

ONE IS TWO AND TWO ARE MANY MORE

Curated by Gean Moreno

November 19, 2025–January 18, 2026



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Featuring works by

Carlos Betancourt

william cordova

Dara Friedman

Regina José Galindo

Luis Gispert

GeoVanna Gonzalez

Jillian Mayer

Robert Melee

Tag Purvis

Barron Sherer

One Is Two And Two Are Many More

Gean Moreno

Celebrating Oolite Arts' 40th anniversary, *One Is Two and Two Are Many More* is an exhibition that explores the cultural history that this anchoring Miami Beach institution has generated and been enmeshed in during the last four decades. It showcases the cultural tendencies and spaces that Oolite Arts has nurtured and often catalyzed, alongside artists who have benefited from them while being residents of the institution—or simply being in the potent field of its effects. To this end, the exhibition dedicates space, in both the physical gallery and this accompanying brochure, to cultural initiatives that were either part of Oolite Arts or very closely associated with it, including the Alliance Film/Video Co-op, Ground Level Gallery, Imperfect Utopia, Listening Gallery, the CAVA residency, and others. In bringing together these initiatives, which took place at different moments in time—some in the 1980s, some in the 1990s, some after the turn of the millennium—the exhibition's ultimate goal is to unearth and highlight the rich ecosystem that has blossomed around Oolite Arts and has fed it in turn.

In terms of personal history, *One Is Two and Two Are Many More*

tracks closely to another project that I generated for Oolite Arts, at the time known as the Art Center/ South Florida, nearly 20 years ago. In 2007, Oolite Arts alumni Julie Davidow and photographer Paul Clemence put together a book titled *Contemporary Miami Artists* (Schiffer Books). Around the enthusiasm that the publication produced, I was invited to organize an exhibition at the Freedom Tower in Downtown Miami under the auspices of Oolite Arts. The result was *Creating a Scene*, a sprawling exhibition, I wrote at the time, "that strives to produce a collective portrait of the Miami art scene from the vantage point of its cultural producers rather than its consumers. Inviting four alternative spaces and over 40 artists, it seeks to open a space of self-representation for those engaged in cultural production at ground level. Rather than only present discreet objects, the exhibition will function as a space in which stories will be created that better explain the contexts against which art produced in Miami should be placed and understood."

The spaces that I invited to participate and generate their own exhibitions within the larger exhibition were: The Box, an

Luis Gispert, *Hold the Mic With a Grudge*, 1998.
Wood, carpet, speakers, sensors, audio.
Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

alternative space at one time lodged in the warehouse district in West Miami and run by Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, Manny Priores, and Jose Reyes; Bas Fisher Invitational, an essential and now long-living Miami project headed by Naomi Fisher, a hybrid space that teetered between an alternative venue and a commercial gallery; 20/20 Projects, managed by Scott Murray; and The House, an exhibition space founded by Daniel Arsham, Bhakti Baxter, Martin Oppel, and Tao Rey. The exhibition also included a working bar by George Sánchez-Calderón, an artist deeply invested in usable spaces and architectural history. The spirits were provided by Jason Hedges, an artist working with food, cooking, and consumables as basic materials.

Like *Creating a Scene, One Is Two and Two Are Many More* is driven by a desire to showcase the field of relations that are necessary for artistic projects to thrive; a desire to make a case for the need for a multiplicity of agents, working at various registers, as an essential component of productive scenes. In this spirit, the exhibition aims to explore a little cultural history and encourage a sense of curiosity for the larger collective endeavors of artists, as well as the social dimension around art, which is not only unavoidable but deeply needed and deeply in need of nurturing and celebration. This emphasis on the relations between artists, institutions, and modes of living, I think, also doubles as an

effort to snuff out that chronic and unnecessary need that Miami cultural producers often seem to suffer from: a pining for external validation. What is often misunderstood is that culture is immanent, produced where the resources, desires, and inventiveness of practitioners meet the obstacles and opportunities that an environment offers. All that external validators do is universalize their own parochial criteria, since they lack familiarity with the dynamics on the ground that they have, for a moment, landed on. They pass judgment at the level of semblance and miss all that is of substance. This is why collective self-assessment and history-making are the bulwarks against the emaciating lightness of an unmoored globalized culture that spins on—while going nowhere, or to less and less interesting places—and constantly swallows its own tail.

Along with archival materials and works by artists associated with the cultural initiatives already listed, *One Is Two and Two Are Many More* also showcases the work of a number of artists who have benefited, at different moments, from both the resources that Oolite Arts provides and the spaces that some of the adjacent cultural tendencies opened up. The artists in the show are Carlos Betancourt, William Cordova, Dara Friedman, Regina Jose Galindo, Luis Gispert, GeoVanna Gonzalez, Jillian Mayer, Robert Melee, Tag Purvis, and Barron Sherer. I thank them all for their enthusiasm and trust. And I also



Carlos Betancourt, *Assemblages I, Faith*, 1992.
Mixed media, found objects, paint. 50 x 36 in.
Courtesy of the artist.

want to acknowledge a particularly immense sense of gratitude to Barron Sherer, who, while allowing me to include one of his films in the exhibition, was essential in doing a little “archaeological” excavation into the cinematic culture that emerged in the early 1990s in South Beach, around Lincoln Rd. and Oolite Arts, with its experimental screening space, B.A.R., and the independent Alliance Theater. He curated, as a kind of show-within-the-show, a screening program of early 1990s Miami films, titled “Co-op Cohort!” The program includes films by Rey Parlá, David Jean Schweitzer, Rodney Ascher and Luisa van Leer, Syd Garon and Rodney Ascher, Lenny Borruso, Mark Boswell, and others. (See Barron’s text, pages 8–9, for a

better sense of the context in which these films came to light.)

