



Artist Tara Long transforms Locust Projects into *La Esquinita*, an immersive installation featuring a 20-foot cake stage and a surreal sweets shop. The project marks the first time the Miami nonprofit has given full creative control of its space to an emerging artist.



Cultivating TOMORROW

Miami's emerging artists are shaping the city's creative future—and these programs make sure their work stands shoulder to shoulder with Art Basel's best.

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While Miami Art Week brings the world to our backyard to see blue-chip galleries and internationally recognized names, places like Locust Projects want to remind you that the future of art is currently taking root. And that's why Locust Projects is doing something radical this year: turning over its platform entirely to an emerging artist. For the first time in years, the experimental art space that has been Miami's longest-running incubator is handing its keys to sound and performance artist Tara Long, who will transform the entire building, both inside and out, into LA ESQUINITA. The all-encompassing installation spans a dreamlike sweets shop, a 20-foot cake stage under a glowing moon and an early-Florida Everglades lounge.

"It's the biggest, boldest takeover any artist has done in Locust Projects' history," says Executive Director Lorie Mertes. The decision underscores a crucial truth about Miami's cultural ecosystem: while the world watches established artists during Art Week, this city is quietly cultivating the next generation.



Programs like Locust Projects, Fountainhead Arts, and Bakehouse Art Complex are the root system, providing the space, resources and networks that transform promising talent into world-recognized creators.

Fountainhead Arts exemplifies this cultivation model. Founded in 2008 by collectors Dan and Kathryn Mikesell, the residency welcomes three artists at a time across eight annual sessions, receiving about 600 applications for 21 spots. "It's harder to get into than Harvard," jokes Deputy Director Nicole Martinez. Early residents like Raul de Nieves, Derrick Adams, Lynette

Viadom-Boakye and Ebony Patterson have gone on to major institutional recognition. In 2024, Artnet named Fountainhead one of the world's most prestigious residencies for its ability to help artists establish networks. During Art Week while resident artists exhibit at the fairs, Fountainhead reconnects with more than 150 alumni who return to Miami, transforming the week into a homecoming of sorts.

At Bakehouse Art Complex in Wynwood, about 100 artists maintain studios in what was once the American Bakeries Company building. Director Cathy Leff sees Bakehouse as "the vital space between the studio and



traditional spaces like museums and galleries, where artists are free to experiment, take risks and do something new." During Art Week, Bakehouse opens its studios for the annual Baked Brunch and presents Bakehouse at Forty: Past, Present, Future—a multimedia exhibition marking both the organization's 40th anniversary and the building's centennial, showcasing a transformation plan designed with Michael Maltzan Architecture that will include affordable artist housing.

"Artists are the root system of any cultural ecosystem," Leff emphasizes. "Without them, Miami risks becoming a place that consumes art rather than creates it."

Locust Projects spent nearly three decades making the experimental possible at scale. Founded by artists for artists in Wynwood in 1991, Locust Projects is Miami's longest-running incubator for experimental art. Over 27 years and hundreds of commissioned projects, the organization provided breakthrough opportunities that inform new directions in artists' practices. Daniel Arsham recently reflected on Instagram about the significance of his 2013 Locust show, while Matte Tommerup and Juana Valdes both received major public art commissions following their exhibitions. Artists consistently credit the support of Locust's team, shared trust and 24/7 access as essential to realizing their projects.

At the heart of these programs is community. Bakehouse's peer network challenges and propels artists forward. Fountainhead's one-on-one studio visits and cultural trips create lasting professional relationships. Locust Projects' 24/7 access and trust allow artists to realize seemingly impossible projects. "Museums, galleries and exhibition spaces present artwork," Martinez explains. "Fountainhead introduces you to the artists who made them."



(Above) A rendering of the Bakehouse Art Complex; (below) Bakehouse's exhibit *Bakehouse at Forty: Past, Present, Future* marks both the organization's 40th anniversary, with a series of images and artwork including an archival photo of the original Bakehouse building in 1986; artist Susan Kim Alvarez's *Sniffly Time*, 2024; and Juan Pablo Garza's *El hermano oscuro (Después Vostlov)*. *The dark brother (After Vostlav)*, 2017.

The community can support the cultivation of these emerging artists through membership programs, Give Miami Day donations, event attendance, and direct advocacy with state and county representatives for arts funding. The urgency has never been greater. Last year, Florida cut state arts funding entirely, and Miami-Dade County funding faced a 50 percent reduction threat. While both were restored this year, next year remains uncertain—and every program is feeling the pressure.

"The impact of individual support will be crucial," Mertes emphasizes, "especially for smaller and mid-size community arts organizations like ours."

Organizations like Fountainhead (fountainheadarts.org), Locust Projects (locustprojects.org), and Bakehouse Art Complex (bacfl.org) remind us that cultural ecosystems require constant cultivation. Artists need affordable space, professional development, mentorship and networks that extend beyond market pressures. They need places willing to say "yes" to ambitious, experimental work.

"Miami has the opportunity to be a city where artists are permanently rooted," Leff says, "where culture and community fuse to create something new, and where affordability fuels innovation."