

## 20 artists in 20 hours: It's so Miami. Just one more reason to hit an art space now.

BY TOM AUSTIN      August 12, 2018 10:12 AM

August has brought a slew of shows by local artists, and September is equally promising. Early in the month, on Sept. 6, North Miami's **Museum of Contemporary Art** will launch "Mira Lehr: Tracing the Red Thread," an installation concerned with navigating the natural world. In the Design District, on Sept. 7 and 8, **Locust Projects** will present a marathon of 20 hour-long exhibitions, "20/20: twenty artists/twenty hours," featuring the work of 20 artists (including Tara Long and David Yu).

Come midmonth, "Grids," a selection of abstract paintings by Miami's Lynn Golob Gelfman' opens at **Perez Art Museum Miami**. Now and through early October, PAMM hosts the first survey show in the United States by William Cordova. Born in Lima, Peru and part of the 2008 Whitney Biennial with fellow Miami artists Adler Guerrier and Bert Rodriguez, Cordova works in a variety of media, functioning as a kind of ethnographer who high-lights the symbols and narrative threads that bind cultures together. In the show "william cordova now's the time: narratives of southern alchemy," his 2014 digital color video "silent parade or The Soul Rebels vs. Robert E. Lee" captures a brass band on a rooftop overlooking an urban anywhere-in-the-world landscape. Another work, a 2016-2017 mixed-media collage with a pattern of squares suggesting bodies in motion, is entitled "can't stop, won't stop (whipala or KRS1)." Throughout, the show examines the issues of displacement, transcendence, and, of course, alchemy.

In Coral Gables, the **Lowe Art Museum** is featuring "Sebastian Spreng: DRESDEN" and "Sheila Elias: Painted Pixels." Both Miami artists are now creating work digitally and, appropriately enough, Lowe visitors are given iPads to augment the viewing experience. Elias is given to pure explorations of color – her artist heroes include Roy Lichtenstein and Yayoi Kusama – and literary and mythological influences, with pieces

having names like “Osiris’s Heart, 2012;” viewing her pieces with an iPad makes dots of color leap about.

Spreng, a native of Argentina, also writes about classical music. Fittingly, his work at the Lowe carries such titles as “Canto, XXIX, Verse 111, 2017;” he is known for work like “Ring Landscapes, 2005,” inspired by Richard Wagner’s “Ring Cycle.” His body of work also includes images of solitary trees, which harken back to the Romantic era of art in the 1800s., when Dresden was a cultural wonderland associated with Richard Strauss and German Romantic-period landscape painter Casper David Friedrich. In 1945, the city was destroyed by Allied forces bombing raids, reflected in this show as somber abstract ruminations on that horror. Viewing Spreng’s pieces through an iPad turns the bombed-out streets of Dresden into something resembling molten lava.

To the south, in the 1920s Stone House at the waterfront **Deering Estate**, collaborative artists Annie Blazejack and Geddes Levenson present a sharply-focused exhibition of paintings in “Swamp Reclaims the Pool.” Both also work in a variety of media, from video to performance art, and both are also former artists in residence at the Deering Estate. (They also are participating in Locust Projects’ upcoming “20/20: twenty artists/twenty hours.”) The fantastical paintings reflect the artists’ fascination with Sci Fi in depictions of wild Florida (alligators, sharks, manatees). The merging of alligators with swimmers in suburban South Florida pools seems particularly appropriate amid the lush Deering Estate: on a recent visit, a family of manatees turned up in the lagoon.

Across town, at the public art program **Unscripted Bal Harbour** along the Bal Harbour beach path, comes a new photographic exhibition “Jill Peters: Burnesha of Albania.” For several years, the Miami-based Peters has documented Albania’s fascinating Burnesha, sworn female virgins who live and dress like men. In rural Albania, a young woman turning down an offer of marriage often inspires a blood feud: one of the subjects in Peters’ show had three males in her family murdered by a spurned suitor and his crew. Accordingly, some Albanian women take a sensible ,who-needs-this-crap-just-for-sex? approach to the notion of marriage. As part of the bargain, they exchange life-long celibacy for Albanian male privileges such as the right to attend university and study mechanical engineering. In a world given over to sameness, the Burnesha *stay* strange: they hate being branded as lesbians and are homophobic enough to concede they would beat up men wearing women’s clothes.

