

# DECONSTRUCTION

A reordering of life, politics, and art

July 10 to September 30, 2018 | Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum



“The fact is that at points in time certain ideas do connect and become thinkable, or become visible, having to do with the general conditioning of the time and the specific conditioning of the individual,” wrote the artist Robert Irwin in the mid-1970s. While it cannot be assumed a priori that the twelve artists represented in *Deconstruction: A reordering of life, politics, and art* set about to deconstruct assumptions and precepts that govern our lives, each artist’s response to prevailing issues such as sexuality, identity, and class encourages us to realize that it could only be, just now, that these ideas could visibly coalesce.

I extend my grateful thanks to Eddie Arroyo, Zachary Balber, Frida Baranek, Christopher Carter, Yanira Collado, Gonzalo Fuenmayor, Pepe Mar, Glexis Novoa, Sandra Ramos, Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, Jamilah Sabur, and Frances Trombly. As a museum, we are fortunate to have the collegiality and support of Anthony Spinello, Isaac Javier Perelman Mizrahi, Alfredo Guzman, Nina Johnson, David Castillo, Irina Leyva-Pérez, Janda Wetherington, Tyler Emerson-Dorsch, and Alejandra von Hartz to help us bring *Deconstruction* to fruition.

Jose Lima and William Spring generously contributed their insight and assistance with ephemera related to Craig Coleman. I would like to recognize the Frost Art Museum’s curator, Dr. Amy Galpin, for her commitment and passion for this project.

The twelve artists featured in this exhibition find an appropriate platform at the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum FIU, which draws inspiration from the vibrant and growing artistic community in Miami.

**Dr. Jordana Pomeroy**  
Director  
**Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum FIU**

## DIRECTOR’S FOREWORD

# Amidst a frenetic society, their works call for moments of deep and careful reflection.

*Deconstruction: A reordering of life, politics, and art* brings together the work of twelve Miami-based artists, who work in a variety of media.<sup>1</sup> Through their artistic practices, they examine current events, personal memories, and cultural archetypes dismantling societal norms to suggest alternative perspectives. Each artist demonstrates a sensitivity for their subject matter as well as materials. They are engaged directly in their process and demonstrate an awareness of the present and the past. Amidst a frenetic society, their works call for moments of deep and careful reflection.

Distinctive histories reverberate within several works featured in the exhibition. In his large-scale installation *Varla TV*, Pepe Mar recalls South Beach as a haven for