This brochure also includes interviews and reminiscences with Carlos Betancourt about the studio-cum-legendary social space Imperfect Utopia; Mark Boswell on the Alliance Film/Video Co-op; Alfredo Triff, on “Black Box,” a major project hosted at the Ground Level Gallery on Lincoln Rd.; and Gustavo Matamoros on the Listening Gallery and Audiotheque, two major projects housed at Oolite Arts that drew important links between the visual arts and the experimental sound and new music scenes. I want to thank these four interlocutors, as well as the team at Oolite Arts, for the invitation and the support.



Meet the Curator

Gean Moreno is director of the Art + Research Center at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, and part of the ICA’s curatorial team. He has organized exhibitions dedicated to the work of Charles Gaines, Terry Adkins, Denzil Forrester, Eric-Paul Riege, Richard Hunt, Shuvanai

Ashoona, Zilia Sánchez, and Ettore Sottsass. Moreno was an adviser to the 2017 Whitney Biennial and the 2018 Creative Time Summit. In 2008, he founded [NAME] Publications, a press dedicated to field-advancing art theory, and through which he has worked with numerous international institutions, including Kunsthalle Zurich, Van Abbemuseum, MCA Chicago, and CAM Houston. His texts have been included in various exhibition catalogs and publications. In 2019, Verso released an anthology that he edited, *In the Mind, But Not From There: Real Abstraction and Contemporary Art*. He is currently completing a major monograph on the work of Charles Gaines.



Still from *Nadie atraviesa la región sin ensuciarse*, 2015, by Regina José Galindo. Single channel video, performance documentation, Duration: 02:15

william cordova, *Production stills from B-Movie*, 1998. Courtesy of the artist.

Co-op Cohort!

Barron Sherer



In 1992, Mark Boswell and William Keddell founded the Alliance Film/Video Cooperative with assistance from a modest grant from the city of Miami Beach. The grant enabled the cooperative to make film/video equipment and edit bays accessible to the public at low cost, to offer classes, and to create an artist-driven production/exhibition hub. It also launched the Anti Film Festival specifically to showcase wild/experimental work outside market logic.

The Co-op championed DIY access over gatekeeping. It prioritized artist-run initiatives over market-driven ones. It held screenings and maintained gear pools that lowered the barrier for artists to create and exhibit their work. This scene leaned

into unconventional form/content and a community model borrowed from earlier media collective traditions.

The Co-op operated in several of the ArtCenter/South Florida properties on Lincoln Rd., and its edit bays and equipment locker were located in what are now Oolite Arts' administrative offices. The Co-op was part of the ArtCenter's ecosystem through the gracious donation of space, and its members taught Super 8mm and video production, and even ran hard-to-fit-anywhere screening series, such as "Cinema Vortex" and "Sick Cinema."

The Alliance Film/Video Project's Alliance Cinema, located at 927 Lincoln Rd., was a small, single-

screen venue that opened in 1990. The Cinema birthed the Co-op and served as a key exhibition site for Co-op/underground programs, such as "The Sixty Second Film Festival," featuring one-minute films, two of which are included in the "Co-op Cohort!" program.

From its base at 924 Lincoln Rd., the Co-op fostered a wave of short works across the mid-1990s. Early pieces included *Last Temptation of Cheezus* (David Jean Schweitzer, 1994), *Sporadic Germination* (Rey Parla, 1994), and *Dickhead* (Lazaro Amaral, 1994). The following year, *Fleisch* (Susanne Boswell, 1995), *Party Trick* (Barron Sherer and José Isaza, 1995), and *Krazy for Krispy Kreme* (Rodney Ascher and Luisa van Leer, 1995). Later

Co-op works include *Costumbres* (Lenny Borroso, 1998) and *Kult Kino* (Mark Boswell, 1998). These films were edited on nonlinear systems as evolving technologies became more affordable. The Co-op's continued role as an incubator for underground cinema in South Florida was solid... and then fleeting, as rents rose on South Beach.

The Co-op began as an open, community-driven gear/education/exhibition collective. Over the 1990s, it matured, institutionalized, and relocated to a small City of Miami Beach property below 5th Street that had been operating as a micro-precinct for the police department. By the late '90s, the Co-op formally merged into a local branch of IFP, the Independent Feature Project.

The following films are on view at the "Co-op Cohort!" display:

Rey Parla

Sporadic Germination (1994)
Super 8mm and Video, Color,
Sound, 4:30 min.

David Jean Schweitzer

Last Temptation of Cheezus
(1994)
16mm, Color, Sound, 3:00 min.

Lazaro Amaral

Dickhead (1994)
16mm, Black and White, Silent,
0:30 min.

Barron Sherer and Jose Isaza

Party Trick (1995, Original music
by Bill Orcutt)
16mm, Black and White, Sound,
1:18 min.

Susanne Boswell

Fleisch (1995)
Super 8mm and Digital Video,
Black and White, Sound, 4:50 min.

Louisa Van Leer and Rodney Ascher

Krazy for Krispy Kreme (1995)
16mm, Color, Sound, 1:00 min.

Syd Garon and Rodney Ascher

*The True History of Crime: One
Minute* (1995/2025)
35mm, Color, Sound, 1:00 min.

Lenny Borroso

Costumbres (1998)
Digital Video, Color, Sound,
4:18 min.

Mark Boswell

KultKino (1998)
Super 8mm and Digital Video,
Black and White, Sound, 5:00 min.

Barron Sherer and Jose Isaza, *Party Trick* (Original music by Bill Orcutt), 1995. BW 16 mm and audio accompaniment transferred to video, 01:18. Courtesy of the artists.



