structures, but the structures that many other cities have with families that have been around forever. And it's like, you can't do anything unless you have money in which to do so. Here it's like, I have an idea.



I'm just going to go for it! I'm going to give it a try because I can, because I have a community around me. And it could work. Just as easy it could fail, it could actually work.

Clifton: Yeah, because everything was new and fresh, and there were so many exciting projects. I think there were a lot of

opportunities to start something and it was sort of cheaper here at the time. It was inexpensive to live, rent studio space, and fabricate things. So there were little galleries that would come and go and artist-run spaces popping up because five people get together and could come up with 250 bucks for rent. So it made for this punk kind of approach to spaces. And maybe there was more music and bands playing. I remember at Dorsch Gallery, there were a lot of punk bands that would play. It's stuff that you don't really see now as much...

Kathryn: Because we can't afford it in the same way. I couldn't create Fountainhead today in Morningside. It's like you wouldn't be able to do that. When we started the studios, it was because I went to my friends who owned buildings and said, who has a building they can't rent? And I was like, "I'll take it!"

Clifton: Yeah, there were lots of empty buildings that they couldn't rent back then.

Kathryn: Exactly. And I said okay, we can work together and build artist studios.

Clifton: I remember going into the Fountainhead studios and it was just Michael Genovese and Don Lambert and they were the only two people. And then I went in, it was this gigantic space with two guys finding a little spot. No walls...

Kathryn: And blue tape on the ground!

Clifton: Oh yeah, the blue tape..

Kathryn: Here's your studio!

Clifton: And they say, "Where do you want to work?" I chose an area in the back by the garage door and set up my stuff. It was very raw and organic, and a lot fun. No rules.

Kathryn: Absolutely.

Clifton: It was like random spontaneous things that can only happen that way, you know?

Kathryn: Yes. I mean that's how it was when we started the residency, it was about doing things to support the artists and the community. We have hosted so many events- we love it!

Clifton: And we're still doing that. I mean, you're having all the gatherings at the residency, the open houses, and doing some amazing group trips. You're still very much about community.

Kathryn: A hundred percent, but back then we hosted artists for all the museums because they didn't have the budgets they have now. We hosted artists for Locust Projects, which was where you did that fantastic project. You have to tell me a little bit



more about that because I will never forget it. It's something that I think with all your materials and all the detritus that you brought in and the subject matter, the rides, and your performance, I feel that probably couldn't happen today...

Clifton: I don't think so.

Kathryn: It was a bit of a fire hazard, maybe a health hazard?

Clifton: I don't have an arts education, I was just talking about how there were no rules before. Now it seems like there's a little bit of structure to get a show, you have to go to a certain school, and it just feels different. It felt like down here it was more open to random things, and it was really about it just being good. I've made lots of films before the Locust show, and I had a couple of shows at Bas Fisher Invitational (BFI), and I think Claire saw those shows. It was from my filmmaking past that I started getting into exhibiting the set props with the films because the sets became just as important as the films to me. And then the project proposal that I submitted to Locust, just sort of matched, it made sense.

It was more prop-heavy than film-heavy. It was my sort of transition from the film world, which I didn't really seem to fit into because I was making more experimental films, to art. I really wasn't in the art scene because I didn't have the background in that. I think that my idea was very unusual, and it was based on a lot of childhood dreams that I kept writing down for years. I always write down stuff like that. So yes, it would probably not happen now. It was kind of offensive and weird!

Kathryn: It was wrong in so many ways that it made it right....

Clifton: It's not something I would do now. At that time, that's what I wanted to do. And it worked out. And it got me into a lot of other shows after that through Galerie Ernst Hilger and then the Museum of Art over in Vienna where I did an installation and a performance as well.

Kathryn: Also I think about it now because everybody talks about immersive experiences. Everybody wants to be immersed in the arts, and that was an extremely immersive experience. You were a part of that.

Clifton: What was great about Locust is that it's a non-profit, so their goal is to show work and not focus on making sales. That's not their business model, and that's really what art should be about. But it's such a struggle that artists have to think about their careers more than they used to. Before there was more freedom of time and having some extra money to work on stuff and not have one or two jobs just to pay the rent. So there was more opportunity and flexibility back then.

Kathryn: And that gives you the ability to be your true creative self, right?

Clifton: Yes. That's exactly what I wanted to do at that moment. And it wasn't about making stuff with the idea that it could be accessible to a collector. I didn't have those thoughts. There were a lot of components from that exhibit that did get purchased, like the signs and stuff, but I didn't know that when I was making it. It just happened that people loved the show and they wanted to remember parts of it. But that's what I like about Locust Projects.

I was also heavily into the music scene here, too. it's always been a separate world, a different group of people that are in the bands and music lovers. I have to say that 15 years ago, a lot of those music people who were in punk and indie bands were also going to more art shows and openings. I don't see those people anymore. There used to be an interesting crossover.

Kathryn: I agree.

Clifton: The crowd feels different and I'm not saying it's a good or bad thing. I do miss the people who are in the music scene, I don't see them at shows and openings, just like the dance community and the art world. You don't see collectors going to music events and you don't see them going to dance events, but they go to art shows. You know what I mean?

Kathryn: I think that's a very interesting observation because when we were younger, smaller, and less expensive, there was much more integration with the different art forms. As you said, we had dancers, musicians, and visual artists, all coming together to support one another. And there were so many more collaborations back then. And I personally think that's what people are thirsting for today. But because everything has gotten so expensive, because we have grown, it's like people have gone back into their silos. And I think you see that in the various communities within the visual arts or within the different art forms as well. It's just people have had to get far more focused on careers...

Clifton: Yes, fine-tune it.

Kathryn: Whereas before it was all about the art. It's all about the community. It's all about making shit happen.

Clifton: Because back in the late 90s/early 2000s, if your show didn't do well, you're not going to be homeless. But now there's a possibility that you spend everything and go broke. I have to sell some work because I must pay my rent. You know what I mean? It's like there's a little bit more anxiety about just surviving day to day. And that is stressful and it stops people from taking risks or doing things that are exactly what they want to do. I hope not, but maybe that's part of it. I'm trying to look at both sides here, like why? I guess that's why we're talking.

Kathryn: But we've also benefited tremendously from the growth as well. So it's like everything, there are both positives and negatives.

Clifton: The attention that is focused on Miami's art scene- that got me shows overseas. Where else would that happen? Where else would someone who owns a gallery in Vienna go see my show? So yes, I benefited from that.

Kathryn: Absolutely. I think we all have, I've certainly benefited from that here. People really want to come and learn about the Miami arts community. That's definitely one of the draws of residencies. People really want to be immersed in what's happening here.

Clifton: Absolutely.

Kathryn: Okay. I think we went way over our time. I love this conversation though. I could talk to you all night!



DREAM-CUM-TRU,
2008 installation and
performance at Locust
Projects

BRANDON OPALKA

IT FELT LIKE A SMALL
TOWN BACK THEN

Brandon Opalka: All right, we're here having a conversation about a little bit of the Miami Art History. I'm Brandon Opalka with Jacin Giordano.

Jacin Giordano: I'm Jacin Giordano.

Brandon: We want to start off a little bit about how we met. We met in 2002 in Wynwood, before it was called Wynwood. I feel like it was still called Overtown back then.

Jacin: Definitely wasn't an art district, that's for sure.

Brandon: I rented a space that was 3000 square feet for about \$600 or \$700 a month and it had no walls. It was just all open. It just had a bathroom. I couldn't afford it at the time, so the only way I could afford it is to divide it up. And Jacin was one of the artists that helped to divide the space. What did you think about that neighborhood back then?

Jacin: The neighborhood felt like, it was the Wild West out there. There was nothing happening. I was just looking for a place to be able to make work and hopefully live in the space so I didn't have to pay two rents. So, going into that building on 20th Street, there was this just huge open space that as long as we put some work in putting up walls, it seemed like we would very cheaply be able to live and work there. But anybody who came to visit and parked their cars on the street would inevitably have their windows broken. It wasn't the kind of place where you're just going to go walking around at night. There were literal garbage, dumpster fires. It wasn't ideal.

Brandon: At the same time, coming out of art school, we talked about how convenient it was to have the Rubell Collection in the same neighborhood and have Locust Projects down the street. As hard as it was, it still had a lot of art present.

Jacin: Yeah, definitely. The Rubell Collection was really eye-opening for me. To see that Miami had that contemporary collection was super exciting. It was super close to where the studio was and felt like it gave me a reason to want to be in Miami for a while, just stick around, making art, and taking in what other artists were doing in the area. The House also wasn't too far. You had Locust Projects, and Placemaker. So, there was a lot happening in the neighborhood.

Brandon: I was going to bring up the show that I curated back in 2002 that you were in for Barbara Gillman Gallery. When I look back at it now, I realize how amazing it was that all these opportunities presented themselves to such young artists back then. It was something I took for granted at the time. I didn't realize that, at some point, that it wasn't going to last. When I think about the show I put together, it was before the curatorial aspect of that show for Barbara Gillman was before I'd ever even done a solo art show. So, developing the space that we shared and curating came before I ever had a solo art exhibition, which I thought was weird because I had been so focused on studio practice since then that my roots were not even in that.

Jacin: That's what felt generous about that show though. It felt like you weren't looking for an opportunity just for yourself, that you were purposely, what was it, like 15 artists in that show, right?



JACIN GIORDANO

Photos courtesy of Brandon Opalka Paul Stoppi

Brandon: Yeah.

Jacin: You were purposely looking for opportunities for all of us to show the work together hoping that it could lead to opportunities for anybody that was involved in the show and not just yourself. So, I thought that was a really generous way to approach having that opportunity at the gallery for you.

Brandon: Yeah, it was. Barbara really trusted me, but she also had a history of being involved in the arts in Miami since the 70s. So, on top of being a mentor, I think she was aware of what was happening in the city at the time because there was a lot changing. The show was in 2002 in the summer and that same year, at the end of the year, you were at the Art Basel Convention Center with Fred Snitzer exhibiting your work six months later.

Jacin: Yeah, I think so. During that 15 caliber show, there was also Hernan Bas curating a show at Snitzer, a group show that I was in. I think it was actually the same month, like the exact same time. Yeah, I was doing some more shows with Fred, and that was the first Basel where I had work in it. I think it was the first Basel in Miami. Yeah, looking back at that, it was like you said, I definitely took for granted that I was in that art fair at that time, just around when it actually started.

Brandon: Yeah, to switch to another topic real quick, I was looking at my Locust Projects show in 2001. I remember talking to Westen Charles and I was working for Bernice Steinbaum at the time. I had no idea that Westen Charles and I had a graffiti background in common, but I asked him if I could do a show at Locust, just like in conversation. And a month later he asked me for a proposal, and it was the first proposal I had ever had to come up with. It was just some photos of some tattoos I found online. I don't even think I had a computer back then. I just went to Kinkos or put together a little five-page proposal, and that was enough to get me into a Locust Project show back then. It was quite a while ago.

Jacin: That's what it felt like to me, at least. Coming back to Miami was like Locust Projects and all the galleries in Miami there, that felt like we were focusing on local artists, who were in Miami and trying to create opportunities for one another. Because there were enough people making great stuff, at that point, and those spaces were opening. So, it was nice that the focus was on the local scene and the local artists.

Brandon: Yeah, if you had the nerve, you could walk into any gallery back then and just ask to talk to them about an exhibition. I remember it felt like a very small town back then, everybody was at everybody's show. If it was like Fred had a show or Brook Dorsch had a show, it was the same people at every event and it went on until 11 o'clock at night.

Jacin: Well, speaking of seeking opportunities, I remember first coming back to Miami. I was in Baltimore for college, coming back in like 2001 and thinking the same thing. It was like, "Oh, I'm going to go find a gallery show." So, I had my slides all ready and printed, and went around to a few different galleries. I remember going to Bernice Steinbaum specifically, handing my slides over, and saying, "Hey, I'm an artist. I would love to do a show with you." I remember walking away looking at her show, looking back at the office and she picked up the slides, looked at them for three seconds, put them down, and never talked to me again. That was it.



PRES RODRIGUEZ

ART ADJACENT

Danny Gonzalez: I'm Danny Gonzalez.

Pres Rodriguez: I'm Pres Rodriguez. We're going to talk art in Miami in the early 2000s from a non-artist perspective.

Danny: Yeah, neither of us are "artists." Well, you sort of toed the line.

Pres: Art adjacent people?

Danny: Sounds right.

Pres: We were never in the art world necessarily, but you went to school for photography. I've worked in graphic design, art direction, and creative direction for a long time. But I think what drew me to the gallery scene in Miami was that it was a social thing for us. There weren't many creative spaces, and the music scene wasn't very lively either. You took whatever you could get, as far as culture. There was a lot of mixing of different types of people. You'd go to an art show and there'd be tattoo artists, art students, graffiti people, writers and skaters, and random people just looking to get a free drink!

