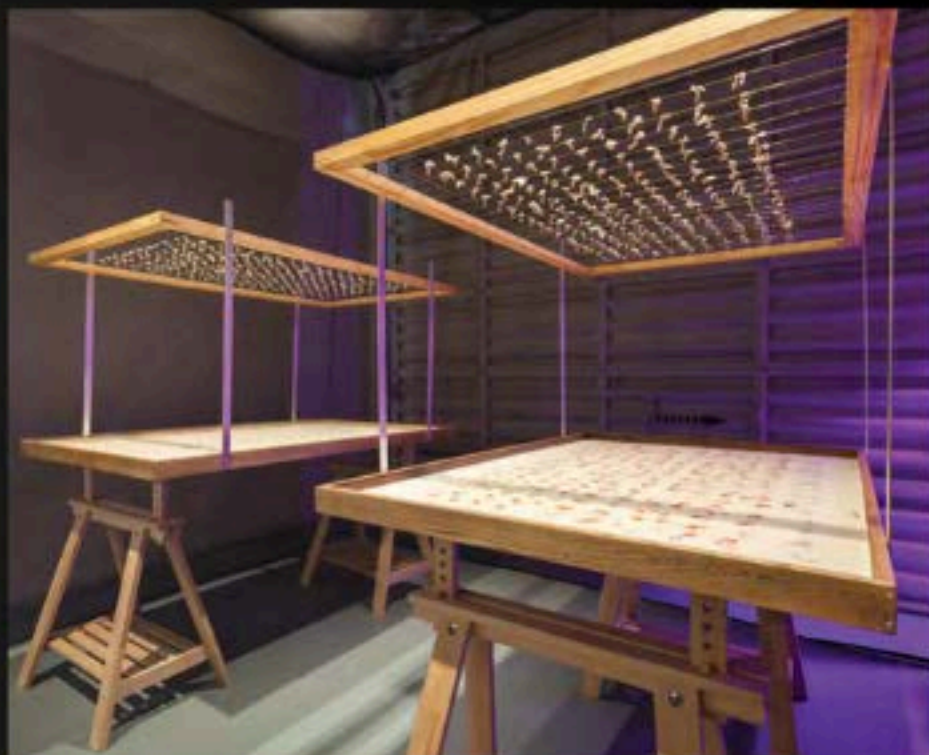


THE ALTER- NATIVE

Locust Projects believes in art and the people who make it. Providing professional support as well as a place for artists to boldly experiment, Locust Projects looks back at its 20-year history while redefining its future as Miami's art incubator.

REBECCA KLEINMAN



Frenky Cruz, *Vivarium Mecorum*, 2017

“Twenty years ago, we came across a small, artist-run space in an evolving neighborhood in central miami called Wynwood. The industrial area was becoming a bit of a refuge for artists who had been chased off of South Beach due to rising rents. The art community was evolving rapidly and signs of real talent were emerging. Three artists—



Locust Projects initial website: <http://Welcome.to/locustprojects> built by Elizabeth Withstandley. Locust Projects posts open call on the new website for artists to submit project proposals for 1999, the first year of programming.

recent Pratt graduates—had banded together to rent an unfinished, un-airconditioned warehouse and were doing exhibitions. They started with shows featuring their own practices but quickly began to do exhibitions of local artists and, eventually out-of-towners. The shows were brave, experimental and generally of high quality. They christened the space Locust Projects.”

— *Dennis And Debra Scholl, Founding & Current Board Chairs*



Daniel Arsham, *Welcome to the Future* 2014. Photo by Richard Patterson

“Although the address of Locust Projects has changed through the years, its purpose has not. The walls have been painted and repainted, drilled, moved, demolished, extracted from, embedded in, dented, drawn on, plastered and replastered. The floors have been intentionally jackhammered, cracked, excavated, ground into, filled-in, danced on and cried on.”