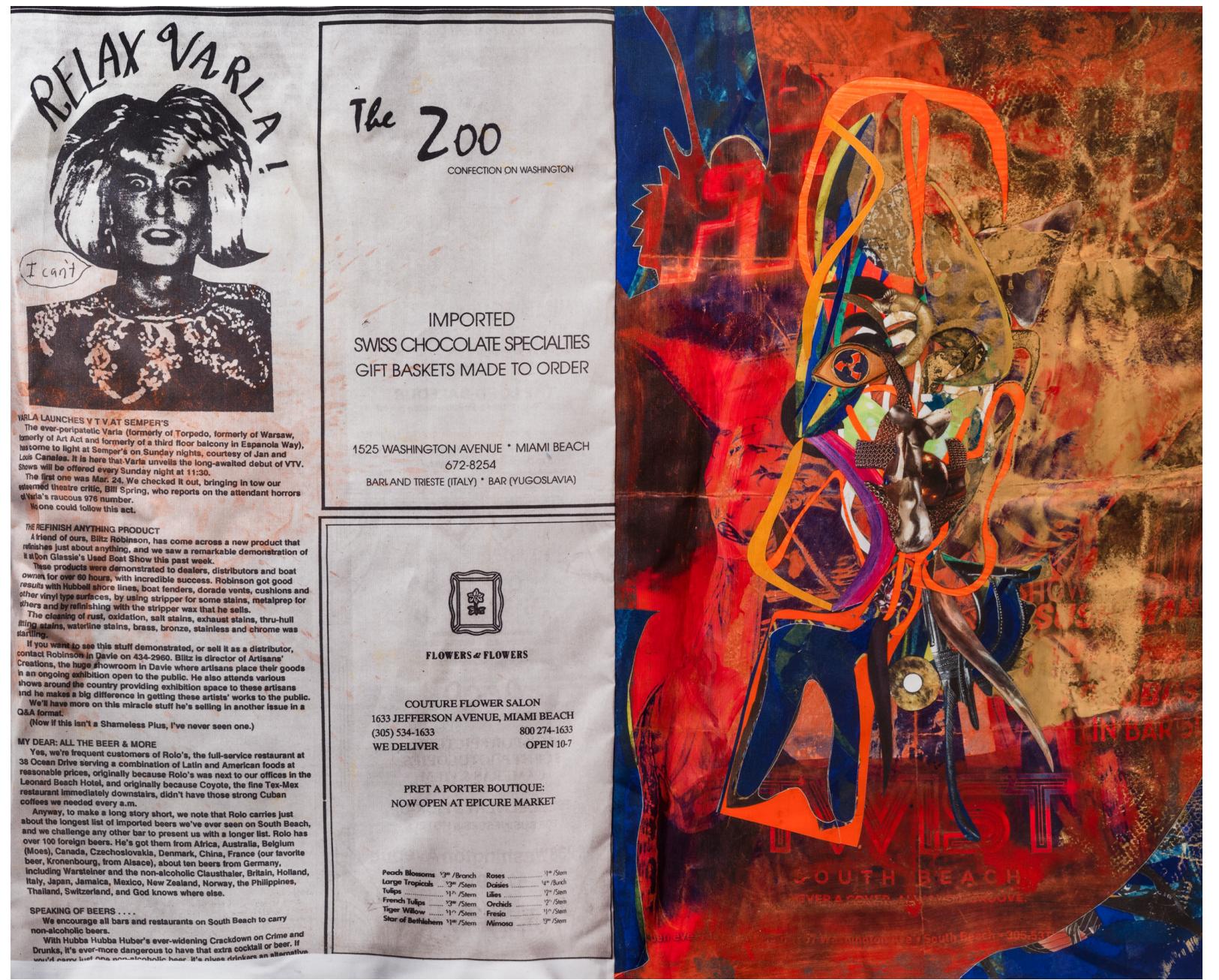


FIG 1

<sup>1</sup>The subtitle for the exhibition derives from Guy DeBord's *Society of the Spectacle*, originally published in 1967 in France during a moment of political strife.

## COVER

Sandra Ramos, b.1969, Havana, Cuba, lives and works in Miami. *Apocalyptic Cartographies. Limbus*, 2017, Mixed media, photograph/paper and engraving on acrylic, 41x 61 x 2 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Pan American Projects.

counterculture (**Fig. 1**). During the 1980s and early 1990s, South Beach functioned as a refuge for people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Some settled on this stretch of Miami's barrier islands to live out their days; more broadly, many members of the LGBTQ community found solace together during a time in which being queer—and HIV positive—resulted in a life on the margins. Mar routinely visits second-hand retail outlets, where he excavates materials to repurpose them in his work. In *Varla TV*, two paintings by Craig Coleman, found at a thrift store, as well as archival materials, provide the inspiration for Mar's celebratory and mournful tribute to this legend of Miami Beach, who died from HIV/AIDS in 1995 at age 34. Coleman began his career as a painter in New York, eventually relocating to Miami, where he painted in a studio on Espanola Way and performed in drag under the name Varla. Coleman was a central figure of the arts scene in South Beach in the 1990s, a legacy reflected in *Varla TV*. Mar brings together his own work with that of Coleman, creating a dynamic synthesis that provides an emotional core for the exhibition.

Like Mar's installation based on historical narrative, Jamilah Sabur's works testify to her ongoing interest in the construction of meaning and how it informs the way one views the world (**Fig. 2**). In 2018, when she became a U.S. citizen, Sabur assumed the



FIG 2

## FIG 1

Pepe Mar, b.1977, Reynosa, Mexico, lives and works in Miami. *Varla TV*, 2018 (detail), Painted fabric, two paintings by Craig Coleman and one mixed media work by Pepe Mar. Courtesy of the artist and David Castillo Gallery. Photo credit: Zachary Balber.

## FIG 2

Jamilah Sabur, b.1987, Saint Andrew Parish, Jamaica, lives and works in Miami. *A declaration (Ibine-Ela-Acu)*, 2018, Biometrics photo (2008), Ziploc bag, oil and graphite on linen, 24 x 28 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Nina Johnson Gallery. Photo credit: Zachary Balber.