Danny: Which was kind of me!

Pres: Yes, which is a little bit of both of us. But it definitely started my interest in contemporary art and trying to figure out, "What is this?" Even though, I don't know, man. It was a funny time. You could fail quietly in Miami. There was a lot of experimentation, a lot of people just doing random wild shit. If it didn't work, it didn't matter. No one was going to write about you somewhere and ruin your potential career because of some bizarre project. It would just happen and go away and that's it.

Danny: Which in a way can also have its downfall. You can fail quietly, but then I'm also thinking about it from the music perspective because that's where I come from. If you are successful, sometimes it's hard to get out as well. You become a big superstar in this little town. It's like, "Okay, so now what?"

Pres: There was definitely a lot of big fish in the small pond going on.

Danny: Imagine how many bands would have gotten out if they had been in other cities. They could have made it out easier, to tour or whatever. It's not exactly the same for an artist but the art world at large is not looking at you so you're not counting on it. The art world is not instantly scooping you out, but in some cases it eventually does.

Pres: Everybody was cutting their teeth in this weird, quiet art scene compared to other major cities. But from it you get Hernan Bas, Naomi Fisher, Luis Gispert, Bert Rodriguez, etc. People who had made it to the Whitney Biennial and/or got representation from big out-of-town galleries. Daniel Arsham, Jen Stark, FriendsWithYou... this is all brewing seemingly out of context from the rest of the art world.

Danny: Ultimately, that's why Basel decided to come here. It's like, "Oh, there's something really happening down there." There's an audience for it and people like it and who doesn't want to come to Miami anyway?

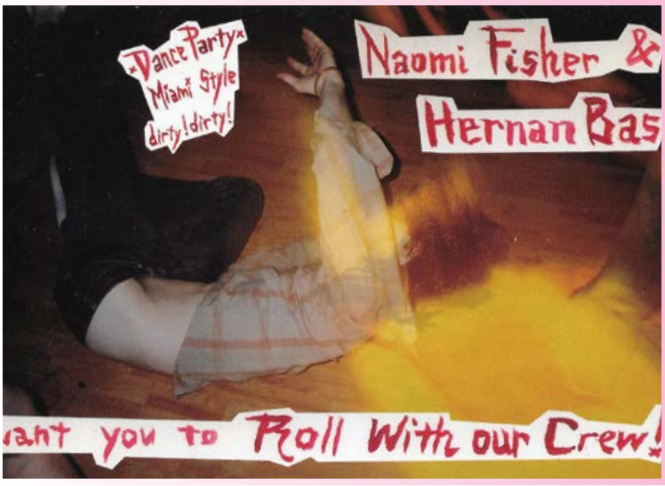


CONVERSATIONS

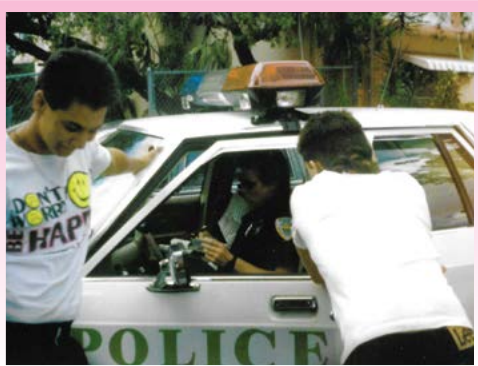
MAKING MIAMI

DANNY GONZALEZ

Photos courtesy of Pres Rodriguez



Hernan Bas & Naomi Fisher Party at I/O Lounge, 2003



The Night Crazy Legs Went GQ: New Projects by Miami Artists, Locust Projects, 2003

Pres: Let's be real. Art Basel came because...partially there was a really interesting scene bubbling down here and maybe some of them started becoming privy to it.

Danny: There's money.

Pres: There's money, but also it's a vacation in the winter for Europeans. Literally, write off a business trip to the beach. Where are they gonna go in December? New York? Too cold. L.A.? Too far.

Danny: It's kind of the perfect storm. It all came together in the perfect time and place.

Pres: I think a lot of people thought it was a weird choice back then since Miami wasn't necessarily known as a cultural destination. But if you were here at that time, it made absolute sense.

Danny: They wanted to take their talents to South Beach.

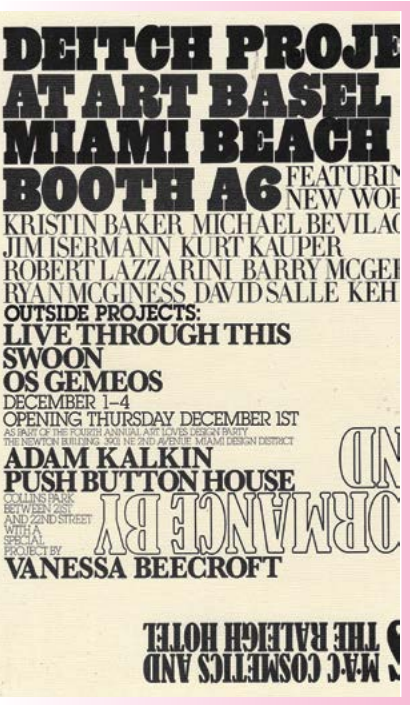
Pres: The art scene was attractive to them. It's what brought Emmanuel Perrotin down here. If you look at the roster of artists from Miami that he had initially, there was a good handful. Lots of major galleries did start coming down for Basel and even doing events outside of the fair.

Danny: Deitch for sure.

Pres: Exactly, like Deitch and White Cube...That was such a godsend, man. Being from here and feeling isolated from all the other stuff going on in other cities. This is pre-social media, so you would get glimpses in magazines or maybe early, early blogs.

Danny: The Tokion magazine scene. That was like a big thing for me being introduced to some of that world.

Pres: Watching the scene happening in New York that's mixing my interests in fashion and music, design, graffiti, and art. Seeing that happening up there and everybody cross-pollinating and getting to have little morsels of that down here during Basel was huge for me. Exposing us to more stuff. Even if it's just once a year.



Deitch Projects, 2005

Hernan Bas, *We May Even See the Wind Together*, 2003



Deitch Projects, 2004

Danny: Yes, I guess I'm back to the music thing, but that also came too. It was like, "Oh, shit." All these other big-name things. I remember Daft Punk coming down before they were huge...

Pres: It was the art world equivalent of what we have with the Winter Music Conference, Miami Music Week, and the Ultra Music Festival all colliding at the same time.

Danny: Yeah, those just got blown out the same way Basel had.

Pres: It's too much.

Danny: I can remember a time being excited to go down to the beach for a Winter Music Conference event or for Basel. Now, I'm just like, "Ah....no."

Pres: I hear you. It can be so overwhelming.

Danny: Yes.

Pres: "Do I want to deal with the other shit that has come with Art Basel?" I think Art Basel was really amazing for the first six or seven years in the sense that we could get away with fucking anything, any art show, any invite-only event, whatever. Nothing was off-limits. There was always a way for random kids to sneak in and get to see how the other side was living. Now there are just physically too many people all trying to do the same things. It's a mission even if you're actually supposed to be there.

Danny: Either you knew someone or you just snuck in and it didn't seem impossible. They stopped doing this.. but the big shows on the beach? Iggy Pop! I remember New York Dolls. Peaches, I think one year.

Pres: The Scissor Sisters.

Danny: That seemed so crazy to me. Like, "For free, really? On the beach, in the sand." This is really wild....so fucking cool. I'm down for this.

Pres: It felt really supportive of people interested in what was going on, just curious people who had no academic background, and no business being in blue chip galleries, but it opened it up for us to check it out and see what was possible.

Danny: But I think my initial introduction to the art scene here was through the Box guys.

Pres: Same for me.

Danny: That's before there was even a part of town dedicated to galleries. They had their initial space on Bird Road- in the warehouse district. I was super young and had met Manny [Prieres] and his sister Sarah. They introduced me to a lot of stuff, I can't pretend like I got it, but I was like, "Oh, okay. This is interesting."

Pres: Yes.

Danny: I'm curious to see more of it or try to figure this out, or are there other events like this happening around town? I feel like that Box scene sort of snowballed me into going to the other galleries. I remember Dorsch, which was the first gallery that I was aware of in Wynwood at the time. I went to that neighborhood for the first time to see his show. I had no other reason to go there. It was like, you just wouldn't go there.

Pres: Totally.

Danny: And then slowly but surely it's like, "Oh, another gallery. And another gallery." Then the whole second Saturday thing started happening. That was incredibly fun.

Pres: At some point, the usual circuit was Locust Projects, Fred Snitzer, Brook Dorsch, and Kevin Bruk. Rockets Projects, even though that was a little outside of the core Wynwood area, you'd have to get in a car and go over there. And there would be another random thing every month too.

Danny: David Castillo?

Pres: Then David Castillo and Spinello eventually had a space in Wynwood too. The second Saturdays thing I believe came out of needing power in numbers. Wynwood was still sketchy. Everyone's car got broken into at some point. As long as there were way more people in the street all at once, it was safer. You know what I mean?

Danny: Totally.

Pres: It's hilarious, thinking about Wynwood in those terms. If you go over there now, it's massively different. It used to just be warehouses and these random art spaces. Now there are high-rise condos being constructed around imported NYC restaurants

Danny: Is there even a gallery left?

Pres: I don't think so. Not the same style of gallery space anyway. Maybe I'm wrong though. But yo, back to Box. I think my initial introduction to this art scene was through one of the founders Manny. Can't really remember how I met him.

Danny: The Box guys were Manny Prieres, Jose Reyes, and Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova.

Pres: Yes, he was the one that drew me in. Remember when they did the FriendsWithYou show? It was a crazy installation performance piece. I was dressed as one of the guys at the entrance. Me and Alvaro [Ilizarbe] were in those suits.

Danny: Really?

Pres: Yeah dude. Letting people in behind this curtain. Sam [Borkson] was behind us in an even heavier/hotter suit. I don't know how he survived that. I sweat more that night than I've ever sweat my entire life!

Danny: Too funny.

Pres: I swore to them I'd never volunteer for any of their shows again.

Danny: Then, years later you did, you were in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade when they did a float!

Pres: That was the next time that I said yes- 14 years later! Instead of sweating I almost froze. It was literally the coldest Thanksgiving on record. They nearly canceled the parade.

Danny: It's funny to think about the beginning of their career, right? They had a show at Box.



Pres: Those guys started from the bottom. Making toys in Sam's apartment to developing a practice where they now get to do insane shit. So proud of them.

Danny: I remember being there for some of those early sewing sessions.

Pres: It was Sam's place and at Tury's [Arturo Sandoval III] place right? I was so green. I still remember Manny telling me about certain artists and how they don't paint their own paintings. I'm like, "Wait, what do you mean they don't paint their own paintings? What are you talking about? How does that work?" But at least for me, it piqued my curiosity and made me want to learn more and even participate. A few years later, Manny, Jen Stark, the TM sisters, Jon Peck, Mike Del Marmol, and I shared a studio space downtown. So I was even dabbling a little bit then.

Danny: That was a great building.

Pres: It definitely grounded me in wanting to understand and check out contemporary art. I'm still fascinated. It's all because of that time period in Miami. It was inviting to outsiders. I especially liked going to Locust and seeing their shows, because they were so non-commercial. I thought, "This is art for real? This could be art too?"



CRISTINA GONZALEZ

THIS IS
PRIMARY

TYPEOE GRAN

&



BOOKS BISCHOF

Photos courtesy of Primary

Cristina Gonzalez: This is Books Bischof, Cristina Gonzalez, and Typeoe Gran in conversation about the Miami Design District.

Typeoe Gran: What year did we move in?

Books Bischof: The end of 2010. We were in there, probably by August of that year, and started to do the renovation.

Typeoe: Our first show is the Basel show, right? With Retna! We began in the Design District with that show, which was a pretty big show, lots of people came through. It was our first real exhibit together. It was amazing.

Books: It was bananas!

Typeoe: It was pretty great. We started off in a crazy fashion because we were more known for murals. Then once we started our first gallery, our home base.

Books: With a fully immersive, a lighting strike moment, with Retna.

Typeoe: We did everything! All the walls. All the floors.

Books: And the storefront windows.

Typeoe: And the little project room, all the walls in there too.

Books: The success with that exhibit almost made the art world feel too easy.

Typeoe: Well, it was the beginning... And then we followed up with a big group show? The Chicha exhibition?

Books: *Para Mi Gente*, the Chicha-inspired group exhibit next because...

Typeoe: We didn't know what to do ?!?