GeoVanna Gonzalez, *PLAY, LAY, AYE: ACT 8*, 2019-present. Steel, expanded metal, and plexiglass. 36 x 36 x 60 inches each module. Courtesy of the artist.

Robert Melee, *Facelift Mommy*, 2001. HD video, 01:25. Courtesy of the artist.



Top: Tag Purvis, *America the Beautiful*, 1997, exhibited in public space. Color film, 03:00. Courtesy of the artist.

Left: Dara Friedman, *Revolution*, 1993–2003. 16 mm film transferred to video, 09:20. Courtesy of Rubell Museum.



Right: Jillian Mayer, still from *Scenic Jogging*, 2015. Single channel video, 01:18. Courtesy of the artist.

Carlos
Betancourt



Carlos Betancourt, born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, lives and works in Miami. He is a multidisciplinary artist. His works explore issues of memory by recycling and reinterpreting the past in relevant new contexts. Influenced by personal memories, he believes that art can be informed by one's own experiences, not necessarily the other way around. Betancourt's work is in the collections of the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NSU Art Museum, the San Antonio Museum of Art, New Orleans Museum of Art, Palm

Springs Art Museum, The Bass Museum of Art, Pérez Art Museum Miami, and Museo de Arte de Ponce in Puerto Rico. "Re-Collections," a mid-career retrospective, opened at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (MAC) in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in November 2015. His work has been exhibited widely in galleries and institutions nationally and internationally. A central player in the Miami Beach underground scene of the 1980s and 1990s, Betancourt founded Imperfect Utopia, a studio-cum-social space, on Lincoln Rd.

william
cordova



william cordova, born in Lima, Peru, lives and works in Miami and New York. He holds an MFA from Yale University and a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. cordova is an interdisciplinary cultural practitioner interested in the roots of abstraction, the history of textile encoding and nonlinear narratives, fourth dimensionality, and alchemy. He synthesizes memory, ritual, and mythology to disrupt and reassess definitions of our collective landscape. His exhibitions include the 50th Venice Biennial, Prague

Triennial, 13th Havana Biennial, Whitney Biennial, Prospect.3 Triennial, and SITE Santa Fe Biennial. He co-curated the Tulsa Greenwood Massacre Centennial in 2021 and founded and co-curates the Florida AIM Biennial. His awards include a Smithsonian Fellowship, a Lunder Institute Fellowship, a Creative Capital Award, a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, and an Art Matters grant. He was a resident of Oolite Arts (Art Center/South Florida) from 1998-2000. Photo credit: Renee Cox.

Dara Friedman



Dara Friedman is a German-born artist and filmmaker working in Miami. She uses everyday sights and sounds as the raw material for film and video artworks that reverberate with emotional energy. With a background in structural film and dance, Friedman's cinema involves a radical reduction of the medium to its most essential material properties. In place of linear storylines, her films typically portray straightforward actions and situations that unfold according to predetermined guidelines. Solo exhibitions include "The Tiger's Tail," San Carlo Cremona, Italy (2022); Harburger Kunstverein (2019);

Pérez Art Museum Miami (2017–2018), Aspen Art Museum (2017), Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2014), Museum of Contemporary Art of Detroit (2014), and Public Art Fund, New York (2007). Major public collections include MoMA and Whitney Museum, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Pérez Art Museum, Miami; Julia Stoschek Collection, Düsseldorf. Recently, Friedman completed *The Empress*, a large-scale labyrinth designed with her mother, Gundula Thormaehlen Friedman. She received the Oolite Arts Ellies Creators Award in 2018 and 2022. Photo credit: Cherry Handforth.

Regina José Galindo



Regina José Galindo was born in Guatemala in 1974, where she still lives and works. Through her artistic practice, she situates her body in public space, critically addressing questions of political and personal violence. Since participating in the 49th Venice Biennale in 2001, her work has been part of numerous international exhibitions, including Documenta 14, Istanbul Biennial, Prague Biennial, Sharjah Biennial, and the Biennale of Sydney. Her work is in the collections of the

Reina Sofía Museum in Madrid; MoMA and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York; Pompidou Centre in Paris; MALBA in Buenos Aires; Castello di Rivoli in Turin; the Tate in London; and many other institutions. In 2015, Galindo presented *Nadie atraviesa la región sin encusarse (No One Traverses the Region Without Getting Dirty)*, a large-scale transformation of an exhibition space and a performance in Miami's Little River neighborhood, at the invitation of Oolite Arts.

Luis
Gispert



Luis Gispert was born in 1972 in Jersey City, NJ, to Cuban parents and raised in Miami. He studied at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and received his MFA from Yale University. Gispert currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Working in sculpture, painting, video, large-scale photography, and installation, Gispert examines how self-styled urban subcultures infect and inform mainstream aesthetics without losing their protean vitality or compromising their initial ethic of

resistance. He is immersed in audio and hi-fi culture, customization, and art history. His work is included in numerous public collections, including the Pérez Art Museum Miami; New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Whitney Museum of American Art, both in New York. He was an Oolite Arts (Art Center/South Florida) resident between 1997 and 1999.

GeoVanna
Gonzalez



GeoVanna Gonzalez' multifaceted practice encompasses performance, installation, sculpture, and moving image. Thematically underpinned by the fluid landscapes of gender and identity and an exploration of intimacy and proximity, it centers on the interplay between the live body, spatial dynamics, and sculptural elements. Gonzalez' work has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Museum of Art and Design, Miami (2024); Hallwalls Contemporary

Arts Center, Buffalo (2024); Locust Projects, Miami (2021); and Grund Gallery, Berlin (2019). She has participated in group exhibitions at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2025); MCA Denver (2024); ICA Miami (2022); Station Museum of Contemporary Art; Houston (2021); and NSU Art Museum, Fort Lauderdale (2020). She was a resident at Oolite Arts (2017–2018) and received the Ellies Visual Arts Award twice, in 2018 and in 2020.