# Yanira Collado's sculptural work, like Carter's, considers both cultural ruptures and remnants.

middle name Ibine-Ela-Acu. These words, which signify Water-Sun-Moon, derive from Timucua language, spoken by Amerindians who lived in southern Georgia and northern and central regions of Florida. Born in Jamaica, Sabur spent time in central Florida during her middle school years and most recently as a part of an artist residency with the Crisp Ellert Museum in St. Augustine. In this autobiographical work, Sabur makes a powerful proclamation and overlays her own experience with historical memory. The self-

portrait in this work is a biometrics photo from 2008 that was a part of an immigration proceeding.<sup>2</sup> Although the photograph was intended for documentary purposes, it exudes a certain vulnerability.

A commitment to hold onto one's past through discarded objects underlies Christopher Carter's sculpture, *Cross-Cultural Trap* (Fig. 3), which serves as a personal totem for Carter—a reminder of the futility inherent in labeling or classifying



FIG 3

**FIG 3**  
Christopher Carter, b.1966, Albuquerque, New Mexico, lives and works in Miami. *Cross-Cultural Trap*, 2018, Wood, found materials, and enamel, 6 x 6 x 6 feet. Courtesy of the artist. Photo credit: Jose Luis Garcia.

<sup>2</sup> Biometrics photos were introduced in 2006. Used more frequently as a part of anti-fraud efforts, the biometrics photos possess strict requirements and include facial recognition capabilities.

individuals. The work is comprised of wood that the artist held onto for fifteen years, embedded with metal components and leather collected during his travels. Yanira Collado's sculptural work, like Carter's, considers both cultural ruptures and remnants. Based on a series created after Hurricane Andrew in 1992, Collado addresses the need for protection against powerful, essential forces. Inspired by the remnants of housing in Homestead and beyond, the artist references the bones of architectural support. Here she presents cuaba soap, a material with a high pH level, in the shape of cinderblocks. Titled, *fuku, ahora te haces que no me conoces* (now you make believe you do not know me), the work functions as a metaphorical portal through which a spell (*fuku*) is released (Fig. 4).