Books: At the time, what we were talking about was needing a palate cleanser. We didn't want a 2-person or another solo to have to follow that last exhibit.

Typeoe: Because Retna was such a huge show for us. How many artists in the group? I remember doubling down. First Retna and then just about every artist in Miami.

Books: Also Shepard Fairey, Skullphone, Kenton Parker, Tristan Eaton, lots of folks in that exhibit ... maybe around 50 artists participated.

Typeoe: Everyone just turned in a graphic and then we utilized.

Books: It was based on the Peruvian Chicha posters, which were mostly black backgrounds and colorful fluorescent graphics. So that it would be a more coherent install, we asked artists to submit a design and give us full creative control with the installation; our choice of color and size. We laser cut every artwork as multilayered stencils and installed from floor to ceiling and all over giant pyramids we fabricated. I remember the whole art community was there helping install. But it was also, an interesting moment because the only person that wasn't there installing was you!



Typoe: Because that was my first show at Locust Projects, I was slammed installing my exhibit over there.

Books: The drop ceiling?

Typoe: Yep!

Books: It was an explosive time!

Typoe: Cool moment. For everybody. It was a big energy back-and-forth.

Cristina: I forgot that's also when you had your show at Locust!

Typoe: Because I remember I would run a block up and back from Locust to Primary into the 4141 building and the whole place smelled like spray paint. There were people all over the floor and all over the atrium and there were stencils everywhere it was just like a perfect storm.

Books: There's a great photo of me. Totally asleep on the floor. With my blue hoodie up over my head, but my one red shoe off of my foot, four feet away from me.

Cristina: Like you had been hit by a car!

Books: Laying on the concrete in the middle of the gallery. Just passed out, from exhaustion and paint inhalation.

Typoe: Those days we were just about having fun. And that's kind of what that space represented. It was us getting our bearings. Learning about what our taste was, what we like. Even though that's always an evolving thing. It was just like, "Okay, there's 3 people, how do we all work together? What do we want to show? What are we doing? What does our space mean?"

Books: It was us three but it was also a larger group of people, very democratic, that were all kind of, giving their input. We can't forget that Chris Oh was involved, long before his unfortunate passing.

Cristina: So many people were a part of building Primary. Dejha Carrington. Todd Adel. Everybody helped make it happen at that time. Being a part of the team. That's what was so beautiful and organic about all of us working together.

Books: Remember, during the *Chicha* exhibit, Mike Feinberg hit us up about having Diplo and Jillionaire deejay a late night inside Primary Projects.

Typoe: Oh yeah! We had a secret entrance through the back of the gallery and you went in from down that long hallway in the back.

Books: Entered through the fire exit on the backside of the building.



Artwork by Rebeca Rainey

Typoe: Through an alleyway, it was like a speakeasy. And we just threw an insane party inside our exhibit in this little mall in the Design District, all night long.

Books: It started at 1:30 AM in the morning!

Cristina: And that's what was special about having our gallery in the Design District 2010 to 2013. It was very authentic. It was like you said, very democratic.



Typoe: It was that time in history because... that couldn't happen again. You couldn't do that now.

Cristina: You can't replicate that.

Books: We were young and could do whatever we wanted.

Cristina: Yes. And it wasn't just about doing shows. It was about bringing the community together, whether it was through the exhibits, music, or little pop-ups with Odd Future. Just random events that we did. It was very special.

Typoe: I tell you what Books, if you tried to do it now you'd fall asleep before the show even started.

Books: I'm in bed by 8:30 pm.

Cristina: Like you said, you were bringing it up before we even started recording, how crazy the openings used to be! How people would go from our gallery (when we would close down) to Fratelli Lyon, so many people that their system would crash!

Typoe: We would shut down that restaurant.

Books: Those years, with the *Chicha* exhibit, with *His Wife and Her Lover*, there was a specific attitude, it was intense. A lot of Miami artists. And then...

Cristina: *The Salon Show (Salon de Notre Société)*

Books: ...*Here Lies Georges Wildenstein*.

Typoe: It's not like we had full representation over artists, nothing like that. We were just figuring it all out. Also, there was alcohol, it was a party because we're still working out what having a gallery means. And if you compare our last opening, which we just had in 2023 to those openings back in the day, it's a different world because that energy was all youth.

Cristina: One hundred percent.

Typoe: It was scrappy. How do we figure it all out? How do we get fifty people to show in here? Okay, sounds good, let's do it.

Books: I don't think anybody back then could have convinced us how hard it was going to be to stay true to ourselves and hold on to that energy as we continue. Because we want the gallery to grow and we want that critical dialogue, we aim to be stronger, better, and faster. But you also don't want to lose that...



Installation View:
Para Mi Gente (Chicha)



Cristina: Authenticity.

Books: That raw authenticity. It's not the easiest thing to hold on to. I feel great about where Primary is at now but, you're right that moment was... priceless.

Typoe: Well, there was something great about not caring, because you're just too young to know any different. Back

then, we were just having fun with our friends and then that turned into a career and suddenly we were like "Oh, okay, this needs to work like a business"

Cristina: Definitely. It was a critical junction in all of our lives. Opening up that space, being in that district.

Typoe: Yeah, the public art was one thing, but once there was a physical space that you could come to, that was like, "Oh this is Primary" and that gave us power that we didn't have before.

Books: One of the group exhibits, *Here Lies Georges Wildenstein*, was when we did Miru Kim's performance where she lived in the gallery for the entire Art Basel week, naked with the two pigs, and we learned a hell of a lot...

Cristina: One hundred and three hours, or something like that?

Books: *I Like Pigs and Pigs Like Me* (104 hours).

Typoe: That was a long time ago!!

Books: I don't think we lost that energy, we learned so much from those experiences. And I remember Typoe coming into the gallery saying "I was hanging out with Miru and she's got this project that none of the other galleries want to touch."

Typoe: Nobody would do it anywhere. They wouldn't do it in New York, L.A, in Europe. People were just like, "What?" And I was like, "Guys this is it, I know it's insane."

Books: I remember us all talking about it and saying, "This is a no-brainer, we have to absolutely do this." And that definitely came with a heavy experience. But nonetheless, it's not a story that you will ever forget in Miami's art history...

Typoe: We had busloads of people coming to the gallery to see that spectacle and we still didn't even know what we were doing. We hardly sold anything that December. We were just experimenting.

Books: For sure, sales were slow.

Typoe: We were figuring it out. We were doing it. Making it happen.

Books: Our exhibit with Miru Kim is definitely a Design District memory, an Art Basel Miami Beach "remember when?", and a solid contribution to Miami art history.

Cristina: Yes.

Typoe: It was huge. Everybody was there, that was the thing to see that year. It was in every newspaper, all over the world. It was only happening here, that was it.

Books: That was the beginning of us.

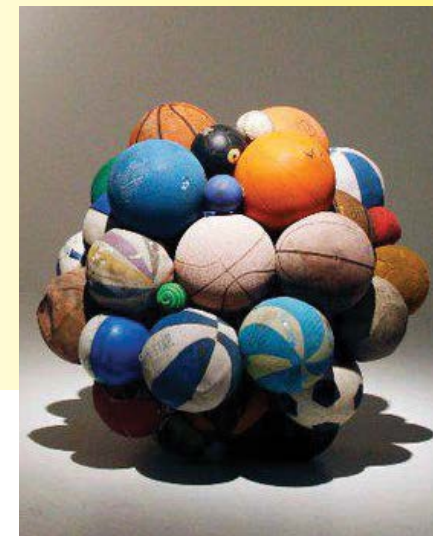
Cristina: Fun times!

Books: Yes.

Typoe: I feel like that's it. That's the start of it.

Cristina: All right, well, then we'll stop here.

Artwork by Adrian Sonni



Artwork by Eva Roberts



Artwork by Andrew Nigon

JILLIAN MAYER

SCENIC JOGGING

CONVERSATIONS



LUCAS LEYVA

Photos courtesy of Jillian Mayer

MAKING MIAMI

Jillian Mayer: My first “notable” artwork was the video *Scenic Jogging*, it was made in 2009 and it was one of our many collaborations. I made it because I wanted to be included in an annual video show called *Optic Nerve* at MOCA. I pitched you on it and you said that you were down to produce it and lend me your pickup truck. It was a very rough and tumble shoot, very beyond indie with no budget at all. I was nervous you were going to ask for gas money.

Lucas Leyva: It’s hard to believe that it was shot on NW 2nd Ave at like 8PM on a Wednesday night. I just read that it is now “the most instagrammed street in America.”

Jillian: It felt like when you reach a city’s limits and the streets stop being named- but this was Wynwood, right in the middle. But like any other place, whole communities and transactions exist there on levels. Nobody bothered anyone and people just kept to their own business. We didn’t have permits or permission. Miami in general felt open. We were like teens playing in the middle of the night in a world of limbo and limitlessness.

Lucas: All that space, both literally and figuratively, it’s like looking at a white rhino or something. The disconnection was fertile. We didn’t know what we were doing but we could strap a projector to my truck based on images in your head, slap it together and then a few months later watch it on the Guggenheim.

Jillian: Yes, it was surreal. To see a place on the edge of a massive shift projected on the rotunda and external walls of the Guggenheim in NY. I always feel like anything I see or make is for others and once I finish it, it’s now part of the world. And I felt like we were really gifting other people Miami that night.

Lucas: I think there was less of an awareness of how things might be perceived as well.

Jillian: I felt like everything here is was so malleable and everyone made up the stories. Producing projects felt spontaneous. And still, I always try and think- ART FIRST. How can we get the work done? It was a great time for that. I think that’s why I joined up with Borscht- that shared ethos that enabled so much work to be pumped out. It was just getting started at the time but then seeing all the stuff everyone made, with the line around the Arsht Center to see it, felt like something special was happening.

Lucas: Your second video, *Life and Freaky Times of Uncle Luke*, which is now in textbooks and collections and somehow considered an ‘Important Work’ in film history, premiered that night too, but we didn’t know a thing.

Jillian: I remember getting the call that it got into Sundance while I was in a bunny costume handing out flyers for Club Mansion on SoBe. And then it was off to the races.

Lucas: We were living behind the Wendy’s on 33rd and Biscayne, splitting the \$250 rent. The Borscht stuff is probably another wave as it really got going after the scope of this book/show, but it was inspired by all these people. There was a special moment, and I think we caught the tail end of it, but what was it? Was the high water mark when Liz Ferrer was giving away everything in Lester’s for a few months? domingo’s karaoke duet speakeasy with Bas Fisher Invitational (BFI)? Whatever that thing was, it doesn’t exist anymore.



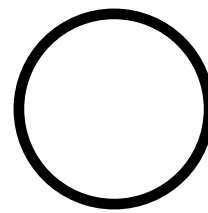
Jillian Mayer, *Scenic Jogging*,
projected inside the Solomon R.
Guggenheim Museum, NYC, 2010

Jillian: I guess we didn't have an agenda and I feel like many younger people are either really into identity building for the sake of being famous and to influence others. LIKE FOR LIKE. FOLLOW FOR FOLLOW. SUBSCRIBE TO MY CHANNELLLLLL. I think I was just trying to make things. We all were.

Lucas: Isn't that what *Scenic Jogging* was about? I'm sure there's something about speculative real estate in there but mostly it's this impossible race to keep up with perfect digital images. I thought it was dystopian at the time, but it was prescient and actually optimistic. Everyone is living in *Scenic Jogging* now- always, forever- running and watching and being watched...



LEYDEN RODRIGUEZ – CASANOVA



IN & OUTSIDE
THE BOX

JOSE REYES

&

MANNY PRIERES



CONVERSATIONS

MAKING MIAMI

Photos courtesy of Box Archive

Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova: I remember that the catalyst for starting vBox was when Jose had a meeting with a gallery in the Design District at the time, and we were going to put together a show there. Apparently, he had already given some work to the gallery and then suddenly the gallery closed and disappeared.

Jose Reyes: You're exactly right!

Leyden: We were so unhappy. You told us you lost some of your pieces. I was like, "What? They took your work?" We all thought that was so messed up. So basically, that is how we started.

Manny Prieres: We decided we could do this entirely ourselves. Why not?

Leyden: We set out to find a warehouse to open the show, where we could have studios. There was this kind of motivation for getting it done.

Jose: You're right. We never actually meant to create a gallery. We rented the warehouse off Bird Road to show that first exhibition.

Manny: It was called *Conditions of Gregor*. I feel like we all had different motivations or inspirations to start the space. But it came together at the same time. And at the end of the day, it was based on this D.I.Y. ethos. Because nobody was going to give us the opportunity, we're just going to do it.

Leyden: It's a mentality that I feel I still carry.

Jose: We're all wired that way.