Jillian Mayer



Through videos, sculptures, online experiences, photography, performances, and installations, Jillian Mayer explores how technology affects our lives, bodies, and identities. It processes how our physical world and bodies are impacted and reshaped by our participation in a digital landscape. Mayer has had solo shows at Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Omaha, Nebraska; Kunst Aarhus, Aarhus, Denmark; University of Buffalo Art Museum, Buffalo, NY; Tufts University, Boston; Pérez Art Museum, Miami; LAXART, Los Angeles; and Utah Museum of Fine Art, Salt Lake City. She has

screened films and performed at MoMA PS1; MoMA; the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami; the Bass Museum of Art; the Guggenheim Museum; and the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal as a part of the Montréal Biennial. She was a 2018–2019 Resident at Oolite Arts, and a recipient of an Ellies Creator Award in 2018. Mayer has exhibitions currently at the Baker Museum in Naples, FL, and the Sarasota Art Museum in Sarasota, FL, with an upcoming large sculpture at MASS MoCA, in North Adams, MA. Photo credit: Martina Tuaty.

Robert Melee



Robert Melee is an American multidisciplinary artist. His work has been exhibited extensively nationally and internationally, including solo exhibitions at Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York (nine solo shows); Columbus College of Art & Design, Columbus, OH; Milwaukee Art Museum; Corcoran Museum of Art, Washington, DC; CAM, Houston; White Cube and Sutton Lane, both in London; David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; and MoMA PS1, Sculpture Center, and

the New Museum of Contemporary Art, all in New York. His work is in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Haifa Museum of Art, Haifa; Milwaukee Museum of Art; Portland Museum of Art; Allen Memorial Art Museum, and Oberlin College, among other institutions. Between 1998 and 2000, he spent four months a year in Miami, in a studio at Oolite Arts, as part of a National Foundation for the Advancement in the Arts Residency.

Tag Purvis



Tag Purvis is a Southern-born queer filmmaker and artist whose practice bridges site-specific installation and narrative cinema. Living openly with HIV since the 1980s, he emerged during the height of the AIDS crisis with works that carried both memorial and activist force, insisting on queer visibility in public space. His short *America the Beautiful*—a looping projection first presented during his residency at Art Center/South Florida—provoked censorship battles on Miami Beach before traveling to more than 40 international festivals and being

acquired by CANAL+. His debut feature, *Red Dirt* (2000), starring Karen Black and Walton Goggins, won multiple festival honors and was acclaimed for its Southern Gothic intimacy and poetic realism. Purvis' work continually explores chosen family, queer embodiment, and the spectral South. He is currently preparing a 25-year re-release of *Red Dirt* and developing the Yazoo project. He lives and works between Spain and the United States. He was a resident at Oolite Arts 1994–1998.

Barron Sherer



Barron Sherer, born in Rock Hill, SC, resides and works in Miami. He is a time-based media artist who transforms and reuses archived films and videos across cinematic, para-cinematic, and gallery installation settings. Sherer's film-based moving image and photography work focuses on the détournement of archival media, combining it with materials he creates using legacy media-making techniques. This work examines contemporary and historical realities, as well as the image-based representations that

engage with them. His practice often questions or relates to cultural memory and modernity. He received a 2020 Oolite Arts Ellies Creators Award for a large-scale moving image installation. He was a 2023 Knight Foundation Art + Tech Expansion Fund recipient, investing in his analog-to-digital art-making workflows. Currently, Sherer is a 2025 Project Artist in Residence at Deering Estate. Sherer's film work is in the Centre Pompidou Film Collection, Canyon Cinema Foundation, and private collections.



IMPERFECT UTOPIA

A brief history by Carlos Betancourt

Imperfect Utopia, my studio on Lincoln Rd. in Miami Beach, was never just a workplace; it was a living experiment in art, memory, and community. Housed in an Art Deco building—likely once the offices of legendary Miami Beach architect Morris Lapidus—the high-ceiling loft became both the cradle of my earliest works and a gathering place for artists, dreamers, and the South Beach underground.

The first iteration of Imperfect Utopia was on Washington Avenue and 8th Street, tucked inside the storage room of Heydays—an iconic vintage shop during the early South Beach underground years. Next door was the Strand, a restaurant founded by the managers of New York's legendary Indochine. I had my 21st birthday at the Strand, and that night, thanks to a friend, Iran Issa Khan, I met Ed Ruscha, David Hockney, and Paloma Picasso.

After dinner, we walked over to my tiny studio. I showed everyone sketches for oversized pop portraits and some furniture designs, which, to my surprise, they were genuinely impressed by. We sipped vodka cranberries, the drink of the moment, and in that haze, I caught a glimpse of the shape of things to come...and what Imperfect Utopia could be.

After a couple of years in Heydays on Washington Avenue, I knew I needed a space where Imperfect Utopia and I could grow. Around that time, I won a prize in the Florida Furniture Competition. It wasn't a fortune, but it gave me the confidence and just enough money to survive a few months—and to take a leap.

I found my next home in an Art Deco commercial space where the legendary architect Murray Dixon had once kept his offices, just off Lincoln Rd. on Lenox Avenue. By then, the space was being used as the underground club Avenue A. After a suspicious fire, the club closed, and I struck

Imperfect Utopia, 1987-1995, 704 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach.



a deal with its owner, Gary James, to take it over.

The rent was unbelievably low, about \$200 a month, but the place was rough. Still, the loft had great bones, a big vitrine window, open space, and special energy that made it perfect for a studio. It also became my home. There was no shower, just a hose I rigged up in the alley. I slept on the mezzanine, cooked on a 1950s stove I picked up for \$10 from a mid-century building being refurbished, and furnished the place with treasures, Saarinen tulip chairs I bought for 25 cents each and a Vladimir Kagan sofa I found for \$50.