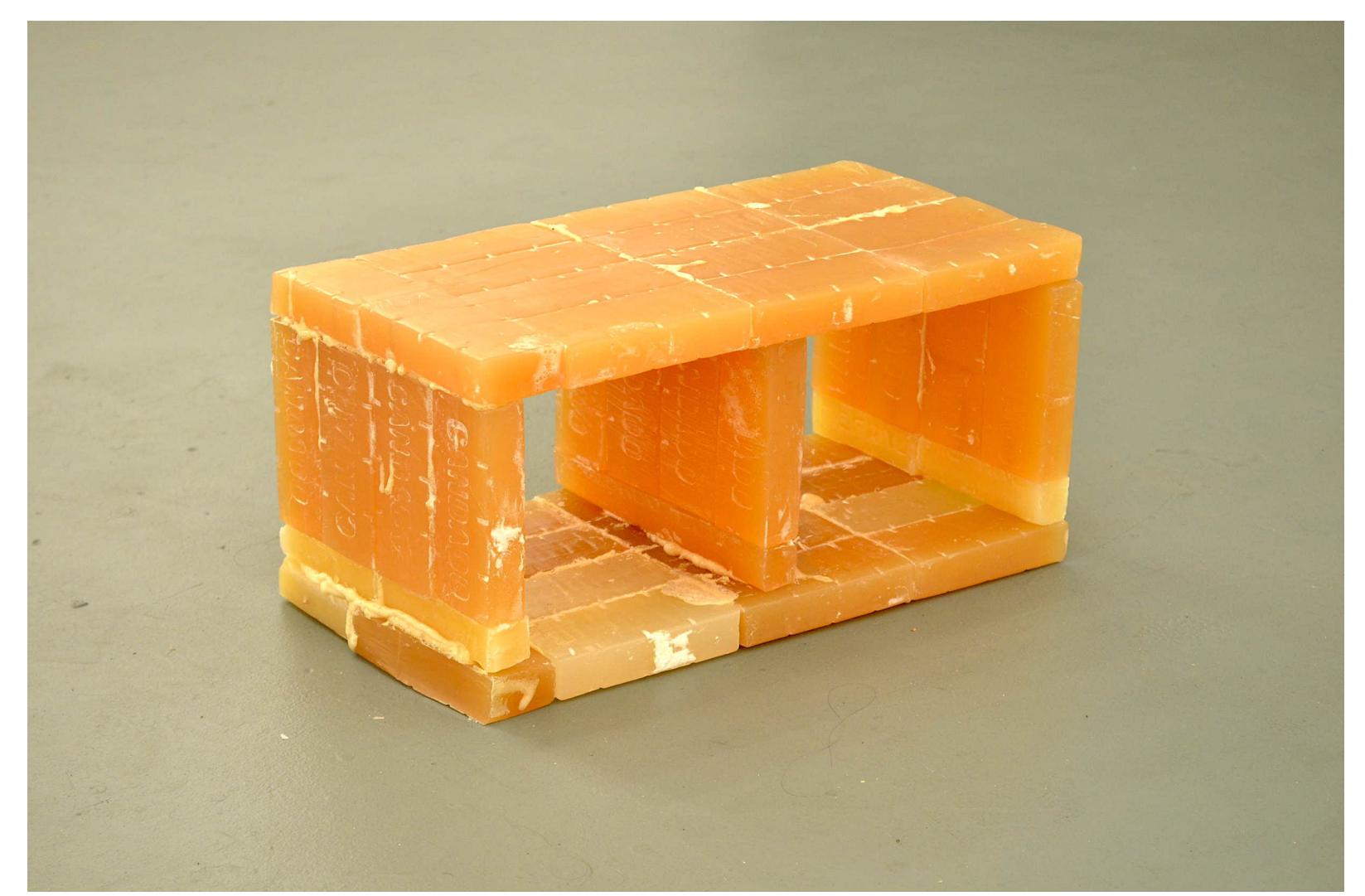


FIG 4

**FIG 4**  
Yanira Collado, b.1975, New York, New York, lives and works in Miami. *fuku, ahora te haces que no me conoces* (detail), 2018, cuaba soap, 18 x 32 x 32 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Throughout his series *Intimate Strangers* the artist evokes childhood longings with an element of humor by obstructing pristine spaces.



FIG 5



FIG 6

Architecture as aspirational structures influence the work of Zachary Balber, whose day job includes employment as a commercial photographer, and specifically of high-end real estate.

Balber began the series *Intimate Strangers* to reflect on his exposure to some of Miami's most expensive homes and his desire as a young boy to step inside these palatial homes and live a life of extravagance.

FIG 5

Zachary Balber, b.1984, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, lives and works in Miami. *Booties and Astroturf to walk on the moon*, 2018, Digital c-print. 30 x 40 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

FIG 6

Gonzalo Fuenmayor, b.1977, Baranquilla, Colombia, lives and works in Miami. *The Happy Hour*, 2018, Graphite and charcoal on paper. Courtesy of the artist and Dot Fifty One Gallery.

In *Booties and Astroturf to walk on the moon* (Fig. 5), the photographer's body, flopped down face first in the grass, creates a striking figure in relation to the otherwise pristine setting. Throughout his series *Intimate Strangers* the artist evokes childhood longings with an element of humor by obstructing pristine spaces.

Playful aesthetics resonate in the work of Gonzalo Fuenmayor who pictures a universe of floating cocktail garnishes in *The Happy Hour* (Fig. 6). In his work, infused with rich black hues, Fuenmayor deconstructs an exotic trope of a tropical paradise with a dramatic, other worldly sensibility. The unknown depths of the universe are married with cocktail umbrellas, a spirited symbol of escapism. While Sandra Ramos's work *Apocalyptic Cartographies. Limbus* (Fig. 7) feels far from playful, she emphasizes



FIG 7

FIG 7

Sandra Ramos, b.1969, Havana, lives and works in Miami. *Apocalyptic Cartographies. Limbus*, 2017, Mixed media, photograph/paper and engraving on acrylic. 41x 61 x 2 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Pan American Projects.

# Devoid of people, works by Novoa and Arroyo reinforce the role of architecture in shaping society's past, present, and future.



**FIG 8**

childhood innocence while simultaneously addressing themes of alienation, isolation, and migration. Here, Ramos presents a photograph of a young girl in a school uniform lying across a makeshift raft in reference to similar structures used to cross the ninety miles between Cuba and the

United States. The young girl, pictured alone, is suspended between a real and imagined space mapped by Ramos.

The evolution of places and spaces pervades the haunting and intricate work of Glexis Novoa. The artist produces drawings



**FIG 9**

of hybrid spaces and considers carefully the relationships between power and the built environment. Power and history are evoked in his work, *Timba*, in which the artist draws directly on a seductive fragment of Carrera marble recovered from Havana (Fig. 8). In contrast to Novoa, Eddie Arroyo produces paintings of specific locations (Fig. 9) in Miami that highlight issues of gentrification and recall traditions of *plein air* painting. While his works depict particular buildings, they convey universal concepts. Arroyo's paintings highlight the changing urban landscape of Miami with focused attention on the neighborhood of Little Haiti. Devoid of people, works by Novoa and Arroyo reinforce the role of architecture in shaping society's past, present, and future.