Leyden: We didn't want to follow any particular rules. We were going to do this our own way.

Manny: I still remember meeting at the Denny's on 40th Street, saying "What are we going to do?" So we found a space and put together an art show. We were in our early twenties planning something that was going to be 7 to 8 years of our lives! Little did we know!

Jose: I have a vivid memory of that first show and people walking into the space. And I remember thinking, oh... the space is the thing. There's something really nice here and it's not like a space for me to exhibit my work in. It's exciting that there are people coming to see stuff that's not mine.

Manny: I think we started just meeting artists through Space Cadet Records, which was nearby in the Bird Road Art District. The Galvez brothers ran Space Cadet as an experimental music and art space. We attended a lot of events there and met people like Sander Willig, Stella Rey, and Naomi Fisher who was friends with Hernan Bas, and we even ended up doing a show with Space Cadet's Rafael Galvez. We started building a community.

Leyden: The second show we did was William Cordova and Carlos Sandoval de Leon. That's the way it went, which we always said was interesting. It just clicked. You were talking about what the feeling was, in terms of having the space for people to show in. Can you dig into that a bit more in terms of where that came from?

Manny: I was obsessed with music. I was really into the D.C. scene of the record label Dischord, very D.I.Y. Their idea was to archive a certain time in D.C. and Maryland. So all the music that was recorded that came out of Dischord was from that area, from that city. There weren't any New York or L.A. bands—it was all from that region. So I found that really interesting. And to me, I thought it would be interesting to showcase artists that we thought were doing interesting things in our city. And that got me really excited.

Jose: For me, it was a little more personal. I felt like growing up in Miami, I could never put my work anywhere. And there was a moment in the first couple of shows where I realized I had much more of a D.I.Y. attitude. We have a space where nobody had to ask permission. And all of a sudden, we could open the front door and give people the opportunity. And we all had day jobs, so we didn't need anybody's money.

Manny: Yes, I felt that gave us power. We were like, “We'll do whatever, we'll show whoever we want here.” And that's what we did.

Leyden: We were also, because of it, pretty hands-off in a sense. We were inviting people but did not want to intervene.

Manny: There were maybe a couple of shows where I didn't like the direction the artist was going, and we would have conversations.

Leyden: But that's interesting because it was so open-ended. And I feel like that's a sentiment that continues to impact Dimensions Variable (DV). There is an openness to giving artists an opportunity and not forcing upon them your aesthetic values, and having to grapple with that discomfort, even in my current work with DV. And having to deal with that, I think it's a really interesting journey. You almost feel like this isn't my vision for this space, and then you come out on the other side of that process as a changed person. And you see a whole entirely different way of working.

Jose: I've always loved that about you. The three of us have such different personalities. And I always felt like you were the one that was like, wait, let's open this up.

Manny: Yeah, I felt like I was in the middle, and I felt like you, Jose, were very black and white.

Jose: Yeah, I always wanted to go... let's go now!

Leyden: And in the process, we kept coming back to this. When was the point where we thought about creating a non-profit?



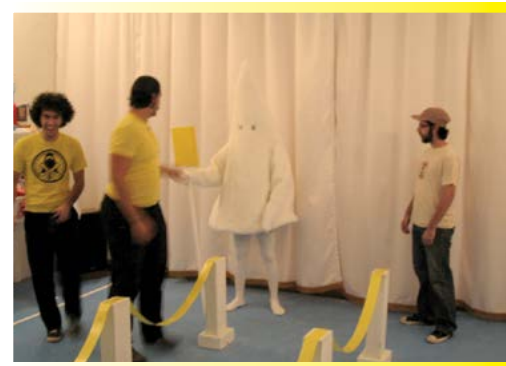
Installation view of Jose Reyes, *Self*, 1997 at Box



Installation view of Manny Prieres, *Migration*, 1997 at Box



Installation view of Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova during *Arizona*, 1999



Manny Prieres, Arturo Sandoval, and Pres Rodriguez setting up for *FriendsWithYou* at Box, 2004

Manny: I remember the more we learned about what it took to be a non-profit, the more it discouraged us. I felt that we were going to lose control. We would have to bring people in from the outside.

Leyden: We had to build a board.

Manny: And I remember you not liking that sort of thing. I wasn't into it. And I remember Jose, you were like, “fuck that! I don't want to deal with it.”

Leyden: We just wanted to keep doing what we're doing.

Jose: I never questioned the integrity of the choices that you guys were making. For me, the point of being independent was very important. We had day jobs and we funded everything that happened at Box out of our pocket. The notion of giving up that independence to become a non-profit organization and, by the way, do exactly the same thing we were already doing just never interested me.

Leyden: There's also a tiny detail, which was that our studios were there. So there was also this idea that we worked there. We don't necessarily want to create an environment where it gets really messy when our studios are there.

Manny: Exactly. We were so earnest- that was the thing, I remember people asking me what the prices were for the work, and would say, “Talk to the artists.” We were idealists—we never took a cut of any sales.

Leyden: The naiveness of this whole thing.

Manny: Because this was a pure space to be activated by artists in whatever way they wanted. I mean, you can look back at any type of movement like this, they're not supposed to last forever. It was not sustainable. Whatsoever.

Leyden: What's interesting is all the spaces that go beyond that, they all end up changing. They have to evolve. The moment you start getting funding, you have to build a board and become more corporatized in order to account for grants. It changes the whole dynamic.

Jose: It's a give and take. I think we were at a point in our lives where the give was more than the take.

Leyden: I also think we were all in our thirties and starting to really take our own personal practice more seriously.

Manny: It was tough to sustain it.

Leyden: I mean, I was going to get to that, in terms of what killed it?

Manny: I remember the FriendsWithYou show really was difficult. And then you sent us an email.

Leyden: Oh, yeah. I was like, “I'm out.” I needed a break and to get the hell out of Miami for a bit. And I met Frances. It was becoming difficult financially.



Manny: Are you kidding me? I remember bouncing checks. I told Jose, whoa, we can't do this anymore.

Leyden: There's only so much that we can pour into this.

Manny: Of course, and it was okay because I feel like these kinds of movements are not meant to keep going. What Locust has been able to build as a non-profit space is incredible and they are such an amazing asset to this community. But that wouldn't have happened with us. We were a little too underground.

Leyden: The difference from Locust is that they were better prepared to hit that wall that we hit. The board and the folks who came in and got involved helped them persevere. They climbed that wall, and that's something we didn't do—and I don't think we really wanted to.

Manny: We were too stubborn, and we didn't want anyone to know, but it's okay....

Leyden: It's okay though, it was time to die.



Rene Barge performs during *Front & Center*, a group performance project featuring Fe Cu Op, David Rohn, and others at Box in 2003.



Photo courtesy of Natalia Benedetti



TM Sisters and Jenna Balfe perform during *Front & Center* at Box in 2003.



Rafael Galvez performs during his solo project, *Paperfold Ballerina*, at Box in 1997.



Sam Borkson and Arturo Sandoval finalize last details of *FriendsWithYou*'s first ever solo project at Box in 2004.



Premiere of site-specific installation by *FriendsWithYou*, *Get Lucky*, at Box in 2004.



REMEMBERING PURVIS

Purvis Young, *Untitled Mural*, c. 1998 - 2003

Photo by Victor Jaramillo, 2023. Courtesy of Bakehouse Art Complex

ROSIE GORDON-WALLACE
September, 2023

President / Curator
Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator.

Purvis Young was really quite instrumental in the work that we did at the Bakehouse Art Complex. My friend Jeffrey Knapp from Miami Beach, may his soul rest in peace, introduced me to Purvis. Purvis would come around just to hang around the Bakehouse Art Complex in the evenings. And then he got in trouble with the law and Diaspora Vibe Gallery became his probation officer. And so we negotiated with Purvis that in order for him to do a hundred hours for the government during his probation, a good idea would be for him to do the mural at the Bakehouse. And you couldn't give Purvis hours to come in or hours to leave. What we did was we bought him paint and left the paint by the wall at night, and he would come into the Bakehouse in the evenings and paint daily until the mural was completed and he had fulfilled his probation requirements with the law. It was an exciting time because we would look forward to what we might see each morning, what was going to be revealed. And the mural is still there. It has just been restored at the initiative of Cathy Leff, the new CEO of the Bakehouse. It pleases my soul to see that his work has been preserved so that the community can continue to enjoy it for years to come.

IN MEMORIAM

Leslie Judd Ahlander	Lynne Golob Gelfman	Sheila Natasha
Fred Albert	Barbara Gilman	Chris "Evils" Oh
Carlos Alfonzo	Tony Goldman	Nam June Paik
Mario Algaze	Lourdes Gómez Franca	Helene Pancoast
Guillermo Alonso	Juan González	Kay Pancoast
José Alonso	Felix Gonzalez-Torres	Phyllis Parker
Genaro Ambrosino	David Gossoff	Pete Porter
Denise Andrews	Mary Grabill	Sir Edward and Ana Lee
Gigi Aramescu	Barbara Greene	Porter
Judith Arango	Zaha Hadid	Charles Recher
Tom Austin	Duane Hanson	Clarence Reid aka Blowfly
Mike Bakaty	Paula Harper	Michael Richards
Walter Darby Bannard	Shirley Henderson	Terence Riley
Florence Knoll Bassett	Israel "Reefa" Hernandez	Gleason Waite Romer
Estelle Berg	Tyrone Hill	James Roos
Cundo Bermúdez	Lee & Tina Hills	Ruth and Marvin Sackner
Ned and Sue Billing	Laurie Horn	Ann Sams
Dorothy Blau	Robert Huff	Alfredo Sanchez
Ronni Bogaev	Jim Hunter	Adolfo Rene Sanchez
Patrick Bouchard	Peggy Hurst	Gloria Scharlin
Bill Brady	Susanna Ibargüen	Tom V. Schmitt
Jon Fernando Brito	Ann Jaffe	Ellie Schneiderman
Wilfredo Brito	World Famous J. Jonny (WFJJ)	Tony Scornavacca
Raymond Brown	Miguel Jorge	Haydée Scull
Eglantine Buchanan Gordon	Art Kendallman	Sahara Scull
Roddey Burdine	Jay Kislak	Richard Shack
Luis Calzadilla	Jean Kislak	Robert Sindelir
Michael Carlebach	Dina Knapp	Mary Griffin Smith
Enrique Castro-Cid	Jeffery Knapp	Dolores Smithies
Carlos Cisneros	Helen L. Kohen	Beryl Solla
Michael Clifford	Joan Lehman	Rafael Soriano
Mark Coetzee	Lebo (David Le Batard)	Edwin Stirman
Grover Cole	Mira Lehr	Carlos Suarez de Jesus
Craig Coleman	Randall Levenson	Andy Sweet
Cecil Cooper	Norman Liebman	Marty Taplin
Kerry Stuart Coppin	Jacqueline Lipsky	Georgia Tasker
Bill Cosford	Tony Lopez	Oscar Thomas
Jan Cowles	Ed Love	Tomas Tournon
Elmer Craig	Carlos M. Luis	Evelyn Tucker
Joseph Wilfrid Daleus	Gloria Luria	Lewis Vandercar
Bernard Davis	Sheldon M. Lurie	Lawrence Weiner
Humberto Dionisio	Mark Lynch	Carl Weinhardt
Laurence Donovan	Carlos Maciá	Joel Weinstein
Giselle Dove	Roberto Martinez	Judy Weiser
Tomatadu Plenty	Juan Martínez	Myra Wexler
Josephine Esposito	EugeneMassin	Eddie Weyhe
Klara Farkas	Cristina Matuchek	Gerald Winter
Asif Farooq	Juanita May	Frances Wolfson
Christine Federighi	Donald McKnight	Brian Wong Won
Denman Fink	Peter McWhorter	Frank Wyroba
Granville Fisher	Michael Mendenhall	Tom Wyroba
Robert Flynn	Ana Mendieta	Bunny Yeager
Robert Frank	Beatriz Mendoza	Purvis Young
Simrod Friedman	Richard Merrick	Reyna Youngerman
Fernando Garcia	Elliot Miller	Dolores & Sanford Ziff
Enrique Gay Garcia	Andrew Morgan	Christo and Jeanne-Claude
Fernando Garcia	Arturo Mosquera Jr.	

INDEX

This is a list of select individuals and organizations connected to the conversations in this book. Please note that this is not intended to represent the entire directory of people that played a role in the Miami Art Scene.

In Alphabetical Order:

777 Gallery
777 Gallery was a pirate, collaborative space in Coral Gables, FL, founded by artist Manuel Millares. The alternative art and music venue deliberately had a short life between 2008 and 2010 and caused a stir in an otherwise traditional neighborhood.

