

Collecting

Art museums heating up Miami's cultural scene

Many institutions have gained new directors, with more women now in charge. Gareth Harris surveys the city's scene



Pérez Art Museum Miami

NOVEMBER 25, 2016 by: **Gareth Harris**

Miami's art landscape, and its museums especially, have changed dramatically in the past year," says local art adviser Lisa Austin. In March 2015, The Art Newspaper reported that "Miami's art museums are becoming rudderless ships", as four major institutions were on the lookout for new directors, including the Pérez Art Museum Miami (Pamm) and the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA Miami).

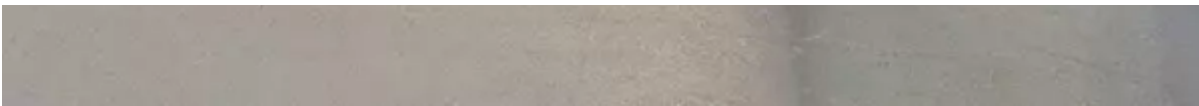
But the problem appears, for now, to have been remedied. Austin reels off a list of significant recent appointments, noting that "we have some strong new women: Jill Deupi at the formerly very sleepy Lowe Art Museum [University of Miami], and Jordana Pomeroy at the Frost Art Museum at Florida International University". She also names Ellen Salpeter at ICA Miami and Silvia Karman Cubiñá, director of the Bass Museum.

Austin describes the Bass as “a moribund institution which is being turned around by a dynamic woman”. Cubiñá, who was appointed in 2008, launched the museum’s [first acquisitions fund \(http://next.ft.com/content/218c4c68-7b53-11e6-ae24-f193b105145e\)](http://next.ft.com/content/218c4c68-7b53-11e6-ae24-f193b105145e) earlier this year. Worth about \$4m across 10 years and supported by private and public money, the new fund will buy or commission at least one work of art annually. The first purchases are Ugo Rondinone’s “Miami Mountain” boulder piece, which is due to be unveiled in Collins Park next week, and Sylvie Fleury’s site-specific neon work “Eternity Now”.

Though this initiative keeps the Bass in the public eye, the museum itself has been closed since May 2015 for extensive renovations, with the reopening being delayed. “We’re dealing with a historic building, which keeps springing surprises,” Cubiñá explains. The new launch date is next spring, and the renovation will add 50 per cent more programmable space, for education as well as exhibitions, with six galleries where there used to be two.

Salpeter, meanwhile, formerly deputy director of external affairs at the Jewish Museum in New York, took the reins of ICA Miami in December 2015. The fledgling venue has a chequered history, having been set up by the former board of trustees and staff members of the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami (MoCA), who pulled out of MoCA in 2014 after a lengthy legal fight with the City of North Miami. The tussle ended with the city taking control of the museum and appointing its own director, Babacar M’Bow, who was dismissed earlier this year.





Ellen Salpeter, director, ICA Miami © Rolando Diaz

Larry M Spring Jr, North Miami city manager, says that MoCA has hired a consultant to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the museum, which includes finding the “right leader”. But a local patron, who preferred to remain nameless, says that “MoCA has receded to a minor role in the art scene”.

ICA Miami launched in a temporary, rent-free venue in Miami’s Design District in December 2014, courtesy of the property developer Craig Robins and the company L Real Estate. In December 2017, the new institution will move to a 37,500 square ft, permanent space nearby, designed by the Spanish firm Aranguren & Gallegos Arquitectos.

We’re trying to make Miami an intellectual city. Art Basel is great. But it’s not enough, only five days
Rosa de la Cruz

The museum shows modern and contemporary art, with a collection of about 300 works, some of which were transferred from MoCA. “ICA Miami has a very active acquisitions committee that is working to build out our collection,” says Alex Gartenfeld, chief curator and deputy director. At the new site, a free-entry 15,000 sq ft sculpture

garden will also be a draw.

Salpeter hopes that the ICA Miami will carve out a niche. “What distinguishes us? Our commitment and community-led ethos. All of our exhibitions and programmes are free.” While many museums have education programmes, the ICA’s is notably ambitious. Month-long workshops for scholars and students have launched at the museum in collaboration with Florida International University as part of a new Art + Research Center initiative.