**FIG 8**

Glexis Novoa, b.1964, Holguín, Cuba, lives and works in Miami and Havana. *Timba*, 2017, graphite on Carrara marble (marble recovered from Havana), 14 x 16 inches. Courtesy of the artist and David Castillo Gallery.

**FIG 9**

Eddie Arroyo, b.1976, Miami, Florida, lives and works in Miami. 5825 NE 2nd Ave. Miami, FL 33137, Acrylic on canvas in artist's reclaimed Dade County Pine frame, 2017, 30 x 38 x 2.25 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Spinello Projects.

# Deconstructing society, ways of seeing, power, poverty, class, cultural realities and imaginaries, and the materials themselves reverberate throughout this exhibition.



**FIG 10**

Analyzing materials and how they fit within a larger framework informs the work of Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, Frances Trombly, and Frida Baranek. Rodriguez-Casanova uses found materials such as doors, blinds, and drywall, often mass-produced and associated with domestic spaces (**Fig. 10**). Cheap and ubiquitous, these items speak to a capitalist society, the widespread distribution of certain goods, and the bland aesthetics that characterize so much of new construction. Rodriguez-Casanova alters the way in which the viewer experiences recognizable materials. The door, resting on the floor and leaning on the wall, suggests the idea of a prop and creates an intervention in the museum space. Trombly engages with hand-made textiles. She melds traditions of painting and cloth production in *Loose Canvas with Pink Embroidery*

(**Fig. 12**). The draping of the canvas might seem casual or improvised at first, but it is carefully organized and laboriously executed. An openness to experimentation and a dedication to materiality exists in both Trombly's work and in the practice of Frida Baranek. In *Uncertainty Relations IX* (**Fig. 11**), Baranek manipulates wire that yields an arrangement of curved shapes, which dominate the overall composition and suggest a sense of dynamism and



**FIG 11**

**FIG 10**

Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, b.1973, Havana, Cuba, lives and works in Miami. *A Degraded Door and Blinds*, 2012, found door, PVC blinds, steel, 36 x 80 x 12 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Alejandra von Hartz Gallery.

**FIG 11**

Frida Baranek, b.1961, Rio de Janeiro, lives and works in Miami. *Uncertainty Relations IX*, 2017, Steel, galvanized steel and copper wire, 63 x 16 x 20 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Gabinete de Arte Raquel Arnaud, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

movement. The sculpture, with its loose wires, is simultaneously steady and fragile, mass-produced for the construction industry yet a distinctive and elegant material in the artist's hands.

Deconstructing society, ways of seeing, power, poverty, class, cultural realities and imaginaries, and the materials themselves reverberate throughout this exhibition. While these artists share the same city, they are less about this geographical distinction than probing ideas and perspectives defining the evolving human condition. As the Frost Art Museum celebrates its tenth anniversary, it reaffirms its commitment to artists who make change in this city and put Miami on the global artistic stage.

**Amy Galpin, Ph.D.**  
Chief Curator, Frost Art Museum



**FIG 12**

**FIG 12**

Frances Trombly, b.1976, Miami, Florida, lives and works in Miami. *Loose Canvas with Pink Embroidery*, 2016, Handwoven cotton and hand-embroidered, hand-dyed silk, 48 x 48 x 2 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Emerson Dorsch.



Yanira Collado, *fuku, ahora te haces que no me conoce* (detail), 2018, cuaba soap, 18 x 32 x 32 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

**FIU** | Patricia & Phillip  
Frost Art Museum

**10** YEAR 2008-2018  
ANNIVERSARY

**Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum**

Florida International University

10975 SW 17th St. Miami, FL 33199

t. 305.348.2890 | e. [artinfo@fiu.edu](mailto:artinfo@fiu.edu) | w. [frost.fiu.edu](http://frost.fiu.edu)

Museum Hours: Tues.-Sat: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. | Sun.: 12 p.m.-5 p.m. | Mon.: Closed



 Smithsonian  
Affiliate

 MIAMI-DADE  
COUNTY

 CULTURE  
BUILDS  
FLORIDA  
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
DIVISION OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS



The Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum FIU receives ongoing support from the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; the Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Council on Arts and Culture and the State of Florida.