But none of that mattered. What mattered was the energy—ideas flowed as freely as the drinks. Artists, designers, musicians, club kids, drag queens, poets, friends, and family all gathered there, to the tunes of The Cure, Echo and the Bunnymen, Celia Cruz, New Order, Iris Chacón, and others. The space became the foundation for some of my earliest work, but it was more than a studio; it was a crossroads for the growing South Beach underground. We were creating, experimenting, and building a culture and a community in real time.

Two years later, I moved Imperfect Utopia again, this time right onto Lincoln Rd. itself. Rent was still cheap, only \$280, and Sam Pearlman, the owner, would hardly come to collect it. I lived there, too, still showering in the alley with a

hose, or sometimes in the iconic waterfall fountain by Morris Lapidus right outside the studio.

The move felt symbolic. What was happening outside Imperfect Utopia was just as important as what was happening inside. Lincoln Rd. was beginning to revive after years of decline. We would hang out at the Woolworth cafeteria counter at one end of Lincoln Rd. or at Lum's Diner in mid-Lincoln Rd., often taking the tram. The Road felt like our realm, the last place we ever thought would be gentrified. Sometimes I would forget to close the studio door, and waking up in the middle of the night, I'd peek down from the mezzanine bedroom to find friends, and sometimes strangers, hanging out on the first floor!

The South Florida Art Center, founded by artist Ellie Schneiderman, was just a few blocks away, where over 70 artists had transformed vacant storefronts into studios and galleries. The Center was buzzing with energy and helped breathe new life into a street that had long been quiet and neglected.

I was admitted as an artist to the Art Center after submitting my portfolio, but I chose to keep my own studio rather than take one of the spaces offered. Being part of the Art Center came with many benefits—studio visits, lectures, collectors' visits, artist exchanges, exhibitions, programming—and in many ways, this connection helped make Imperfect Utopia successful.

(continued on page 28)

Some events at Imperfect Utopia:

Freedom exhibit (with Amnesty International and the Human Rights Foundation)

Hosting Cab Calloway for the Art Deco Ball

Dance performances by Elena Garcia and Iroko Dance and Performance

Drag performance by Omar Martinez

Filming of *Fracturism*

Exhibitions featuring works by Roberto Montes de Oca, Carlos Alves, César Augusto, Paul Adrian, Linda Faneuf, and others

Cuba-Cola, *Fracturism*, and *Assemblage* exhibits

Poetry readings with Ralph Oller, Valerie Donati, and others

Mural projects in Lincoln Rd. shops and art interventions along Lincoln Rd.

Coordinating preservation efforts for Morris Lapidus' renovation of Lincoln Rd.

Hurricane Andrew exhibit with various artists

Assistant Teri D'Amico coining and conceiving the term *MiMO*

Supporting productions of *Art Act* play and *A Scarlet Letter*

Coordinating *Arts Asylum* exhibit with Valerie Donati

Some of the artists and other guests who used to hang out at or stop by Imperfect Utopia:

Carlos Alvez, Julian Schnabel, Paul Adrian, Tomato Du Plenti, Bruce Weber, Kenny Scharf, César Augusto, Charo Oquet, Omar López Chahud, Morris Lapidus, Jordan Levin, Ralph Oller, Rudolf Nureyev, Ellie Schneiderman, Keith Haring, Robert Rauschenberg, Norman Lieberman, Sandra Bernhard, Frances Smith, Edward Duval Carrier, Octavio Paz, Celia Cruz, David Byrne, Craig Coleman, Montse Guillen, Miralda, Ali, Roberto Montes de Oca, Cab Calloway, Ángela Valella, Linda Faneuf, Debbie Ohanian, performance artist Adora, Omar Martinez, Elena Garcia of Iroko Dance and Performance, Sandra Schulman, Glen Albin, Valerie Donati, Elisa Turner, Helen Kohen, Paula Harper, Alfredo Triff, Brian Antoni, JC Caroll of Art Act, Louis Aguirre, Louis Canales, Tara Solomon, Barry Diller, Rosario Moreno, Alex Suero, Marissa Boyescu, Linda Evangelista, and others.



At the same time, its proximity allowed my studio to become part of the Art Center ecosystem.

Artists from the Center were constantly stopping by, creating a strong sense of synergy, exchange, and creative energy.

At that time, I was designing furniture, painting large portraits, and developing what would become my *Assemblage* series. I collected materials everywhere—utensils, kitchenware, objects from hotels along Ocean Drive, especially the Netherland Hotels (a friend, Kenny Zerelli, had just purchased it)—and transformed them into intricate, large-scale collages and sculptural pieces. The work reflected the times. Miami was bursting with energy, and there was a fascination with the city's rapid cultural shifts,

memory, consumer objects, identity, and the blending of high and low art. The *Assemblage* series blurred the line between archive and invention and set the tone for my ongoing practice of collecting and recontextualizing. During this time, I collaborated with several artists from the South Florida Art Center, including Carlos Alves, and the mix of that Center's energy with the raw purity of Lincoln Rd.'s underground scene fueled my creativity.

Lincoln Rd. and Imperfect Utopia became a place where art, memory, nightlife, and community collided. Looking back, it was less about having a "studio" in the traditional sense and more about creating an environment that captured the spirit of the times and the possibilities ahead. Imperfect Utopia was both a



laboratory for art and a crossroads where the underground scene met the emerging cultural renaissance. It became a meeting ground—an informal salon that drew a wide and eclectic circle.

