

Local artist makes interactive art, on display at Locust Projects in Miami



By Ricardo Mor
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At the opening for Miami artist Jillian Mayer's exhibition "Precipice/PostModem" at Locust Projects in the Design District, visitors were asked to do something that is never asked of them in traditional museums and galleries: Touch and interact with the art. For example, in the piece *Swing Space*, guests are invited to take a ride on one of four swings hanging from the roof of the gallery while they watch a projection of digitally manipulated cloud imagery in front of them. This came as a pleasant surprise to many of the art patrons who passed through the gallery's doors, including freelance photographer Tesoro Carolina.

"I love that [her work] is very interactive. You need the viewer to interact with the piece to come alive. ... It's not something you just walk up to."

Mayer's work is extraordinarily difficult to categorize. As a multidisciplinary artist, she works in various media, including film, sculpture and conceptual art, often combining several forms to realize her vision for specific works. Combine this with the fact that many of her works demand viewer participation, and it is readily apparent how unique her works are.

Mayer, who graduated with a bachelor's degree in fine art from Florida International University in 2007, says art has always been a passion for her. She considers herself fortunate to pursue it full-time — rare for someone her age. Local gallery owner David Castillo, who represents the artist, says that he's been fascinated by her work since first encountering it in a show he exhibited.

"She had one small piece in the show, and every day I walked into the gallery, out of 60-some wonderful artists in the exhibition, I kept coming back to this one small piece in the show. From that one small piece in a large survey show at the gallery came the artist's first solo show ever, her first gallery representation [at David Castillo Gallery] and since, she has garnered both critical acclaim, interest by museums, museum acquisitions of her work, and most recently the show at Locust."

Mayer's exhibition at Locust Projects is very tech-centric; iPads and iPhones make up several key components of several of the works within the space. iPads attached to self-navigating robot vacuums move across the space greeting visitors and guests use an iPhone to see the "augmented reality" of a

sculpture that is only viewable through an app on the device. Her work reflects how pervasive and integrated technology has become in our lives.

She envisions a world where we upload our dreams to the social media site Twitter (as represented in the work Sleep Site) and where we transform ourselves into digital pixels (as represented by the work RGB Box by a large chamber guests enter filled with a flurry of red, green and blue confetti).

“My body of work has always been involved with technology and communication, the human condition and the social integration of all of it. ... Changing ways of communications inspires me.”

To carry out her ideas, Mayer was assisted by a small team of computer programmers, sound designers, animators and other assistants. She mentions specifically how several filmmakers associated with the Borscht Film Festival often assist each other on each other's work. While some artists may have exacting singular vision of their work, she sees herself more as a collaborator, open to constructive criticism and alternative ways to realize her ideas.

“Collaboration is very interesting because of course [your work] will change a bit but hopefully if you're with trusted company, it will change for the better.”

Many have already taken notice her extraordinary talent; despite having not yet hit 30 and living in South Florida, her work has received international acclaim, having been featured at the prestigious Sundance film festival, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Guggenheim Museums in New York, Berlin, Venice and Bilbao. Debra Scholl, chair of Locust Projects and a collector of Mayer's work, says that the notoriety she has received is merely a testament to the artist's ingenuity.

“I see her transcending the art world in two different ways, as a filmmaker and a visual artist...having been in the art world for 35 years, to see someone so fresh and engaging in different mediums is exciting.