Adler Guerrier
Adler Guerrier is an artist based in Miami. Guerrier has presented his works in exhibitions at Green Door Gallery, Placemaker, Home of Eugenia Vargas, The Living Room, Miami Art Central, The Marcy Building, The House, The Moore Space, Guccivuitton, and Miami Art Museum.

AE District
A progressive idea that merged art and entertainment showcasing all forms of creativity that I felt Miami needed to see more of. From visual art, to performing arts, as well as new and emerging talent in all areas, AE District was also known for hosting high-profile events in its 5,000 sq. ft. space AE District was featured in MIAMI Modern Luxury’s 2010 Best Of The City.

Alberto Ibargüen
Alberto Ibargüen was president of Knight Foundation and publisher of The Miami Herald and El Nuevo Herald. He was active in many civic organizations and was married to Susana Ibargüen, who was president of the board of the Pérez Art Museum Miami.

Alejandro Cardenas
The paintings and sculptures realized by Alejandro Cardenas provide a vision of a post-human world wherein the relationship between human forms and the environment is one of unity and coexistence. Guided by his own imagination and inspired by a wide variety of influences ranging from Surrealism to Sci-Fi to magical realism, Cardenas immerses himself in the creation of surreal, post-human scenes of polished, gridded interiors populated by eerie, angular figures.

Ambrosino Gallery
Founded by Genaro Ambrosino in 1992 in the city of Coral Gables.

Amy Rosenblum Martín
Former PAMM and Bronx Museum curator, Amy Rosenblum Martín has worked for MoMA, the Guggenheim, and the Metropolitan. Recent exhibitions include *Ana Mendieta: Thinking about Children’s Thinking* (Sugar Hill Children’s Museum) and *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration* (MoMA PS1).

Andrew
Andrew is a full service skate shop and apparel brand founded in Miami, Florida (2017). Andrew uses its apparel to shed light on the city’s rich cultural history and unique visual language.

Antoni Miralda
Antoni Miralda is a multidisciplinary artist who has investigated art and food for six decades, using vibrant and inclusive language, ironic and critical always rooted in its social context. He is interested in participation, cultural exchange, and dialogue.

Antonia Wright
Antonia Wright is a Cuban-American artist based in Miami, Florida. Through a multimedia practice of video, performance, poetry, photography, sound, light, and sculpture, Wright responds to extremes of emotion, control, and violence in relation to systems of power.

Aramis Gutierrez II
Aramis Gutierrez has presented his work at the Institute of Contemporary Art Miami, Miami; Galerie Balice Hertling, Paris; Central Fine, Miami; Orlando Museum of Art; The Frost Museum, Miami, FL; Miami Museum of Art, Miami FL; Binghamton University, Binghamton, NY; Guccivuitton, NADA Miami Beach, FL; among other places. Gutierrez cofounded the artist-run space Guccivuitton with artists Loriel Beltran and domingo castillo, later partnering with architect/ designer, Jonathan Gonzalez.

Arrive Miami
Arrive was the first lifestyle retail boutique dedicated to the new, young globetrotter, emphasizing the importance of the global experience. In less than one year, Arrive quickly became a style incubator by identifying and introducing new cutting edge designers as well as sought after young global streetwear brands to the Miami, FL market.

Ashland Mines
Miami Artist Ashland Mines, now known by the name Bobby Beethoven, formerly as Big Gay Idiot DJ and prior to that Total Freedom, lives in a converted bank on Wall Street, Manhattan somehow. Dividing his practice across art, fashion and music the work he's known most for is DJing. As a club DJ working in the outskirts of what can even be considered functional club music - Mines has spent the last two decades digging and collecting to synthesize new ways to communicate with his community.

Bakehouse Art Complex
Founded in 1985 by artists and for artists in a former industrial Art Deco-era bakery, Bakehouse Art Complex provides studio residencies, infrastructure, and community to enable the highest level of artistic creativity, development, and collaboration for the most promising talent. Bakehouse is comprised of approximately 100 resident and associate artists, deriving from a rich diversity of backgrounds.

Barbara Young
As art librarian, curator, and art services supervisor for the Miami-Dade Public Library System for thirty years, she initiated the Artmobile service and co-founded the Vasari Project, an archive of Miami’s art history from 1945 onward, with art critic and historian Helen L. Kohen. Over the years, she has curated hundreds of exhibitions with artists, galleries, and collectors from South Florida and other locales.

Bas Fisher Invitational (BFI)
Bas Fisher Invitational (BFI) is a W.A.G.E. Certified 501c3 artist-run nomadic curatorial platform founded in Miami in 2004 by artists Naomi Fisher and Hernan Bas, directed by Fisher since 2007. BFI creates a bridge between Miami and the international art world by curating programs featuring both local and global artists at sites throughout Miami-Dade County, and in collaboration with national and international partnering organizations.

Bernice Steinbaum
Bernice Steinbaum, a highly respected figure in the art community of the United States, is renowned as a gallerist, dealer, curator, juror, speaker, and author. Known for her discerning eye, snappy wardrobe, and advocacy, she continues to champion emerging artists addressing gender, race, culture, and identity.

Bernice Steinbaum Gallery
Founded in New York in 1977, the Steinbaum Gallery aimed to challenge the underrepresentation of women and artists of color in the art world. After relocating to Miami in 2000, the gallery shifted its focus to environmental themes, eventually closing its Wynwood location in 2014 and reopening as a home gallery in Coconut Grove on January 7, 2017.

Bhakti Baxter
Bhakti Baxter lives and works in Topanga, CA. Exploring the relationship between science and spirituality, his work hinges heavily on geometry, the systemic manifestations of mathematical principles in nature, and the interpretive freedom of abstraction. Working in a variety of media within sculpture, painting, and drawing, Baxter’s practice is an ongoing investigation into existential queries through the creative process.

Bigfish Mayaaimi
Bigfish Mayaaimi was an indoor/outdoor restaurant and exhibition space overlooking the Southbank of the industrial Miami River. A meeting place for Miami's international intelligentsia where during the day, manatees and pelicans shared the watery stage with horn-blowing tugboats and immense barges stacked high with discarded or illegal items.

Bonnie Clearwater

Bonnie Clearwater, Director and Chief Curator of NSU Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale since 2013, previously served as Director and Chief Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami for seventeen years, Director of Art Programs for the Lannan Foundation, Los Angeles and its museum in Lake Worth, Florida; Curator of The Mark Rothko Foundation, New York; and Curator of the Leonard Lauder Collection, New York. Recognized as a force in defining new trends and directions in contemporary art and a champion of South Florida artists, Ms. Clearwater, is an art historian with degrees from Columbia University and New York University and is a widely published author of books on Marcel Duchamp, Tracey Emin, Ana Mendieta, Mark Rothko, and Frank Stella among others.

Books & Books

Books & Books has been South Florida's premiere independent bookstore for over 40 years, featuring locations in Coral Gables, Bal Harbour Shops, Coconut Grove, Suniland Shops, and the Studios of Key West (owned by Judy Blume). They host hundreds of author talks and community-based events year-round and boast an award-winning, full-service Café & Wine/Beer Bar, serving as a vibrant (and safe) meeting place for readers and book lovers everywhere.

Box

Box was an independent artist-run exhibition space dedicated to supporting emerging artists; enhancing the public's understanding and appreciation of all forms of contemporary art; and fostering collaboration and exchange within the arts, cultural, and educational communities of Miami.

Brandon Opalka

Brandon Opalka, born in Virginia 1978, founded Fe Cu Op and the Co-Worker, an experimental mobile art space. Opalka's recent embroidered canvases express his concern for humans relationship with the natural environment.

Brook Dorsch & Tyler

Emerson-Dorsch Brook Dorsch founded Dorsch Gallery in 1991 as a space to show local emerging artists and performers. He has supported an adventurous exhibition program ever since. In 2014, the gallery name changed to Emerson Dorsch Gallery, reflecting the partnership with Tyler Emerson-Dorsch, a graduate of Bard College's Center for Curatorial Studies. She focussed on developing discourse around the gallery's program.

Carlos Betancourt

Carlos Betancourt is a puertorican multi-disciplinary artist. Born of Cuban parents, he is mostly based in Miami and Greece. His artworks explore issues of memory and his own experiences, while also dwelling in issues of nature, beauty and identity.

Carol Jazzar

Carol Jazzar is an interdisciplinary artist who lives and works in El Portal, Florida. Her work is centered on Nature, be it her own, or that of Mother Nature.

Carol Jazzar Contemporary Art

Founded by artist Carol Jazzar, Carol Jazzar Contemporary Art is a contemporary art gallery out of the garage on her property in Miami's El Portal neighborhood from 2007-2014. She showed many local and national artists - including Jen Stark, Farley Aguilar, David Rohn, Shoshanna Weinberger and Ronny Quevedo, among others.

Carolina García Jayaram

Carolina García Jayaram is the CEO of The Elevate Prize Foundation, a global purpose-driven non-profit that serves to amplify social impact around the world. In 2002, she co-founded LegalArt while at UM Law School and has been committed to empowering passionate problem solvers, leaders, artists and innovators ever since.

Cathy Leff

Cathy Leff, Director of Bakehouse Art Complex (2018–present) and Director Emerita of The Wolfsonian-FIU (1996-2018) is a seasoned cultural professional. Over the past five years, she has been working with the 37-year-old Bakehouse complex on a plan to renovate its former Art Deco-era bakery building into a state-of-the-art space for artists and artmaking while adding affordable housing for artists, educators, and other members of the community to the organization's underutilized 2.3-acre campus. She was responsible for negotiating the gifting of the MWJR collection and buildings to FIU and taking the then-private collection into the public domain at FIU.

Charo Oquet

Charo Oquet is a Dominican born, Miami based, interdisciplinary artist whose wide-reaching practice includes performance, sculpture, installation, painting, fashion, ceramic, video and photography. She has exhibited, performed, curated and lectured around the world since 1981.

Christian Curiel

Inspired by magic realism and the current human condition, Christian Curiel's paintings and works on paper mixes the real and unreal aspects of dream states as reflections on Latin American cultural and literary references, as well as elements of ritual, mystery, and symbolism. Curiel is a 05 Yale MFA graduate and professor of art and has shown widely nationally and internationally in galleries and museums throughout the world.

Claire Breukel

Claire Breukel is a South African-born contemporary art curator, coordinator and writer. She has worked internationally with a two decade presence in Miami stemming from a deep love of the city and its cultural community.

Clifton Childree

Clifton Childree born in Birmingham, Alabama is a painter, filmmaker, musician performance and installation artist living and working in Miami, Florida.

Coral Castle Museum

The Coral Castle, located in Homestead, FL is a sculpture garden in stone, built by one man, Edward Leedskalnin. From 1923 to 1951, Ed single-handedly and secretly carved over 1,100 tons of coral rock, and his unknown process has created one of the world's most mysterious accomplishments, as an ode to his lost love.

Craig Kucia

Craig Kucia is a Los Angeles based painter. Over the course of his twenty year career, he's exhibited with The Pit (Los Angeles), Shrine Gallery (New York), Kevin Bruk Gallery (Miami), Nathalie Karg Gallery (New York), Shane Campbell Gallery (Chicago), Blum and Poe (Los Angeles), Shaheen Modern and Contemporary Art (Cleveland), and the Maki Gallery (Tokyo). His work is included in the collections of Progressive Art (Cleveland), Georgia Museum of Art (Athens, GA), Perez Art Museum (Miami), and the High Museum of Art (Atlanta) and he is currently represented by the Pit.

Craig Robins

Craig Robins is the President and CEO of Dacra, Chairman and Co-Founder of Design Miami/, and a collector of art and design.

Cristina Lei Rodriguez

Cristina Lei Rodriguez contemplates the complexity of urban life through her study and imitation of how nature adapts, thrives, decays and is born again. Rodriguez uses techniques of collage, painting, drawing, photography, sculpture and installation to create art that takes many forms, but all are made from common materials that are given a new intangible life.

Dacra

Dacra is the real estate development company founded by Craig Robins in 1987, which spearheaded the development of the Miami Design District.

Daniel Arsham

Daniel Arsham is a visual artist whose work straddles the line between art, architecture, and performance. He was born in Cleveland, raised in Miami, and lives and works in New York City. His work is shown in museums and galleries around the world.

Danny Gonzalez

Born and raised in Miami, FL. Bass guitar for Jacuzzi Boys.

David Castillo

David Castillo holds degrees in History and Art History from Yale University. Castillo has dealt in important secondary market works, overseen major public art commissions, lectured widely on art, held positions at museums and has directed David Castillo Gallery for nearly 20 years.