At the **Frost Art Museum-FIU**, 12 Miami artists — including Frances Trombly, Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, Frida Baranek, Jamilah Sabur, Yanira Collado, Christopher Carter and Glexis Novoa — examine *NEW* the upheaval of contemporary life in the exhibition “Deconstruction: A Reordering of Life, Politics and Art.” The theme was inspired by Guy Debord’s 1967 book “The Society of the Spectacle,” which presciently warned — long before the advent of social media — that a barrage of images in modern existence would one day disrupt personal interaction.

Gonzalo Fuenmayor’s response to the show’s theme is “The Happy Hour,” a 20-foot-long charcoal and graphite drawing of a floating vortex of garnishes, fit for the All-American rite of cocktails. Zachary Balber contributes the photograph “Booties and Astroturf to walk on the moon, 2018,” depicting a lone figure splayed out on an Astroturf-covered condo patio in downtown Miami, engulfed by towering and architecturally-grotesque condominiums. Cuba-native Sandra Ramos’s photograph “Apocalyptic Cartographies. Limbus, 2017” shows a schoolgirl sprawled atop an inflatable raft in reference to Cuban refugees.

Eddie Arroyo, whose work often focuses on the impact of gentrification, offers evocative paintings of Little Haiti, showing the gradual erasure of a wall mural by the Haitian artist Serge Toussaint: as the building is renovated, the mural slowly disappears..

One of the most poignant displays is Pepe Mar’s homage to the late artist Craig Coleman, a social columnist *NEW* for *Wire* newspaper who also performed the drag character Varla during South Beach’s early renaissance. Coleman died of AIDS in 1995. Mar’s “Varla TV” installation is covered with all things Coleman, including a heart-breaking 1994 self-portrait entitled “I Will Not Die.” To create the installation, Mar scanned newspapers and club flyers of the 1990s to create a background screen, then added his own work and two paintings by Coleman.

“This show’s theme of deconstruction was perfect for Coleman, Varla and early South Beach,” Mar says. “That whole iconic era hasn’t just deconstructed — *it’s disappeared* -- and now there’s so much yearning for the *next* underground scene in Miami.”

## **IF YOU GO**

- “Mira Lehr: Tracing the Red Thread,” Sept. 6 - Nov. 4; artist reception Sept. 13. At the Museum of Contemporary Art - North Miami, 770 NE 125th Streetk, North Miami; [mocanomi.org](http://mocanomi.org).

- “20/20: twenty artists/twenty hours,” Sept. 7 and 8, at Locust Projects, 3852 North Miami Avenue, Design District, [locustprojects.org](http://locustprojects.org).
- “william cordova now’s the time: narratives of southern alchemy,” through Oct. 7. “Grids, a selection of paintings by Lynn Golob Gelfman, Sept. 15 - April 21. At Perez Art Museum Miami, 1103 Biscayne Boulevard, downtown Miami; [pamm.org](http://pamm.org).
- “Swamp Reclaims the Pool,” paintings by Annie Blazejack and Geddes Levenson. Through Sept. 14; artists reception Sept. 12. At the Deering Estate, 16701 SW 72 Avenue; [deeringestate.org](http://deeringestate.org).
- “Jill Peters: Burnesha of Albania,” through Oct. 30. Bal Harbour Beach Path, from 9909 Collins Ave. to 10295 Collins Ave.; entry at 96th Street or 102nd Street; [balharbourflorida.com](http://balharbourflorida.com)
- “Deconstruction: A Reordering of Life, Politics and Art” at the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum FIU, through Sept. 30, 2018. 10975 SW 17th Street, Miami; [//frost.fiu.edu/](http://frost.fiu.edu/)

*This article was changed to reflect correct dates for the Mira Lehr exhibition.*