— *Steve Lanster; Art collector and Locust Projects Board Member since 2001*



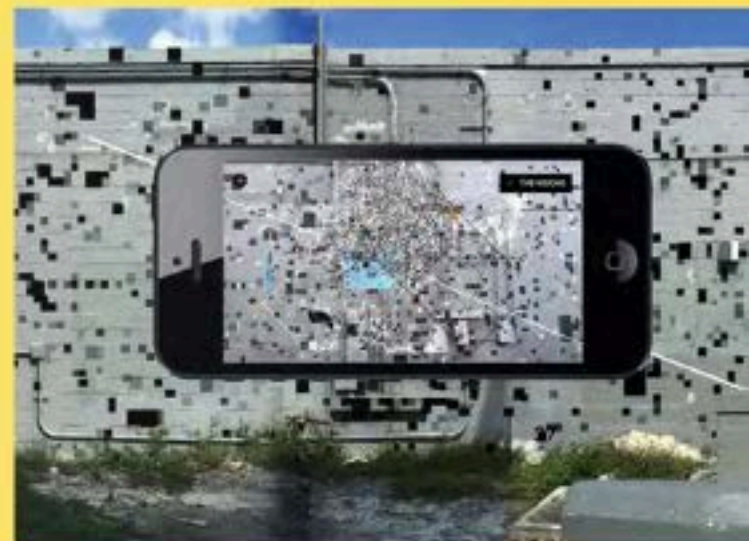
Pepe Mar, *Man of the Night* 2017

Locust Projects, the non-profit alternative art space that's spent much of its existence in the Miami Design District, has come a long way from its days of cheap beer served in coolers and no air conditioning. Founded by a trio of local artists in 1998 in Wynwood, the once scrappy start-up didn't hold its inaugural exhibit until April of the following year. At the tail end of its 20th anniversary year, there's real cause to celebrate as it continues to reinvent itself and push boundaries.

Locust Projects has grown up alongside the city's art scene. "Miami has changed a lot and so has the public consumption of art and visitors' expectations," said executive director Lorie Mertes, who's been charged with implementing the next phase including a full renovation with thoughtful amenities for artists and visitors. "Besides asking ourselves how we can better serve artists, we're moving away from the art gallery model, where the staff is hidden in back, to show the behind-the-scenes process." The artistic process has always been front and center within its mission. Unlike a museum, which conceals exhibition installations, Locust Projects invites people not only to watch commissioned new works being created on site but engage with artists. The same now goes for employees, whose operations will relocate to the entrance's lengthy welcome desk, a throwback to the 5,000-square-foot venue's storefront heritage, as part of the reconfigured layout. A coffee bar will debut to percolate ideas and discussion in addition to strong brews. Embracing the coworking revolution, new offices will also be available for artists to oversee digital projects and desk tasks outside their studios. *(continued pg. 28)*

"Man of the Night was so ambitious since everything I do is made by hand. The show took six months to create, and I collaborated with a seamstress for all of the soft sculptures and the wall quilts. I worked in a small studio, so I could not see the works as they would appear installed. The works were so big, in fact, that one day I took the big quilt to the parking lot of my studio just to be able to see all of it."

—Pepe Mar, Locust Projects exhibiting artist



Ivan Toth, *Depense Lapse-The Visions* 2016



Shiketh, *The Language Must Not Sweat* 2019

“As artists themselves, Locust’s founders knew how important and rare it is for artists to have real space and time to create new work and to make that work in dialogue with a community of peers.”

—Lorie Mertes, Executive Director

“We’re creating a community to try things with the understanding that it’s okay if you screw up. We actually embrace it,” said Mertes, of one of the major differences between the not-for-profit and galleries or museums. “Where else would allow Daniel Arsham to jackhammer a 20-foot in diameter by 2-foot deep hole in the floor or let the TM Sisters put in an above ground pool and host a roller-skating party? It’s a space of yes!”

Several of these artistic feats are documented in *“Locust Projects: The 20th Anniversary Retrospective,”* a book that Mertes intends to come across as alternative as its source of inspiration. Rather than hire a professional art writer, she asked those involved over the decades including board members like Debra and Dennis Scholl, former Executive Director Claire Breukel and a ton of artists to share their memories.

Michela Hoda, *Knowing/Serata for an Opera* 2013



Jillan Mayer, *Precipice-Postmodern* 2013