David Marsh

David Marsh is an Associate Curator for Edge Zones Gallery and also the founder and director of Flowerbox Projects, located in Miami's Little Haiti neighborhood. Since moving to Miami in 2003, Marsh has devoted much of his time outside of painting dedicated to curating and coordinating art shows in addition to mounting his first solo show in 2006, Looking for Labels, and curated his first show, The Wild, Wild Wynwood at Edge Zones in early 2007.

David Rohn

David Rohn grew up and studied Art, Urbanism and Architecture in New York City and its environs. He studied and lived in Paris France for several years and has created and exhibited and performed his work widely, but particularly in the Miami region, where he settled in 1992.

David Castillo

David Castillo is a preeminent gallery in the United States, which opened in 2005 and is considered among the top galleries in the world. The gallery has produced more than 160 fine art exhibitions to date.

de la Cruz Collection

The de la Cruz Collection is a 30,000 square foot museum located in Miami's Design District, built in 2009. Privately funded by collectors Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz, the museum serves as an extension of the couple's home where for over 35 years they have shared with the public their passion for art, collecting, and education. Yearly exhibitions focus on contemporary art, offering accessibility for audiences at no cost, and supporting the local community through public lectures, artist-led workshops, and scholarships. In partnership with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, scholarships include student travel to Europe, Asia and New York City, as well as pre-college programs at the School of Visual Arts and Parsons. The de la Cruz Collection encompasses the collector's vision and history, encouraging education and providing a platform for the exchange of ideas.

Debra Scholl

Debra Scholl has been president of Morada Ventures, Inc., a real estate company, since 1989. One of Locust Projects’ founding board members, Debra has served as Chair for the past 13 years and is involved with numerous philanthropic endeavors, including PAMM and Brickell Literary Society. She and husband Dennis Scholl are avid art collectors who have donated hundreds of works to PAMM, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Florida International University, and Nevada Museum of Art.

Dennis Scholl

Dennis Scholl is a documentary filmmaker and artist who has spent the last fifteen years in cultural philanthropy, focusing on his hometown of Miami, Florida.

Design and Architecture Senior High School (DASH)

Established in 1990, Design and Architecture Senior High (DASH) is an award-winning M-DCPS district-wide magnet school with one-of-a-kind art and design curricula complemented by rigorous academics.

Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator

Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator (DVCAI) has a commitment to artists of the Caribbean and diverse cultures to ensure they receive validation, visibility, and professional opportunities. Our artists break the boundaries of traditional forms and work outside of institutionalized systems, they often must create new systems and infrastructures to sustain their practice. DVCAI promotes, nurtures, and exhibits the diverse talents of emerging artists from the Latin and Caribbean Diasporas through an artist-in-residence program, international exchanges, community arts events, and a dynamic exhibition program collaborating with art spaces and inhabiting the virtual landscape.

Dimensions Variable

Dimensions Variable is a non-profit contemporary art program founded and led by artists. We work together to fund artist development, curate innovative exhibitions, provide spaces to work, host community events, and advocate for artists to encourage a more equitable and interconnected art world independent of the constraints of markets and traditional institutions.

Dina Mitrani

A native of Miami, Dina Mitrani is the director of the Dina Mitrani Gallery, a space she opened in 2008 dedicated to the exhibition, education and promotion of fine art photography and photo-based artworks. She is currently developing a space in Little River with her sister Rhonda, focused on photography, film, and video art, continuing the work they started in Wynwood in 2002. Dina lives in Miami with her two teenage daughters.

Dina Mitrani Gallery

Dina Mitrani Gallery opened in the Wynwood Art District in November of 2008 and specializes in international contemporary photography. The gallery represents emerging and mid-career artists, offers artists talks and lectures about photography, photo-based objects and books. The gallery is committed to promoting its artists, in addition to collaborating with other galleries and curators to bring important photography exhibitions to Miami. The gallery’s mission is not only to exhibit and promote lens-based art, but also to educate and enhance community enrichment. Dina Mitrani Gallery will soon be relocating to the Little River neighborhood of Miami, to open a photography, film and video art space with her sister, Rhonda Mitrani.

DISfunction

DIS invaded Miami Beach Will(ow) Smith style in order to celebrate the impossibly dense and relentlessly stimulating Art Basel and NADA Art fairs, December 2010. Along with co-host, Ryan Trecartin, DIS took over Tommy Lee’s Hot Topic-inspired Rokbar on Collins Ave. from Thursday through early Sunday, joined by an attractive cast of reality television would-nots: DJ Total Freedom, Gang Gang Dance, NguzuNguzu, Seychelle Allah, Azizaman, Fatima Al Qadiri, and the GHE20 G0TH1K crew: Physical Therapy, Venus X, and \$hayne.

domingo castillo flores

domingo castillo flores is a retired artist who collaborated often to produce artwork. In 2010, *the end / SPRING BREAK*, a nomadic pedagogical artist-run project in Miami, FL was co-founded with Patricia Margarita Hernandez and produced in collaboration with Kathryn Marks and Cristina Farah. In 2013, the gallery Noguchi Breton (F.K.A. Guccivuitton and Versace Versace Versace) was co-founded with Loriel Beltran and Aramis Gutierrez. In 2016 Public Displays of Professionalism (PDP), a transdisciplinary think tank was co-founded with Patricia Margarita Hernandez, and Natalia Zuluaga.

Edge Zones

Edge Zones (EZ) is an artist-run non-profit organization that aims to strengthen the contemporary art environment in Miami. Our mission is to provide opportunities and resources for under-recognized artists, making contemporary art accessible and engaging. We prioritize cultural exchanges and create encounters with artists from the Caribbean, South and Central America, fostering a network of collaboration and awareness.

El Speakeasy

Artist Carlos Betancourt and Alberto Latorre art salon behind their current studio in Little Haiti, Miami. It also houses Betancourt's archive of Miami and Miami Beach art memorabilia.

Elisa Turner

An award-winning art critic and journalist in Miami, Elisa Turner wrote for the Miami Herald for 21 years and continues to write for other publications. In 2020 she won the national Rabkin Prize for visual art journalists; in 2021 and 2020 she was awarded First Place for her Arts Commentary & Criticism from Florida’s Sunshine State Society of Professional Journalists.

Elizabeth Withstandley

Elizabeth Withstandley is a research-based video installation and new media artist that focuses on individuals and communities. She is one of the co-founders of Locust Projects, a not-for-profit art exhibition space, in Miami, FL and Prospect Art a not-for-profit in Los Angeles, CA. Emerson Dorsch Gallery Throughout a thirty-two-year history, Emerson Dorsch Gallery has shaped the trajectory of the city’s contemporary art by championing artists at all stages of their careers. Our dynamic team produces shows that have represented breakthroughs for many artists.

Española Way Studios

Española Way Studios was a bohemian enclave in South Beach with the look and vibe of a Mediterranean neighborhood. They provided wonderful working and living spaces when this area of Miami Beach was like a "no man's land."

EXILE Books

EXILE Books produces publications and site-specific events including exhibitions, fairs, performances, and workshops in order to advance engagement with artist’s publications across South Florida. Headquartered in Miami's Little Haiti neighborhood, EXILE seeks to establish a pervasive print culture in Miami by creating hubs for independent publishing that represent and serve our diverse community.

Fe Cu Op

Fe Cu Op, founded in 1997, is a collaborative initiative that transcends traditional mediums to offer a commentary on human behavior, inviting the audience on a unique artistic journey.

Flowerbox Projects

Flowerbox is an artist-run studio + project space, supporting emerging artists, through exhibitions and creative programming.

FoodCultureMuseum

FoodCultureMuseum is a non-profit, cultural, interdisciplinary virtual museum and archive. Based on an open structure or platform from which to present and rethink the “FoodCultura” concept, not only from the perspective of food or nutrition but also from artistic practice and anthropological research.

Fountainhead Residency

Founded in 2008 by collectors Kathryn and Dan Mikesell, Fountainhead Residency is the first of its kind, in the heart of Miami burgeoning art scene providing residencies for 33 global artists each year each year. From 2008-2024 Fountainhead Studios, provided affordable, flexible studios to 30 Miami-based artists. Since 2019, Fountainhead inaugurated a new program Artists Open, the only countywide open studios event.

Frances Trombly

Frances Trombly is an Artist, Cultural Producer, and Co-founder/Co-director of Dimensions Variable (DV). Her work has been exhibited and recognized by important and influential local, national, and international institutions, galleries, residencies, publications, and foundations as she continues her art practice celebrating the importance of fiber as a material in contemporary art.

Fredric Snitzer Gallery

Fredric Snitzer first opened his gallery in 1977 on Biltmore Way in Coral Gables, followed by successive galleries at North Ponce de Leon, Bird Road, and Wynwood and in 2014 the gallery settled in the Arts & Entertainment District near Downtown Miami. Fredric Snitzer is committed to presenting work across all media from a diverse range of contemporary artists, the gallery has maintained a rigorous exhibition schedule that features at least eight rotating exhibitions by its artists each year.

FriendsWithYou

FriendsWithYou is the collaborative art project of Los Angeles based artists Samuel Borkson and Arturo Sandoval III, working collectively since 2002 to create modern modes of spirituality with the mission of having a positive impact on our world. Their artwork has been materialized as experiences, immersive installations, sculptures, paintings, animation, and live performances. FriendsWithYou has exhibited in museums and public venues worldwide and a monograph, *We Are FriendsWithYou*, was published by Rizzoli in 2014. Through their work, we connect to ourselves and each other, spreading friendship, building community, and deepening our relationship with the natural world.

FUNNER PROJECTS

Miami artist collaborative Justin H. Long and Robert Lorie. Often collaborating with others this duo created *Maintain Right*, *The Youth Fair Bro*, *That's Not a Knife*, *Bro's B4 Hoes* and more.

Green Door Gallery

The Green Door Gallery was a studio and gallery founded by Mino Gerges and Gary Fonseca, around 1999. It was located around the corner from New World School of the Arts at 212 North Miami Avenue; the building still stands.

Guccivuitton

Guccivuitton was a Miami based artist-run space, programming between 2013 through 2016 that focused on the colloquial aesthetics in and influencing South Florida. Originally founded by Lorie Beltran, Domingo Castillo & Aramis Gutierrez, the space went on to exhibit the works of over 40 artists working in their community.

Heydays

Steven Menendez' second-hand shop in Miami Beach. Carlos Betancourt's first studio was in the back room.

Houndstooth Cottage

Houndstooth Cottage goals are to advocate leadership among artists/musicians to foster personal growth. The creative hub expanded into a recording studio and boutique indie label through performance, art exhibits and community service.

Hyperspace

The late Víctor Fariñas alternative art space off Lincon Road in Miami Beach 1980's-90's. Included a movie theater, showing B-movies.

Imperfect Utopia

Carlos Betancourt and his influential studio, Imperfect Utopia, helped to launch the Miami art scene in the 1980s. The studio, located on Lincoln Road near the South Florida Art Center (now Oolite Arts) was an experimental hub for the artist and his colleagues, including poets and performance artists, and it served as an art salon and definite south beach underground hang out as well.

Jacin Giordano

Grew up in Miami and now lives in Western Massachusetts. He received his BFA in painting from Maryland Institute College of Art and his MFA from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and he currently teaches a range of visual art classes at the Pioneer Valley Performing Arts School.

Jacuzzi Boys

A rock 'n' roll band from Miami, FL comprised of Gabriel Alcala on guitar and vocals, Daniel Gonzalez on bass, and Diego Monasterios on drums.

Jen Stark

Jen Stark is a visual artist whose work is inspired by patterns in nature, fractals, evolution and sacred geometries. She was born and raised in Miami, and currently lives in Los Angeles.

Jenna Balfe

Jenna Balfe is a multi-disciplinary artist from Miami, FL. Her work focuses on the idea of creating a healing/joyful circuit between self, other and earth via movement and play. She is the lead singer of the band Donzii, a performance artist with a practice of visual art as well.

Jiae Hwang

Jiae Hwang is a multidisciplinary artist who built her artist career in Miami. She now lives in Southern California as Joy Hwang Ruiz, a NY Times best selling children's book illustrator for major publishers.

Jillian Mayer

Jillian Mayer is an artist and filmmaker.

Jon Pylypchuk

Jon Pylypchuk is a Canadian painter and sculptor, living and working in Los Angeles. Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, Pylypchuk earned his MFA in 2001 at the University of California and is in the collections of MOCA, MOMA, The Whitney, The National Gallery of Canada, LACMA, Albright Knox, SmAk Ghent and many others.

José Carlos Diaz

José Carlos Diaz is the Susan Brotman Deputy Director for Art at the Seattle Art Museum (SAM). Diaz received a BA in art history from San Francisco State University and MA in cultural history from the University of Liverpool and he has held positions at The Andy Warhol Museum, The Bass Miami Beach, Tate Liverpool, and the Liverpool Biennial.

