

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Coral Gables, FL, April 8th, 2021 - The Coral Gables Museum is pleased to announce the opening of the exhibition, *A Matter of Time: Examining Forty Years of AIDS While Living through a Pandemic*, spanning the three main temporary galleries of the Museum from April 8th to July 18th, 2021.

Life-altering events are a matter of time. In the summer of 1981, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) published the first reports of five young gay men in Los Angeles with respiratory complications and other infectious diseases; two had already died. Later, the world would know the disease as AIDS or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Over 75 million people worldwide were infected with HIV, and more than 33 million have died since the beginning of the epidemic.

Taking a multidisciplinary approach, the exhibition *A Matter of Time...* gathers information on the emergence and development of AIDS, forty years after the first reported case. Myriad publications, videos, ephemera, and documents help audiences understand the phenomenon during the first years of the epidemic from the perspectives of science, public health, and socio politics. These historical materials range from information on international AIDS conferences and AIDS walks, to the annotations and observations of pioneer CDC researcher, Bill Darrow, featured in the also-included film, "And the Band Played On" (1993).

An encompassing selection of AIDS posters from The Wolfsonian-FIU's collection gives audiences insights on the importance of design in awareness campaigns and illustrates the changes in the social and institutional language. These reflect and chronicle the public presentation of the epidemic in various countries throughout the decades, as

the scientific community discovers the intricacies of the disease. A selection of ten panels of the AIDS Memorial Quilt pays homage to local, national and international celebrities, as well as to people that will always remain anonymous and yet represent the different segments of the population who died from the epidemic. Included in The Quilt are such figures as fashion designer Halston; tennis player Arthur Ashe; singers Hector Lavoe and Freddie Mercury; choreographers Rudolf Nureyev and Alvin Ailey; actor Rock Hudson; and visual artist and activist Keith Haring, among many others.

This exhibition recounts and illustrates in depth an array of local stories. Wilma Bulkin Siegel, MD, is a doctor who devoted herself to art as a personal form of healing after her painful experiences working with AIDS. She painted portraits of her patients, accompanied by their stories, which would integrate a 1998 memory quilt. The Alonso-Brito family, a Cuban-American family of talented artists who lost four of their members to AIDS, contributed paintings, jewelry, clothing, and audio recordings, among other remembrances of their loved ones. Huston Ochoa, one of their descendants and a student of Social Work, has worked closely with co-curator Shed Boren in developing part of the story. Having lost both of his parents to AIDS as a child, for Ochoa, helping tell his family history has been part of a healing process. "This project started out as my effort to help Huston, who was my student at the FIU School of Social Work, understand the HIV epidemic which killed his parents. Then, I felt the need to expand the subject to reflect all the different components of the epidemic," says co-curator Shed Boren.

The show also reflects trailblazing efforts to safeguard the artistic heritage of those who died of AIDS. Projects such as the fundraiser "Art Against AIDS" (1987), founded by Sheldon Lurie, and "The Estate Project for Artists with AIDS", conceived by Patrick Moore and spearheaded in Florida by Patricia Jones, brought together key figures of the South Florida arts community. *Touched by AIDS* (1998,) an exhibition curated by Barbara Young, Margarita Cano and Helen L. Kohen at Miami-Dade Community College's Centre Gallery, paved the way for other local curatorial initiatives that have been instrumental in granting artists whose lives were cut short by AIDS their due place in art history. Included in the show are works by Carlos Alfonzo, Jon Fernando Brito, Wilfredo Brito, Humberto Dionisio, Fernando Garcia, Juan Gonzalez, Sheldon M. Lurie, Carlos A. Macia, and Adolfo Sanchez. "We are very thankful to our collaborators, The Vasari Project, and the Miami-Dade Public Library not only for facilitating the loan of important artworks, documents and ephemera, but also for their contribution to the research on the visual arts section of the exhibition. The input of librarian Barbara Young and artist and art administrator César Trasobares, active members of the Miami arts scene at the time, was instrumental to better understand a period that I did not experience personally. We also found a supportive response from collectors and the families of these artists, who loaned works and took the time to relate personal