On any given night, young Cuban exiles and second-generation Miamians might be in conversation with New York transplants escaping the rigidity of the East Coast art world, while musicians experimented with Afro-Caribbean rhythms and writers documented the city's shifting identity through

poetry readings—Ralph Oller, Valerie Donati, and others. Filmmakers, like Michael Delgado (who filmed the movie *Fracturism* in the space), performance artists, and DJs moved in and out of the space, sometimes testing their own projects in front of a small audience, and at other times simply contributing to the collective energy.

One day, by sheer chance, Celia Cruz and Morris Lapidus crossed paths in the studio. Their brief conversation was as fascinating as it was unexpected.

B.A.R. Space

South Beach, 1992—As I Remember It/A Passenger
Mark Boswell



I moved to Miami Beach in 1992 after film school in Central Florida. The creative energy at that time was amped up on South Beach. All kinds of artists were showing up to make something happen. Everyone for themselves: go for it attitude; there were no limitations. Half of the iconic Deco hotels were actual semi-ruins, the rents were cheap, and anything seemed possible.

The first thing I did was walk into the Alliance Cinema on Lincoln Rd. It sat behind the Books & Books bookstore. I introduced myself to the director, Bill Orcutt. He told me that the Alliance had received a grant from the City of Miami to start a film/video collective. I replied that I wanted to immediately volunteer

in any shape or form to help out. I was familiar with film collective history from prior engagements with various groups in New York, London, and Paris (where I lived for three years). I knew how dynamic they could become for an artistic community without the ways or means to “make movies.”

I kept popping into the cinema to check in with Bill: “Is it starting yet?”

“Almost,” he would reply. He introduced me to Barron Sherer, who was working the 35 mm projector. I felt like it would be great to work with these guys. They had the spirit! Meanwhile, I got a gig working for the Miami Film Festival, doing some independent programming. I also organized an art show in my apartment on May 1, called “May Day.” Word got around when you were doing something. The community was very tight.

I walked in one day for the ritual questioning about the collective: “Has it started yet?” And Bill replied, “Yes, it is starting right now, and you are starting it.” He explained that the Alliance had received a \$15,000 matching grant from the city, meaning that we would have to raise another \$15,000 or the equivalent

in equipment. Bill also told me there was a British filmmaker, William Keddell, living in South Beach, who had experience working in the legendary London Filmmakers Collective. “Get in touch with him, and you guys get things rolling.”

We called every film production company in the Yellow Pages and asked them if they had film or video equipment that they could donate to our project and take a tax write-off. In no time, we had the matching \$15,000 in all kinds of old video cameras, giant ¾-inch video decks, massive tripods, industrial-size lights—you name it.

Now, we needed a space. The Alliance Cinema could pay the rent each month, and Willy and I would have to figure out the rest. For starters, we would offer \$50 memberships to join the collective with access to classes and equipment rental.

Just across from the Alliance, in the South Florida Art Center, we found “the space” in which we founded the Alliance Film Video Cooperative. With the grant money, we purchased a full video edit suite, two Super-VHS cameras, tripods, and lights. We decided to have an opening night party, which was more like a “call to action.” The Art Center said we could use their large exhibition space for it. Bill Orcutt said the Alliance Cinema would buy a keg of beer and that we should “tell everybody to bring out a film or video that is five minutes or less.” They would all be screened.

Rene Rodriguez wrote a front-and-center article in *The Miami Herald* announcing the Co-op.

The second floor of the South Florida Art Center, overlooking the Lincoln Road Mall, was jammed packed in no time for our opening party. Beers were flowing, and we were screening videos, 16mm, and Super 8 films on the wall. The new membership metal moneybox quickly grew stuffed with checks and cash. At some point, a Hollywood producer named Ski Zawaski (an actual stuntman) declared that the films being screened were “total garbage.” A local artist, Ben Wolcott, stood up and shot him...with a cap gun. Blood burst out of his shirt, and the whole crowd fell into shock and then... exploded in laughter. The Alliance Film/Video Cooperative was launched!

Approximately one year after the founding of the AFVC, we had numerous screening programs up and running: “Cinema Vortex,” “The Anti Film Festival,” and “Tom Smith’s Sick, Sick Cinema.” We had to borrow various rooms from Art Center/South Florida for screenings. But one day, unexpectedly, the Art Center surprised us by giving us our own space on Lenox Avenue at one end of Lincoln Road Mall. This space was formerly the site of the infamous Hamlet Bar—the seediest queer bar on South Beach. The Health Department closed it down due to its scandalous sanitary conditions. There were holes in the wall, a toilet with no door, rats, etc.

Woman enters B.A.R. Space during filming of *The Subversion Agency*, 1997. Photo courtesy of Mark Boswell.

We spent a month clearing out the rubble, cleaning, and painting. After much discussion, there was only one name we could anoint our new cinema with: "B.A.R. Space." There was, after all, still an old "BAR" neon sign on the front exterior. We rented 16mm films from the Alliance Cinema's distributor and programmed independent films like *Chicken Hawk* and Jan Švankmajer's *Faust*. William Keddell began a series called "Sound on Cinema," in which live soundtracks were produced by Miami sound artists for classic silent films like Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* or Michael Powell's *The Thief of Bagdad*. Joanne Butcher's feminist film group "Movie Mavens" had its first group screening at B.A.R. (which absolutely packed the house). There were also book readings, live music, and other events.