Justin H. Long

Justin H. Long is a polymath, bon vivant, submerging artist, living the dream in Miami, FL.

Karen Grimson

Karen Grimson is Curator for Craig Robins Collection, and Director of Cultural Programming for Miami Design District.

Katerina Llanes

Katerina Llanes is a curator and creative producer born and raised in Miami. She graduated from Bard CCS in 2009 and has worked at MOCA TV (LA), PAMM (Miami) and the Museum of Art and Design (NYC). She is now the Curator and Program Manager for Jayaram.

Kathryn Mikesell

Kathryn Mikesell is the co-founder and executive director of Fountainhead Arts. Prior to launching Fountainhead she worked in technology for companies including ADC and IBM, and co-founded a children's enrichment center, Skipping Stones, which continues to operate today.

Kevin Arrow

Kevin Arrow is a multifaceted artist and cultural producer living and working in Miami, Florida. His work has been exhibited in South Florida galleries, museums and alternative spaces since the mid-1980s and is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami (MOCA), the Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), the BASS Museum of Art, Miami Beach, the Miami-Dade County Public Library, the Otto G. Richter Special Collection at the University of Miami, Miami Beach Art in Public Places in addition to numerous private collections.

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation is a social investor that supports a more effective democracy by funding free expression and journalism, arts and culture in community, research in areas of media and democracy, and in the success of American cities and towns where the Knight brothers once published newspapers.

lab6

lab6 was an eclectic indie art space committed to showcasing the work of local and international fringe artists between 1996-2004.

LegalArt/LegalARTLink/LegalLink Cannonball

LegalArt was founded in 2003 by Carolina García Jayaram and Lara O'Neil to support Miami's emerging artists with legal services, grants, and business development programs. LegalArt (later renamed Cannonball) went on to establish a live/work residency and the WaveMaker Grant in partnership with The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Wavemaker, along with LegalArtLink, which pairs attorneys with artists, were both gifted to Locust Projects when Cannonball sunsetted in 2017. It continues to thrive under their management.

Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova

Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova is an artist, curator, cultural producer, and Co-founder/ Co-director of Dimensions Variable (DV). His work has been exhibited and recognized by important and influential local, national, and international institutions, galleries, residencies, publications, and foundations and he continues his art practice while advocating for artists through curating and organizing a platform for opportunity and agency.

Little Haiti Cultural Complex

The mission of the City of Miami's Little Haiti Cultural Complex is to present and preserve Afro-Caribbean cultures, inspire the next generation of leaders and leverage arts and culture as tools for transformation and community building.

Little River Yacht Club

Artist-run studio and exhibition space founded by Larry Newberry, Robert Lorie and Justin H. Long. Artists with studios there included: Jen Stark, Alvarro ilizarbe, Orlando Estrada, Emmett Moore, Richard Haden, Sarah Newberry, Robert Lorie and Justin H. Long.

Locust Projects

Founded by artists for artists in 1998, Locust Projects produces, presents, and nurtures ambitious and experimental new art and the exchange of ideas through commissioned exhibitions and projects, artist residencies, summer art intensives for teens, professional development resources for Miami-based artists and public programs on contemporary art and curatorial practice. As a nationally recognized alternative art space and incubator of new art and ideas, Locust Projects emphasizes boundary-pushing creative endeavors, risk-taking and experimentation by local, national, and international artists.

Lorie Mertes

Lorie Mertes is Executive Director of Locust Projects (2017-present). She was Program Director at National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC (2012-2017); Residency Curator at McColl Art Center, Charlotte, NC (2011-2015); and Director of The Galleries at Moore College of Art and Design, Philadelphia (2006-2011); and Curator at Miami Art Museum, aka PAMM (1994-2006).

Lotus House

Sheltering 1,550+ women, youth and children annually, Lotus House is the largest women's shelter in the country. We provide shelter, resources, and multi-faceted, comprehensive supportive services to help our guests successfully exit the shelter system and lead lives of greater opportunity.

Lucas Leyva

Lucas Leyva is a filmmaker and the founder of the Borscht Corp.

Maitejosune Urrechaga

Maitejosune Urrechaga "Maite" is an established artist, musician, and educator and also known as the "better half" of the band Pocket Of Lollipops. Maite has been a part of the music and art scene since her teens and in 2008 she received the Best Art Basel Headline for her Interactive Art Installation in the Miami New Times.

Manny Prieres

Manny Prieres is a Miami based artist that opened, with Leyden Rodriguez Casanova and Jose Reyes, one of the first artist-run spaces called Box, that ran from 1997 to 2004. Box was adjacent to another D.I.Y collective called Space Cadet Records and the proximity of these two spaces created an environment that inspired discourse/ collaboration that was lacking and helped coalesce a creative community within Miami in the mid 90s.

Marie Vickles

Marie Vickles is the Senior Director of Education at the Pérez Art Museum Miami and Curator-in-Residence at the Little Haiti Cultural Center. Marie has organized arts educational programs and exhibitions across the United States and the Caribbean for over 20 years. In her work as an arts educator and cultural practitioner, she is concerned with the relationship between creativity and community engagement – with the goal of supporting equity, sustainability, and access for all, through the arts.

Mario Cader-Frech

Mario Cader-Frech, social impact media professional, leads the DeeperDive.org project conceived at Harvard Divinity School. Founder of Y.ES Contemporary Art program and serves on the boards of MoMA NY and Reina Sofia Museum Madrid.

Mauricio Abascal

Mauricio Abascal is an interdisciplinary artist primarily working in the media of sound, movement, and experimental photo/video. He spent the early 2000's in Miami collaborating with a variety of creative experimenters, culture-jamming and navigating the magical chaos of the concrete swamp.

Max Pierre

Max Pierre is a community-based social practice creative/artist and entrepreneur. Through his work, he seeks to promote social change, challenge systemic injustices, and foster community engagement.

Melissa Wallen

Melissa Wallen is an artist, an award-winning arts administrator, and Director of the de la Cruz Collection.

Mera Rubell

Since their first acquisition in 1965, the Rubells have built one of the most significant and far-reaching collections of contemporary art in the world, encompassing over 7,400 works by more than 1,000 artists- and still growing. They have curated their collection by looking at art, talking with artists, and trusting their instincts.

Miami Design Preservation League

Miami Design Preservation League (MDPL) is a non-profit organization devoted to preserving, protecting, and promoting the cultural, social, economic, environmental and architectural integrity of the Miami Beach Architectural Historic District and all other areas of the City of Miami Beach where historic preservation is a concern.

Miami-Dade Public Library System

The Miami-Dade Public Library System aims to provide extraordinary services, spaces and experiences that promote literacy and learning, personal growth and limitless opportunities.

Michele Oka Doner

Michele Oka Doner is an internationally renowned artist whose career spans six decades. Her work is fueled by a lifelong study and appreciation of the natural world, from which she derives her formal vocabulary, and the breadth of her artistic production encompasses sculpture, drawing, public art, functional objects, video, artist books, and costume and set design.

Micky Wolfson, Jr.

Mitchell "Micky" Wolfson, Jr., fascinated by the active role design plays in shaping human experiences, perceptions, and attitudes, established The Wolfsonian in the spirit of his international upbringing and varied collecting taste. An author, philanthropist, and former diplomat, Wolfson is also the founder of a sister institution in Genoa, Italy: The Wolfsoniana. Over the years, Wolfson has donations his collections and buildings to the State of Florida and the City of Genoa and the Republic of Italy.

MOCA North Miami

MOCA North Miami presents contemporary art and its historical influences through exhibitions, educational programs, and collections. Inspired by its surrounding communities, MOCA connects diverse audiences and cultures by providing a welcoming place to encounter new ideas and voices, and by nurturing a lifelong love of the arts.

Monica Lopez De Victoria

Monica Lopez De Victoria is a multi-disciplinary artist, educator, synchronized swimming choreographer, and collaborator in TM Sisters. Monica creates large site-specific, optical art installations using projection mapping, aquatic performances, textiles, and interactive digital XR.

Montse Guillén

Montse Guillen is a chef interested in food and art. She is the founder of renowned restaurants such as MG (Barcelona 1980), El Internacional Tapas Bar & Restaurant (New York 1984), and Bigfish Mayaimi (Miami 1996).

Naomi Fisher

The 25 year career of Miami based artist, Naomi Fisher, began with hyper-detailed cibachromes of women in absurd feminist performative gestures, inspired by the wild and untamed tropical environment that serves as the backdrop to the population's tendency toward artifice and materialistic excess. Her focus of the last decade – large scale public art projects – is rooted in her painting, performance, and videos which bring interactions with nature to the public realm.

Natalia Benedetti

Natalia Benedetti is a Venezuelan-born artist living in Middleburgh New York. From 1992 to 2007, Benedetti was based in Miami where she held strong connections to the local art community and participated in dozens of events and exhibitions during this time.

Natasha Lopez De Victoria

Natasha Lopez De Victoria is one half of the digital performance duo TM Sisters and is currently creating artworks as ELECTRICNATASHA. Her focuses are animation, murals and most of all portraiture because she believes that everyone deserves a portrait.

New World School of the Arts

New World School of the Arts is Florida's premier center of excellence in the visual and performing arts. As a conservatory, NWSA develops talented students in the areas of dance, music, theatre and visual arts from the ninth grade in high school through a Bachelor of Fine Arts or Bachelor of Music college degrees.

Nina Arias

Nina Arias is a curator and cultural producer who Co-Founded Rocket Projects gallery in Wynwood in 2003, she was instrumental in spearheading the co-creation of the Wynwood Art District Asociacion later that year. Arias is now based in the magical jungle lands of La Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia where she is the Founder and Director of La Sierra Artist Residency and Creative Director of Gitana del Mar, a Beachfront Wellness Retreat Center in the Heart of the World.

Nina Johnson

Nina Johnson is the founder and director of her namesake gallery in Miami's Little Haiti neighborhood. Over the past fifteen years she has brought over one hundred exhibitions by artists both new and emerging to Miami and forged partnerships around the world where she is recognized as a champion of artists.

Nina Johnson

Nina Johnson is a contemporary art gallery committed to elevating exceptional artists and their work. Founded by Nina Johnson in 2007, we are both a pillar of Miami's contemporary art community and an internationally recognized voice known for our wide-ranging and intuitive program.

O Cinema

O Cinema is an independent, community-based, mission-driven, non-profit arthouse cinema in Miami-Dade County and the Beaches featuring first-run films, programs, and events. Our mission is to provide intriguing, entertaining, and superior quality films that audiences will otherwise not see in South Florida.

Oliver Sanchez

Oliver Sanchez is an American artist born in Cuba 1958, working in Miami. Oliver and his brother Adolfo (1957-1990) emerged in the 1980's East Village, NYC art scene and their artwork +is included in the Museum of Modern Art - Club 57 Film, Performance and Art 2017.#

Oolite Arts (ArtCenter/South Florida)

Oolite Arts is Miami's leading individual visual artist support organization. Formerly known as the South Florida Art Center, it will celebrate its 40th anniversary next year.

Oolite Arts (formerly known as ArtCenter/ South Florida)

Our founder, potter Ellie Schneiderman, sought affordable work spaces for Miami's visual artists. Today, Oolite Arts continues Schneiderman's mission, to, as she said, "help artists help themselves." Oolite Arts is both a community and a resource, providing artists with the free studio space, exhibition opportunities, direct support and programming they need to advance their careers.

Peggy Nolan

Long divorced mother of seven and grandmother of eight, long career starting in early middle age, collected by nine museums, author of two published monographs, amazing press hyperbole, lounging in pajamas, happilyretired!

Pepe Mar

Pepe Mar is a Mexican artist living in Miami for the last 20 years. He creates layered collages, assemblages, and installations informed by Queer life, art history, and his upbringing in the US/Mexico border.

Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), formerly known as Miami Art Museum (MAM)

Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM) is a modern and contemporary art museum dedicated to collecting and exhibiting international art of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Placemaker Gallery

Placemaker was an artist-run commercial gallery that was intended to serve as the fundraising arm of The House.

Pocket of Lollipops

Coined as a posh punk sound, the duo born and raised in Miami, FL is compromised by Maitejosune Urrechaga on bass and Tony Kapel on drums, both of them share vocal duties.

Poplife

An early 2000s alternative Saturday-night Miami dance party.

Pres Rodriguez

Cuban-American graphic designer/creative director based in Miami, FL.

Primary

Primary (Est. in 2007) is a context & research-driven curatorial collective with a focus on public arts. Located in Little River, Miami, our private residence explores modern ideas on the subject of live/work, connecting new voices in contemporary art with growing audiences & collections.