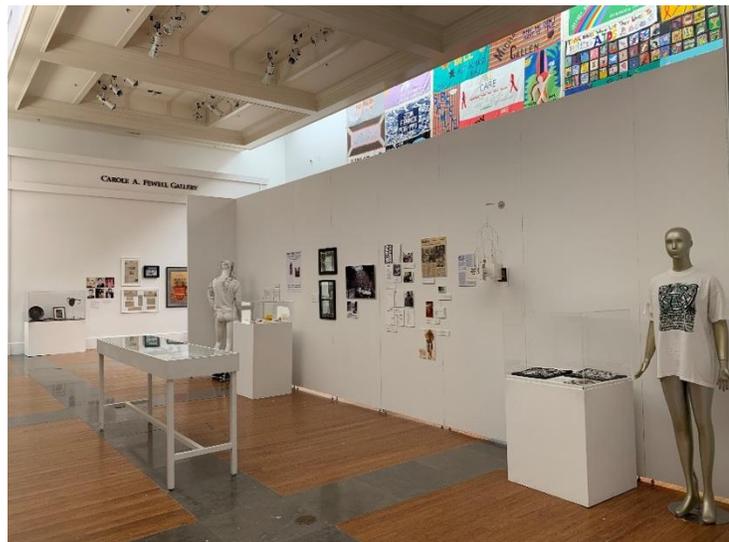
memories and make sure the story was told accurately,” said co-curator Yuneikys Villalonga.

The project “What Now?” (1997), curated by César Trasobares at the Aljira Center for Contemporary Art, New Jersey, brought together imagery and reflections of artists living with the disease, at a time when they were confronted with the first “cocktail” or set of medications that prevented death. “What Now?” is to be remarked as an instantaneous picture of that critical moment of both uncertainty and hope throughout the nation. Trasobares is also represented in the show with his piece “Only You” (2021) setting a dialogue with the work of his colleague Keith Haring as a challenge to reflect on the merging of provocative universal subjects.

A different, yet contemporary, take on AIDS is that of artist Yucef Merhi with his work “The Artbox” (2000). In 18 miniature plexiglass boxes of different colors, the artist presents that he considers the most relevant cultural icons of the year 2000, thus trying to capture the *zeitgeist* or spirit of the times, as a portable and playable museum. One of the boxes contains the source code of the computer virus “AIDS” that circulated almost at the same time when scientists found the first cures for the biological virus. Merhi managed to “capture” or “discover” the virus by surfing the “dark web.”

“A Matter of Time...” is organized by the Coral Gables Museum in collaboration with The Vasari Project, Special Collections & Archives, Miami-Dade Public Library System, Miami, FL, and The Wolfsonian-FIU. “The Museum is very proud of this collaboration with such prestigious institutions in South Florida, for the first time in our history. We hope this is just the beginning of many other conversations,” said Executive Director, John R. Allen.

The show is curated by Shed Boren, Ph.D., Clinical Assistant Professor, Florida International University, and Yuneikys Villalonga, Chief Curator, Coral Gables Museum.



A Matter of Time

Examining Forty Years of AIDS While Living through a Pandemic

Carole A. Fewell Gallery, Gallery 109 & Anthony R. Abraham Family Gallery
April 8th - July 18th, 2021 | Curated by Shed Boren and Yuneikys Villalonga

In Collaboration with: The Vasari Project, Special Collections & Archives, Miami-Dade Public Library System, Miami, FL, and The Wolfsonian-FIU.

RELATED EVENTS:

Sew to Tell: A Community Project by Aurora Molina

Mondays & Fridays throughout the exhibition, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Artist and social practitioner Aurora Molina invites you to join her in sewing and quilting to remember those who succumbed to AIDS and those who survived, from famous to ordinary people, from patients, to caretakers, families and friends.

Thursday Lecture Series

Thursdays throughout the exhibition, Community Meeting Room, 6:00 - 9:00 pm
Stay tuned for information on presentations of different topics related to the exhibition including advancements in treatment; current prevention efforts; community mobilization groups; art organizations and AIDS; faith and AIDS, among others.

For more information on the exhibition contact

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Coral Gables Museum Hours:

Monday - Friday: 12:00pm - 5:00pm

Saturday & Sunday: 12:00pm - 6:00pm

Amid the current COVID-19 Pandemic the museum has implemented a few changes to better protect our visitors and staff. Sanitation stations will be available throughout the venue, as well as yellow floor markers to assist in maintaining social distancing. Due to Miami-Dade County ordinances, facial coverings are mandatory.