Eventually, we moved next door into a more "proper" space. Here is how Todd Anthony in *The Miami New Times* described it at the time:

The B.A.R. is dead. Long live the bar! Fans of that gritty, grungy, Gothic gargyle of a movie theater-performance art showcase known as B.A.R. Space, located just around the corner from Lincoln Road Mall at 1663 Lenox Ave., Miami Beach, will be chagrined to learn that the venue has moved —next door. "The new place is larger, it has air conditioning, a working

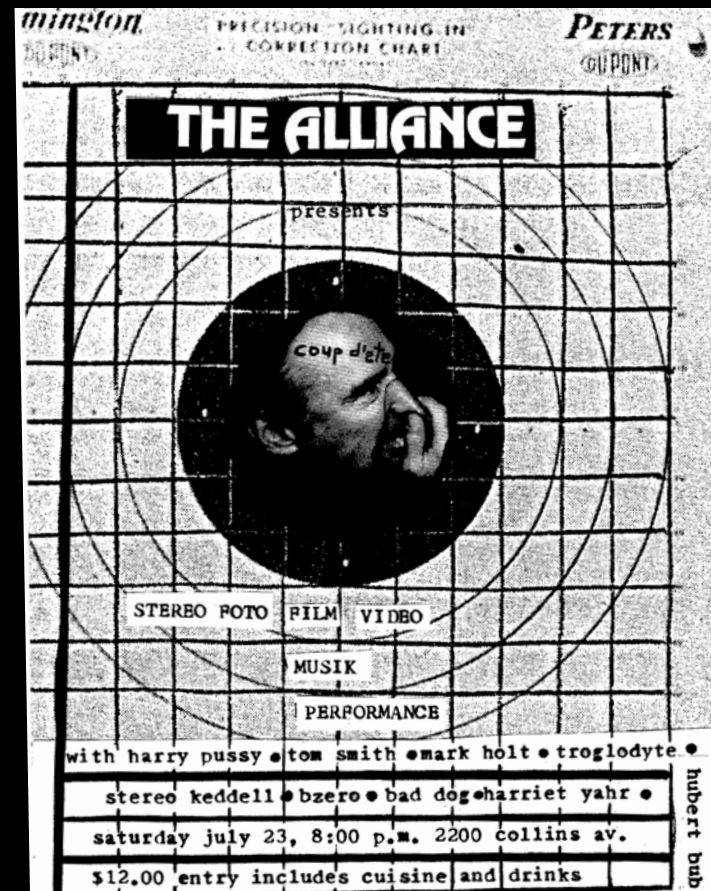
bathroom, and there's a place for a projection booth on the second floor, so now when somebody stands up, they won't block the beam from the projector," explains Bill Orcutt, director of the Alliance Cinema, which often exhibited films at the dark and musty B.A.R. Space.



Mark Boswell in front of B.A.R. Space for the Anti Film Festival, 1996. Publicity photo. Photo courtesy of Mark Boswell.



Cinema Vortex sign. Photo courtesy of Mark Boswell.



Co-op fundraiser flyer. Photo courtesy of Mark Boswell.

BLACK BOX

A Project at Ground Level

Interview with Alfredo Triff

Gean Moreno: Can you describe Black Box?

Alfredo Triff: This is what journalist Judy Cantor wrote about Black Box, November 30, 1995, in *The New Times* weekly:

At Ground Level during the month of November, Steve Bollman, an artist with a studio at SFAC [now, Oolite Arts]; Alfredo Triff, a musician and professor of philosophy at MDCC's Wolfson Campus; and Gene Ray, who also teaches philosophy at the Wolfson campus, organized what they termed the Black Box project, a cafe-society hangout that presented a variety of concerts, lectures, panel discussions, video screenings, and open artist critiques (all free of charge) designed to stir locals from their cultural lethargy.

"The intention is to think about the process, and not so much about the product," observes Bollman. "To provide an alternative to thinking about art as just commerce." Adds Ray, "This is a friendly, bridge-building experience that is not business as usual in Miami."

Black Box was a multidisciplinary space that served as an exhibition site. It had a library (of our own books), an art magazine collection

(*Parkett and ArtForum*), and a café. Our program had four exhibitions (each presented by a different local curator), panel discussions, experimental films and documentaries, live music, performance art, poetry readings, etc.

GM: What in the cultural context of the times made you guys consider that such a project was necessary? (I think we should mention here that Black Box was, in some way, linked to other projects that the three of you worked on at the time, like the cultural magazine *La Bête*.)

AT: *La Bête* precedes Black Box by about a year. The magazine was Gene Ray's baby. With very little money, he planned and constructed a significant Miami cultural publication, which elicited interest amongst artists, professors, students, and the curious. I collaborated on a big article for the last issue (#4). We organized a couple of shows with local artists at the Film Alliance (I do not remember the particulars, nor have any documentation). Gene and I had a show at the old Cuban Museum. Thomas Pepper (then professor of foreign languages at the University of Miami) wrote the essay (Gene and I also contributed texts).

GM: Can you elaborate on some of the actual activities that took place at Black Box? One very poignant memory of the project for me is having sat through the seven hours of Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's complex *Our Hitler: A Film from Germany*. I also remember some live scoring of classic silent films.

AT: Gene Ray and I (later Steve Bolman) had many discussions about the importance of facilitating a specific space, adaptable to a particular communication social need, an extension of the office and the library where one could read the press—Gene was a sort of news junkie—discuss matters, and write. We romanticized it a bit. Gene's model was Barcelona's Els Quatre Gats, where Catalan modernism in art, literature, and graphic design was forged. My choice was Vienna's Café Central, the meeting place for the likes of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Karl Kraus, then later Ludwig Wittgenstein, and other philosophers of the Vienna Circle. All that was left was to find the right space. We looked and tried different venues to no avail. At that time, Miami Beach was becoming more pedestrian. Lincoln Rd. met all the preconditions, just during the beautification, which turned Lincoln Rd. into a boulevard. The three of us presented the idea to Jane Gilbert (director) and Bonnie Berman (in charge of the sculpture/ceramics of Ground Level). Right before the project was approved, we met with all the artists. It would be unfair to say that they rejected our plan,

although on the other hand, there is no doubt that they initially saw the idea as a kind of obnoxious interference. In the end, however, they welcomed the project (a few objected to the "Rigor" stamp to mark our books—the cipher was Steve's idea—as too elitist). Once Black Box started, the Art Center/South Florida artists became enthusiastic and helpful.