PS 742/ Artemis

PS 742 was an experimental art and performance space under the auspices of the arts organization, Artemis, whose mission was to support South Florida-based artists, located in Little Havana between 2000-2004.

Purvis Young

Purvis Young (February 4, 1943 – April 20, 2010) was an American artist from the Overtown neighborhood of Miami, Florida. Self-taught, Young's work was often a blend painting/drawing with collaged elements utilizing everyday discarded found objects.

R&R STUDIOS

Roberto Behar & Rosario Marquardt are founding partners and artistic directors of R&R STUDIOS. They are dedicated to the creation of architecture and artworks that perform as social sculptures and tools for the pursuit of happiness.

René Morales

René Morales is the James W. Alsdorf Chief Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. Previously, he worked at Pérez Art Museum Miami, where he organized approximately 60 exhibitions including Gary Simmons: *Public Enemy*, Christo and Jeanne-Claude: *Surrounded Islands*, Dara Friedman: *Perfect Stranger*, Sarah Oppenheimer: *S-281913*, and Meleko Mokgosi: *Your Trip to Africa*.

Rhonda Mitrani

Born to Cuban and Argentinean parents, Rhonda Mitrani is a filmmaker, video artist and founder of The Screening Room, Miami, a new-media space where motion picture converges through exhibitions, projects, and educational programs. Mitrani is also developing a space focused on film/video and photography with her sister, Dina, an updated version of the art warehouse they cultivated in Wynwood.

Robert Chambers

Robert Chambers is a sculptor now based in Miami. He is known for projects inspired by science. He has a number of Art in Public Places commissions. Robert taught at NYU and University of Miami and is a YoungArts panelist. Exhibitions include the Sculpture Center, PS1 MoMA, Exit Art, The American Academy in Rome, The House, La Torre de Los Vientos, Laumeier Sculpture Park, Kunst-Raum Riehen, AIRIE and the Fabric Workshop Museum. Collected by MoMA, MOCA, Kemper, Fabric Workshop, Pérez Art Miami and Tufts.

Roberto Behar & Rosario Marquardt

Roberto Behar & Rosario Marquardt are founding partners and artistic directors of R&R STUDIOS. They are dedicated to the creation of architecture and artworks that perform as social sculptures and tools for the pursuit of happiness. Their work weaves together visual arts, architecture, design, landscape and the City. Rosario and Roberto study architecture in Argentina and later in New York City. They have been visiting artists at Getty Research Center and American Academy in Rome. Their work belongs to public and private collections around the world. Most recently, they completed The Home We Share a triad of large scale public social sculptures at Princeton University.

Rocket Projects

Rocket Projects art gallery was co-founded by Nina Arias in 2003, serving as a vibrant platform for cutting edge contemporary art and emerging talent. The gallery represented a roster of artists, including notable names such as Emilio Perez, Christian Curiel, Brandon Opalka, Ryan Humphrey and Cristina Lei Rodriguez. With its avant-garde exhibitions and pioneering spirit, it played a pivotal role in shaping the Wynwood Art District during its brief, but influential tenure.

Rosa de la Cruz

Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz are the founders of the de la Cruz Collection, a contemporary art collection based in the Miami Design District that is free and open to the public year-round. Rosa founded The Moore Space with Craig Robins in 2001.

Rosie Gordon-Wallace

Rosie Gordon-Wallace is a renowned curator and advocate for contemporary diaspora art. In 1996, she founded Diaspora Vibe Gallery the non-profit Diaspora Vibe Culture Arts Incubator (DVCAI)- 2003, which has since become a global hub for emerging artists from the Caribbean Diaspora, artists of color, and immigrant artists, challenging traditional definitions of Caribbean and Latin American art.

Rubell Museum

The Rubell Museum opened in Miami's Allapattah neighborhood in December 2019. Originally launched in 1993 as the Rubell Family Collection, the institution was renamed the Rubell Museum to emphasize its public mission and expand access for audiences. In October 2022, the Rubell Family opened a second museum in DC's Southwest neighborhood that serves as a place for the public to engage with the most compelling national and international artists of our time.

Ruben Millares

Ruben Millares is a Cuban-American artist born and based in Miami, Florida. Through a medium agnostic practice along with formal educational training as a CPA, Financial Planner, artist and musician, Millares is in constant search for the fusion between pragmatism and imagination to find balance in a world of dualitie.

Ryan Trecartin

Ryan Trecartin's work—which includes video, sculpture, sound, installation, and most recently land art—has largely been focused on the fluid nature of identity and the changing meaning of community and subjectivity in the wake of the profound technological shifts of the last 20 years.

Silvia Cubiñá

Silvia Karman Cubiñá is the Executive Director & Chief Curator of The Bass, a contemporary collecting museum located in Miami Beach, Florida, as well as the former director of The Moore Space.

SIMPLYGOODMIAMI

SIMPLYGOODMIAMI is a project that focuses on highlighting and celebrating people, places, and things that we believe were just SIMPLY GOOD. In a world driven by hype, excess and bluster we wanted to take the time to focus on subtleties, details and nuances. We truly believe that these are the things that actually set everything apart.

Space Cadet Records

Space Cadet was run by Rafeal Galvez, with his brother musician/artist/actor Alfredo Galvez, and musician and artist Sander Willig.

Studio 10o3

Studio 10o3 was a studio shared by Gary Fonseca, Matthew Tremblay and Adler Guerrier, while they were students at New World School of the Arts. A series of exhibitions were produced there between 1997 through 2000.

Susan Caraballo

Susan Caraballo is an independent curator, interdisciplinary creator, cultural producer and non-profit arts consultant who was the founding director of Artemis, the parent organization of PS 742.

Susan Lee-Chun

Susan Lee-Chun is an artist based in Miami, FL. Lee-Chun's work focuses on identity politics through performance, video, photography, and sculpture.

Swampspace

Swampspace is an alternative exhibition space established to present varied cultural events that celebrate civic values, the arts and humanities. Oliver Sanchez is the founding Director of Swampspace located in the Miami Design District since 2005.

Sweat Records

Sweat Records is a mission-driven, community-oriented independent record store and all ages event space. Sweat has been serving South Florida music lovers since 2005.

The Bank

Carlos Betancourt's artist studio and alternative space in downtown Miami, late 1990's- 2005. It was in an abandoned building that had a huge bank. Various young artists exhibited there including Martin Oppel, Bert Rodriguez, Bhakti Baxter and Daniel Arsham.

The House

An actual two-story, wood-frame house in the Edgewater section of Miami (near downtown) that was established as an exhibition space by Bhakti Baxter, Tao Rey, Martin Oppel and Daniel Arsham from 2000 - 2004.

The Margulies Collection at the Warehouse

The Margulies Collection at the Warehouse is a non-profit institution located in a 50,000 square foot retro-fitted warehouse in the Wynwood Arts District of Miami. The Warehouse presents seasonal exhibitions from the collection of renowned collector Martin Z. Margulies as well as educational programs, special exhibitions and an international loan program.

The Moore Space

The Moore Space was dedicated to presenting international contemporary art forms. It achieved this through an experimental program of cross-disciplinary exhibitions, performances, artists and curatorsresidencies and public programs which reflect the state of contemporary art today: new forms, new voices and new thought.

The Nightclub

The Nightclub project is a nomadic platform founded by artist Angela Valella that since April 2012 aims to create dialogue among diverse artistic practices and practitioners through curated exhibitions presented in various venues for one-night only. The project has been shaped by exhibitions and talks, organized by a close-knit network of artists and cultural producers.

The Screening Room

Run by film and video makers, The Screening Room Miami is a new-media exhibition and project space. The multi-disciplinary space is a Knight Art Challenge recipient and is dedicated to motion picture, which includes video art exhibitions, film workshops, lectures and screenings.

The Strand

Iconic bar/restaurant on Washington Ave in the late 1980-1990s. Home to Miami Beach counter-culture scene and run by the managers of Indochine in NYC.

The Vasari Project

The Vasari Project is a library collection dedicated to documenting, collecting and preserving Miami-Dade County's art history from 1945 to the present. It is a living archive that grows through contributions from artists, art professionals, exhibition spaces, galleries, institutions and private donors.

The Wolfsonian-Florida International University

TheWolfsonian-FloridaInternationalUniversity uses objects to illustrate the persuasive power of art and design, to explore what it means to be modern, and to tell the story of social, political, and technological changes that have transformed our world. It encourages people to see the world in new ways and to learn from the past as they shape the present and influence the future.

Thea Smolinski

Thea Smolinski is an art advisor and collection manager. She has had basically all of the art world jobs at one point or another, and now lives in Los Angeles with Craig Kucia and their two girls, Ruby and Archie.

Tiffany Chestler

Tiffany Chestler is a contemporary arts curator and administrator. Chestler holds a Master of Public Administration from Barry University (North Miami, FL); and a Bachelor of Arts in Humanities from Florida International University (Miami, FL). A native of Miami, Florida, she currently resides in southern Vermont.

TM Sisters

TM Sisters is a collaboration between Puerto Rican/German/Swedish American siblings, [Na]Tasha Lopez De Victoria and Monica Lopez De Victoria. Their creative mashup of experimental digital artworks and performances have been shown internationally for over 20 years.

Transeat

Transeat was a platform for the FoodCul-tureMuseum, a meeting place in order to explore, collect, preserve, and celebrate some of the many fascinating connections between food, popular culture, and art.

Twist

With 7 bars, 3 dance floors and a different vibe in every room, there is always something going on at Twist. Never a cover... always a groove, 7 nights a week, every week of the year. 1057 Washington Ave., Miami Beach

University of Miami Special Collections
The Department of Special Collections is home to a wide array of rare books, manuscripts, archival collections, photographs and audio-visual items, maps, architectural drawings, artists’ books, zines, photographic collections, and other research materials that document the history of Florida, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and beyond. Special Collections is dedicated to supporting research and teaching using the collections and actively acquires new materials to create a fuller historical record.

Vivek Jayaram
Vivek is the founder of Jayaram. He lives in Miami Beach and keenly recalls many nights art walking, Studio A’ing, and Sweat Record-ing in the 305 over the past 20 years.

Vivian Marthell
Vivian Marthell is an artist, activist, and producer who co-founded experimental art lab and lab6 with Carlos Suarez de Jesus. She is currently the CEO and CCO at O Cinema, the hub for the next generation of storytelling in South Florida.

Westen Charles
Westen Charles is a third-generation Miami-based artist and teacher who in 1998 co-founded the non-profit art space Locust Projects. Charles attended Pratt Institute for his undergraduate education and received his MFA in sculpture from the University of Miami in 1995. Charles has been operating predominantly outside of the traditional art gallery format.

Wham Bam
Wham Bam: an art store in Miami Beach during the 1980's early 1990's focused mostly on Keith Haring artworks. Keith Haring attended the opening and it was his hang out In Miami. It was inspired by his 1986 Pop Shop in Lafayette St Manhattan and in Tokyo.

World Class Boxing
For a decade, World Class Boxing was a public space displaying the personal collection of Debra and Dennis Scholl. The space held over 40 exhibitions including one person shows of Mark Bradford, Julie Mehretu and William J O’Brien.

Worm-Hole Laboratory
Worm-Hole Laboratory was created as a nomadic project for curators and artists. WHL was founded out of a residential apartment with the intention of reaching the art community of Miami and beyond. Participants are allowed to use WHL as a rehearsal space and arena for experimentation and investigations in contemporary art.

Wynwood Art Fair
The Wynwood Art Fair took place on Oct. 21-23, 2011 on NW 6th Avenue between 22nd and 29th streets as a fundraiser for the Lotus House Shelter. The three-day, performance-based contemporary art fair involved over 100 contemporary art galleries, museums, and local and international artists.

YáLE Club Social
Artist-run exhibition space and Mezcaleria by Justin H. Long. Solo shows presented by Paul Anthony Smith, Hugo Montoya, Gabriel Alcala, Carol Jazzar, Tyler Buckheim and others.

CREDITS

Published by Jayaram and EXILE Books

Curator: Katerina Llanes

Editors: Katerina Llanes, Amanda Keeley and Carolina García Jayaram

Cover Design: Lemon Yellow

Graphic Management: Lemon Yellow

Illustration & Layout: Brett Oliveri

Photo Editor: Katelyn Kopenhaver and Katerina Llanes

EXILE Books is made possible through the generous support of the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and The Miami Foundation.

Special thanks to Joshua Herrington, Christina Mastrucci Lehn, the Making Miami Committee (Debra Scholl, Craig Robins, Naomi Fisher, Carlos Betancourt, Rosie Gordon Wallace) DACRA and the many members of our community who helped make this project happen!

This project is generously supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation



J a
y a r
a m



Lemon Yellow®