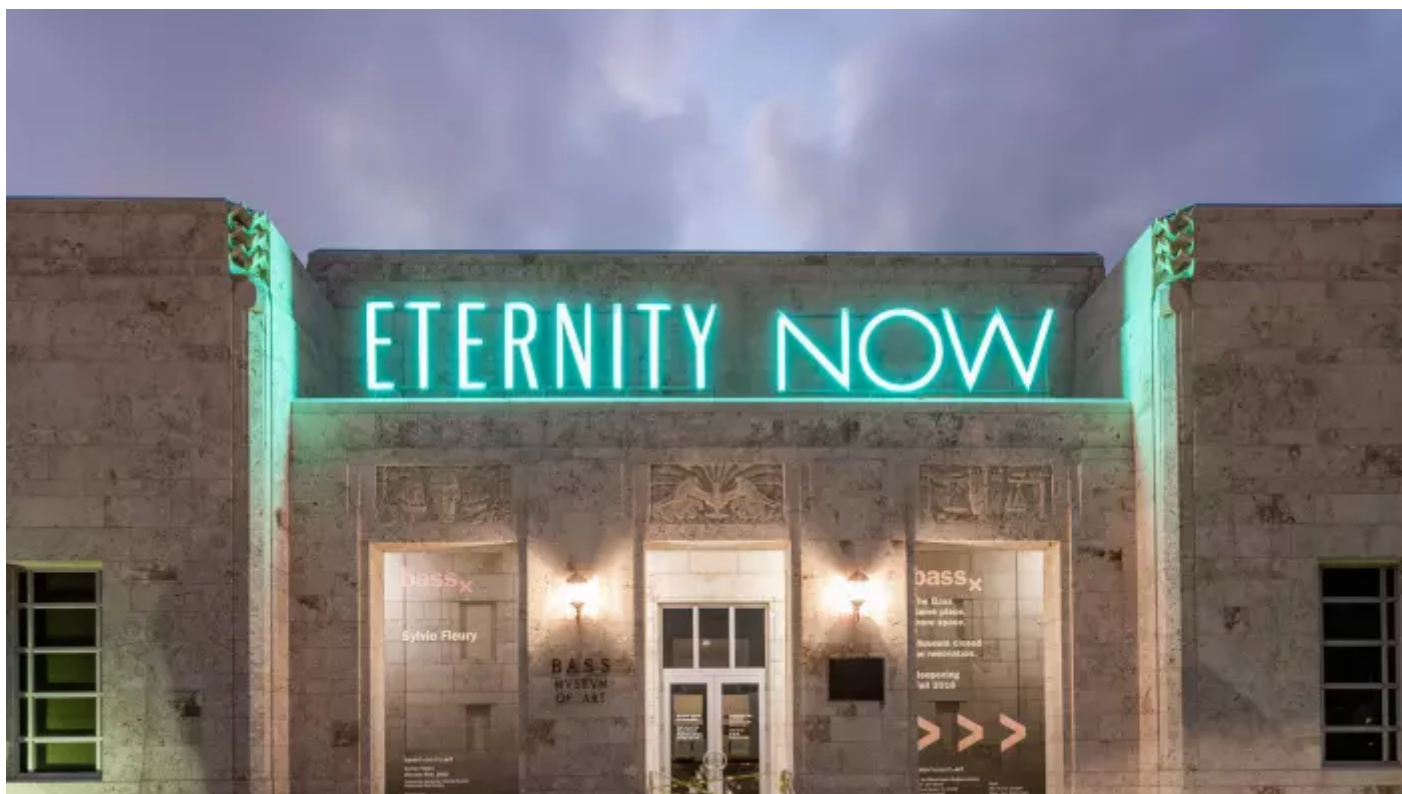
The design and construction of the new building are being funded entirely by private sponsors. “This is a first for Miami,” Salpeter says. The donors include local billionaires Irma and Norman Braman, who are driving the project. On the question of an endowment, Salpeter says: “We are currently in the quiet phases of a sustainability campaign to ensure the museum’s ongoing growth.”



John Miller's "I Stand, I Fall" at ICA Miami © Fredrik Nilsen

Patrons are all-powerful in Miami. Since Art Basel Miami Beach launched in 2002, many privately backed museums have flourished by mounting reputable exhibitions and organising public programmes. The Rubell Family Collection presents thematic exhibitions drawn from its 7,300-strong collection; its show of African-American artists, *30 Americans*, has toured to 11 US venues, including the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington DC. And the Cuban-American collectors [Rosa de la Cruz and her husband Carlos \(http://next.ft.com/content/99f9edba-afea-11e6-9c37-5787335499a0\)](http://next.ft.com/content/99f9edba-afea-11e6-9c37-5787335499a0) have run their own private museum in the Design District since 2009, and pumped money into a range of education programmes.

But Miami arguably still has an image problem, known more for its party scene than its culture credentials. “We’re trying to make Miami more of an intellectual city,” Rosa de la Cruz has said. “Art Basel is not enough — Art Basel is great, but it’s only five days.”



Sylvie Fleury's 'Eternity Now' © Silvia Ros

Do Miami's museums attract healthy visitor numbers throughout the year? Gartenfeld says: "I was amazed when I first moved here from New York to discover what a year-round city this is." The highest placed Miami show in The Art Newspaper's rankings of most popular exhibitions of 2015 was an exhibition of works by the Mexican artist Mario García Torres at Pamm, with a total visitor tally of 110,850 (and a daily average of 937). But Miami's museums need to keep building audiences if they are to compete both nationally and internationally. In the 2015 visitor rankings, 28 exhibitions in Washington DC came higher than any shows in Miami, including *Shirin Neshat: Facing History* at DC's Hirshhorn Museum, which had 265,745 people in total (2,109 per day).