GM: Looking back on it, what do you think the context of Ground Level Gallery, Lincoln Rd., and Oolite Arts (at the time, Art Center/South Florida) brought to the project?

AT: This is a good question, I hadn't asked myself during the project's building, or even afterward. The spaces are supportive because they make the project possible, but the presence and support of Jane Gilbert, Bonnie Berman, and the center's artists were fundamental to Black Box's success. In fact, almost all those artists ended up being friends of mine. And there's no doubt that the artists and the people in charge somehow didn't understand what was happening. Neither did we. Just in terms of the audience turnout, it was beyond belief. One could hear the comment that "Black Box in Miami is attracting the attention of people outside Miami." The person who made that comment was Olga Garay, then the programmer of "Cultura del Lobo" over at Miami Dade College. I don't know where she is now, but at the time, she was considered the most crucial programmer in Miami and very well connected.

The Listening Gallery

Gean Moreno

The Listening Gallery was a project conceived and programmed by sound artist Gustavo Matamoros. It consisted of a 24-channel surround sound system hidden from view under the awnings that wrapped around the exterior of the ArtCenter South Florida's building at the corner of Meridian Avenue and Lincoln Rd. It was designed as a social intervention intended to expose millions of unsuspecting Miami Beach visitors, both residents and tourists alike, to round-the-clock, nonstop experiments that explored the role of sound art in

public space. It ran year-round between 2011 and 2015.

Matamoros commissioned new works from South Florida sound artists David Dunn, Rene Barge, Russell Frehling, Armando Rodriguez, and Paula Mathussen to debut at the Listening Gallery. These new works were interspersed with important sonic exercises by American mavericks of massive historical significance, such as John Cage, David Tudor, Alvin Lucier, Steve Peters, Tom Hamilton, David Behrman, Trimpin, and George Lewis, among many others.

Right: Survey by Gustavo Matamoros completed by René Morales, then associate curator at the Miami Art Museum.

From: "Morales, Rene (MAM)" <rmorales@miamiartmuseum.org>
Subject: Listening Gallery Questions ...
Date: July 25, 2012 11:11:36 AM EDT
To: "gustavo matamoros" <gustavo-matamoros@subtropics.org>

1. In your opinion, what has been the impact of the listening gallery project upon the ArtCenter?

I think it has been an absolutely ideal way to further break down the boundaries between the ArtCenter and the pedestrian public between art and everyday life in general. It is highly engaging and accessible for audiences that aren't necessarily accustomed to experimental art, yet it simultaneously signals that ArtCenter is a place for advanced, experimental work.

2. What is your opinion of the listening gallery in the context of public art?

A big challenge for anyone working in contemporary art is, of course, to balance issues of accessibility and audience development with the desire and the mandate to present and support experimental, advanced art production. This challenge is exponentially more pronounced in the context of public art, as opposed to institutional contexts. It is in the sense of this balance that the project is particularly successful. It is especially effective because, being non-visual, its effect is unexpected, a surprise; by the time one realizes it's an artwork, one has already experienced it. This is very valuable in public art because the subject experiences the work before he/she has had time to make up his/her mind about it, and before he/she has had time to put up a psychological wall.

3. How would you rate the quality of this project?

A, A+. Unique, affecting, intellectually stimulating.

4. What do you think is the potential of this project for the future of Lincoln Rd.?

In general, this type of work seems particularly well-suited to such a busy context, since it doesn't compete with Lincoln Rd.'s other (commercial, gastronomical) offerings the way visual art might, since it's on a different sensorial register. In this sense, it merges nicely with the context, complementing and adding to it. It brings a new dimension to a location that is already very successful as a public space. It is particularly important that this additional dimension is non-commercial in nature. This makes the Lincoln Rd. experience less monotonous; it indicates the need and the potential of diversifying the Lincoln Rd. sensorial ecosystem. Might be interesting to extend it all the way down Lincoln Rd. and into the parking garage (which I believe already features sound art

5. How would you rate the effectiveness of this project in the fulfillment of its goal as a sound art lab for the creative engagement of acoustical public space?

Lincoln Rd. is the most public, densest pedestrian area in the whole city, so in terms of the level of 'engagement', this project can't be beat. At least in terms of numbers of participants and the amount of acoustic material.

6. As you experienced the piece, what was your impression about the work's effect on those around you?

For some, the piece had a strong impact, creating delight and confusion in equal measures; for some, it was registered almost unconsciously. All those responses I feel are legitimate and consistent with the goals of the piece as an artwork.

Rene Morales, Associate Curator
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AUDIOTHEQUE 2.0

In 2018, as a resident of Oolite Arts, Gustavo Matamoros initiated another sound project inside his very studio: **Audiotheque 2.0**, a multichannel sound art installation and arguably the most important public access project for the advancement of sound art in South Florida. Matamoros continued, via this project, his own expansive sound practice and his curatorial project of bringing the most innovative sound artists working today to South Florida to make new works in situ and to disseminate the most advanced knowledge available in the field through public programs.



Performance featuring Gustavo Matamoros in the foreground and performer Paula Matthusen in the background. Photo by Luis Olazabal. Charles Recher Memorial at Audiotheque. Photo courtesy of Gustavo Matamoros. Alison Knowles, *Loose Pages*, created during an Audiotheque residency. Photo courtesy of the artist. John Driscoll, *Ultrasonic Puppets*. Photo provided by the artist.



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