We strongly encourage everyone to RSVP in our website (www.coralgablesmuseum.org) ahead of their visit and pre-purchase tickets to avoid in-person transactions at the Museum.

ABOUT THE CURATORS:

Shed Boren, PhD is a social worker, healthcare executive, and currently a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Robert Stempel College of Public Health and Social Work at Florida International University (FIU). He has worked for, and on behalf of, vulnerable populations for more than 30 years, with a focus on those living with HIV/AIDS, chronic diseases, mental health challenges and in poverty. Dr. Boren has served as the Chief Executive Officer of Camillus Health Concern, Camillus House, Sister Emmanuel Hospital and as the founder of Mercy Hospital's AIDS program. Over the years he has developed a special interest in working with people experiencing homelessness, those aging out of foster care, and those in contact with the criminal justice system. Dr. Boren served as the Executive Producer of the Emmy Award-winning film, *The Day It Snowed in Miami* (2014) and *Sisters*, a film about the life of Sister Helen Prejean (2018). He remains active in the community and he is on the Board of Directors of LEAP and Guitars over Guns. In recognition of his advocacy for marginalized populations, he received the FIU Path Award in 2016.

Yuneikys (Yuni) Villalonga graduated from Art History at the University of Havana, Cuba (2000) and went on to serve as Curator at the Ludwig Foundation of Cuba for the next four years. During that time, she was also teaching Contemporary Caribbean Art at the Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA) in Havana. In 2004, she won the National Curatorship Award from the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC) with the exhibition, *Së Bashku-Juntos-Tillsammans* presented at the 2nd Tirana Biennial of Contemporary Art (Tirana, Albania, 2003) and at the Uppsala Museum (Uppsala, Sweden, 2004.) As Visual Art Projects Manager at the British Council of Cuba (2004-2010) she organized several international exhibitions in Cuba and the UK. Her goal was inserting Latin American, Caribbean and Cuban art into a broader, international scene. In 2011, she joined Lehman College Art Gallery in New York, where she served as Curator for five years and was also involved in their broad arts education program for students of all ages. In 2016, she relocated to Miami, Florida where she worked as Associate Director of Exhibitions and Education at the Bakehouse Art Complex (2016-2017) and is currently the Chief Curator at the Coral Gables Museum. She also writes for several national and international art magazines.

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 ranges 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.

ABOUT THE VASARI PROJECT:

The Vasari Project Archive is a special library collection of the Miami-Dade Public Library System and housed at the Main Library's Special Collections & Archives. Established in 2000 and co-founded by the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, the archive of printed matter and items of ephemera document the history of art and artists in Miami from 1945 to the present. Initiated and managed through its first decade by former Miami Herald art critic Helen Kohen, the archive is housed at the Main Library in downtown Miami. Currently the archive is accepting a broad range of materials from printed ephemera to digital information and images – about Miami's historic and growing visual arts community.

ABOUT THE WOLFSONIAN-FIU:

The Wolfsonian-FIU uses objects to illustrate the persuasive power of art and design, to explore what it means to be modern, and to tell the story of social, political, and technological changes that have transformed our world. It encourages people to see the world in new ways and to learn from the past as they shape the present and influence the future.

Special Thanks to the Alonso Family, Ray Baker, Bea Brito, Margarita Cano, Xavier Cortada, Paul Crockett, Bill Darrow, Luigi Ferrer, Mary Fisher, Jane Fincher, Stephanie Garcia, Larry Hyer, Mario Leon, LnS Gallery, Peter Menendez, Aurora Molina, Huston Ochoa, Alina Orozco, Alina Pedroso, Oliver Sanchez, Dr. Wilma Bulkin Siegel, Richard Standifer, Andre Ribeiro de Barros, Freddy Rodriguez, Richard Standifer, César Trasobares, Jose Valdes-Fauli, Lili Warner, Mitch Weissner, and Barbara Young.

****This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Sister Edith Gonzalez.***

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without the generous support of**



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*Images credit:

Installation views of the exhibition, *A Matter of Time; Examining Forty Years of AIDS While Living through a Pandemic*. Carol A. Fewell Gallery, Gallery 109 and Anthony Abraham Family Gallery, Coral Gables Museum, April 8th - July 18th, 2021. Courtesy of the Coral Gables Museum.