

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## **Rocking Chair Sessions' Audio Histories bring to life the voices of South Florida artists at the Coral Gables Museum.**

**Coral Gables, FL, February 25, 2021** - The Coral Gables Museum is pleased to present The Ellies Award-winning project, *Wish Codex*, an immersive multimedia art exhibit and physical extension of the ongoing oral history project *Rocking Chair Sessions*, on view at the Coral Gables Museum from February 27 to March 27, 2021.

Curated by BABA Collective's founders, artists Elysa D. Batista and Maria Theresa Barbist, *Wish Codex* chronicles the first-hand histories, backgrounds

and wishes of South Florida's creative professionals.

"The South Florida artist community and its members are always at the forefront of the exhibitions that we make" mentioned BABA Collective's co-founder Elysa D. Batista. "It is important that their stories be heard, and that they have a platform on which to share their first-hand experiences." On the other hand, Museum Director John Allen said: "We are extremely proud and happy to host this project, as giving visibility to what is being created in our community is one of our main goals".

The exhibit is centered around a large-scale installation of LED text that transcribes wishes of 150 creatives collected in the *Rocking Chair Sessions* recordings over the past 5 years. This digitized sea of text is combined with video projections that can be seen inside the space during the day, and from the outside of the Coral Gables Museum's historical building in the evening.

"Like a breath of fresh air, the conversations in *The Rocking Chair Sessions*, provide to our public a much-needed update on what is happening in our local, contemporary art scene today. The great variety of voices and criteria compiled in this database helps us better picture and understand the rich landscape of the arts in Miami. Moreover, the contemporary, multimedia installation that Barbist and Batista have inserted in our history-charged spaces

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

prompt us to reflect on the past, the present and the future of the building and its functions,” said Yuni Villalonga, Chief Curator at the Museum.

Throughout the duration of *Wish Codex*, the museum’s gallery will be activated with live interviews and conversations, following CDC guidelines, between BABA Collective and the featured artists, in order to catch up with the 150 creatives during this time of unprecedented challenges for the arts community and the country in general. In this regard, Villalonga added: “The ‘catch up’ sessions not only maintain relevant the content of the former interviews, but also they are a form of recording this past, extra-ordinary year when, because of the Pandemic, we have lost access to the public spaces (exhibition openings, events, etc.) where we would organically run into each other and get a hold of what is going on with our work and life. We are eager to know how COVID-19 has affected art professionals, and by extension, the art community’s ability and challenges to keep on producing art and culture these days.”



Established in 2017, BABA Collective has engaged in an ongoing dialog within the Miami art community, inquiring artists and cultural producers about their personal narratives and creative processes. These conversations are archived as online podcasts and presented as the continuing project *Rocking Chair Sessions*.

*“BABA Collective is keeping it local and grassroots by interviewing peers only from South Florida. Our aim is to build bridges via South Florida’s oral history and multifaceted creative practices.”* says BABA Collective co-founder Maria Theresa Barbist.

Rocking Chair Sessions serves as a multi-year testimonial documenting the lives of creatives who call Miami their home and how the city has shaped and inspired their work and lives.



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*What brought them here to Miami? How does South Florida inspire them? How did they begin their careers in the arts? How has Miami treated them? How have they given back?*

More about the Rocking Chair Sessions can be found at [www.rockingchairsessions.com](http://www.rockingchairsessions.com).

This project is made possible with the support of The Ellies, Miami's visual arts awards, presented by Oolite Arts.

### About Rocking Chair Sessions

Rocking Chair Sessions is a collaborative endeavor created by two South Florida-based artists, [Maria Theresa Barbist](#) and [Elysa D. Batista](#). The artists originally met at the Bakehouse Art Complex (BAC) in Wynwood, FL during their individual artist residencies in 2016.

The idea for Rocking Chair Sessions was born when in discussion of the diversity of artists that were found at the BAC, and other institutions in Miami. They wanted to increase access to interviews and provide an educational insight into these individuals. Thus ROCKING CHAIRS SESSIONS was created and a publicly accessible forum where one could find audio histories describing the professions, media, and life of South Florida-based creatives.

Launched in 2017, [Maria Theresa Barbist](#) and [Elysa D. Batista](#) have built a window into the lives and processes of South Florida-based arts professionals and have given their voices a platform.

### About the Ellies // Oolite Arts

Named after Oolite Arts' Founder Ellie Schneiderman, The Ellies are Miami's visual arts awards, created to celebrate and elevate the careers of the city's artists.

Three decades ago, founder, potter Ellie Schneiderman, sought affordable workspaces for the city's visual artists. Today, Oolite Arts continues Schneiderman's mission, to, as she said, "help artists help themselves." Oolite Arts is a community and a resource, providing artists with the free studio space, exhibition opportunities, direct support and programming they need to advance their careers. Also offer programming to the surrounding neighborhood and the wider community to help them better understand, and create, contemporary art.



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

About the Coral Gables Museum

The Coral Gables Museum fosters an appreciation for the Civic Arts in Coral Gables. It explores and celebrates the history, vision, urban and environmental design, and cultural landscape of the City Beautiful within a broad audience that goes from children, families, and community members to national and international visitors. The museum optimizes its mission by cultivating effective partnerships, and providing programming that includes exhibitions, educational programs, lectures, tours, publications and special events.

***Rocking Chair Sessions | Wish Codex***

BABA Collective

Coral Gables Museum | February 27 - March 27, 2021

285 Aragon Ave, Coral Gables, FL 33134  
[info@coralgablesmuseum.org](mailto:info@coralgablesmuseum.org) | 305 603 8067

**Museum hours:**

Monday - Friday: 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
Saturday & Sunday: 12:00 pm - 6:00 pm

**For more information and to plan your visit:**

<https://coralgablesmuseum.org/visit/>

**For more information on the exhibition:**

<https://coralgablesmuseum.org/portfolio-item/rocking-chair-sessions-wish-codex>

**You can also contact:**

Maria Theresa Barbist and Elysa Batista  
Email: [rockingchairsessions@gmail.com](mailto:rockingchairsessions@gmail.com)  
415 717 2203

Yuneikys (Yuni) Villalonga  
[yvillalonga@coralgablesmuseum.org](mailto:yvillalonga@coralgablesmuseum.org)  
305 603 8067

Coral Gables Museum | 285 Aragon Ave, Coral Gables, FL 33134  
[|info@coralgablesmuseum.org](mailto:info@coralgablesmuseum.org) | 305 603 8067