Will Miami's public museums and privately run spaces always operate as separate entities? "We're still a small arts community, and we don't seem to pull together as a whole enough to support the official institutions," says Austin.

However some patrons have shown their allegiances by backing local venues. Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz have given numerous works to MoCA North Miami. Property developer Robins is a trustee of Pamm and has donated more than 200 works to the museum by artists such as Glexis Novoa and Carlos Alfonzo. His gift was a seal of approval for the museum director Franklin Sirmans, former curator of contemporary art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, who was appointed to Pamm in September 2015.



Tony Tasset's 'Arrow Sculpture' at the Bass

Hiring Sirmans seems to have galvanised the museum, and the city's art community. Pamm relocated to a \$200m waterfront home designed by architects Herzog & de Meuron in 2013. But there was controversy over the renaming of the museum the Pérez Art Museum Miami (it was previously called the Miami Art Museum), following property developer Jorge Pérez's pledge of \$35m in art and cash.

"Franklin has reenergised the exhibition schedule and collection strategy, resulting in a significant number of new gifts to the museum and an emphasis on exhibitions that reflect Miami's diverse population," says local collector and patron Dennis Scholl, who is also a Pamm trustee.

Sirmans faces challenges, though. A priority will be to boost the museum's endowment (the institution is receiving \$4m from Miami-Dade County for the fiscal year 2016-17; three-quarters of its revenue is raised privately). But hopes are high. "The main game-changer is his arrival. He is the superstar that we needed to get Pamm back on the art world radar," says Austin.

ICA Miami, [icamiami.org \(https://www.icamiami.org/\)](https://www.icamiami.org/)

Pamm, [pamm.org \(http://pamm.org/\)](http://pamm.org/)

MoCA North Miami, [mocanomi.org \(http://mocanomi.org/\)](http://mocanomi.org/)

Satellite fairs in Miami: what to see around the city

Scope

801 Ocean Drive

November 29-December 4

scope-art.com (<https://scope-art.com/>)

Scope's focus is on emerging contemporary art from across the world. Twenty-two countries and 57 cities are represented this year, while the fair's Breeder Program focuses on introducing new galleries to the contemporary art market.



Annie Morris's 'Stack 8, Ultramarine Blue' (2016) at Pulse © Winston Wachter

Pulse

Indian Beach Park
4601 Collins Avenue
December 1-4

[pulse-art.com \(http://pulse-art.com/\)](http://pulse-art.com/)

Pulse provides a platform for young and more established contemporary galleries. Visitors to this year's edition will be greeted by Anne Spalter's installation, "Miami Marbles": abstract digital images of the city printed on huge orbs.

Nada

Deauville Beach Resort

6701 Collins Avenue

December 1-4

[nadaartfair.org \(http://nadaartfair.org/\)](http://nadaartfair.org/)

The New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA) is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the advancement of new voices in contemporary art, including the 43 first-time exhibitors at this year's fair.



'Le studio des vanités' (2012) by Omar Victor Diop Manden at Untitled © Magnin-A

Untitled

Ocean Drive/12th Street

November 30-December 4

[art-untitled.com \(https://art-untitled.com/\)](https://art-untitled.com/)

Untitled takes place on the beach proper — its angular white-and-pink tent pitching up on the sands at the end of 12th Street. The fair, in its fifth year, is expanding to San Francisco in January.

Satellite

Parisian Hotel, 1510 Collins Avenue

December 1-4

[satellite-show.com \(http://satellite-show.com/\)](http://satellite-show.com/)

An artist-run, experiential affair, Satellite debuted last year as a free-roaming fair with a young crowd. This year it has settled on a centralised home and has a lively programme of events that takes in a post-feminist tattoo parlour and a queer strip club.



Keith Haring's 'Untitled (Flag)' (1988) at Art Miami © Long Sharp

Art Miami

Midtown Miami

3101 NE 1st Avenue

November 29-December 4

[artmiamifair.com \(http://www.artmiamifair.com/\)](http://www.artmiamifair.com/)

The city's most established modern and contemporary art fair is now in its 27th year. It takes place in Wynwood, the graffiti-clad neighbourhood that is home to some 70 galleries and museums, and attracts mid-level galleries.

Pinta

Mana Wynwood

318 NW 23rd Street

November 30-December 4

[pintamiami.com \(http://www.pintamiami.com/\)](http://www.pintamiami.com/)

One of Miami's most distinctive art fairs, Pinta is focused specifically on Latin American art with exhibitors divided into eight sectors, including photography and applied art.

Photographs: Rolando Diaz; Fredrik Nilsen; Silvia Ros; Winston Wachter; Magnin-A; Long Sharp

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