

## Locals Get Their Due at This Year's Book Fair

Written by Anne Tschida, BT Arts Editor  
November 2014

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### A tented “swamp,” popups, and more multimedia twists



The Miami Book Fair International has become the nation's largest literary fair, one of South Florida's biggest annual events, and a serious crowd pleaser. But sometimes the “Florida” in the fair gets a little lost. Not this year. Some new additions are all about the Sunshine State, from literature to art to music.

Most of the celebration of local talent will be centered in the Swamp, at the southeast corner of NE 3rd Street and NE 2nd Avenue. There a tent is being transformed into a culture lounge, according to program director Lissette Mendez. It's supposed to feel like a cross between the great and divey (now defunct) Jimbo's and the white-draped Delano. You can't get much more Miami than that.

Inside, starting on Sunday, November 16, will be an array of eclectic offerings; in fact, the Swamp appears to be as much a “happening” as anything else.

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So on opening day, you might stop by the tent and board the “Weird Miami Bus Tour: Muhammad Ali Edition,” presented by Bas Fisher Invitational and Thought Loom. It leaves at 4:00 p.m. and “follows Cassius Clay’s daily training run from Overtown to Miami Beach,” and includes film, dance, and poetry, plus an interactive musical experience. Space is limited, so RSVP early: [www.basfisherinvitational.com](http://www.basfisherinvitational.com).

Or stay at the tent for the opening party and DJ Lolo spinning records on the Porch from 4:00 p.m. on; or partake in the poetry karaoke party (“Come for the poetry, stay for the flubbed lines!”) courtesy of the O, Miami poetry collective. Maybe you’ll want to sit still and watch the new documentary *Deep City: The Birth of Miami Sound*, about Miami music in the early 1960s.

On Monday, musician Oscar Fuentes, the man known at the Biscayne Poet, will write poetry on the spot, “live” on the Porch.



On Thursday, listen to the lyrical reading of her first book from Afro-Spanish singing star Buika (who now makes Miami home), accompanied by a *cajon* player. Sticking with the Ali theme, check out the screening that day of *hammad Ali: Made in Miami* *Mu*, by Miamians Alan Tomlinson and *BT*

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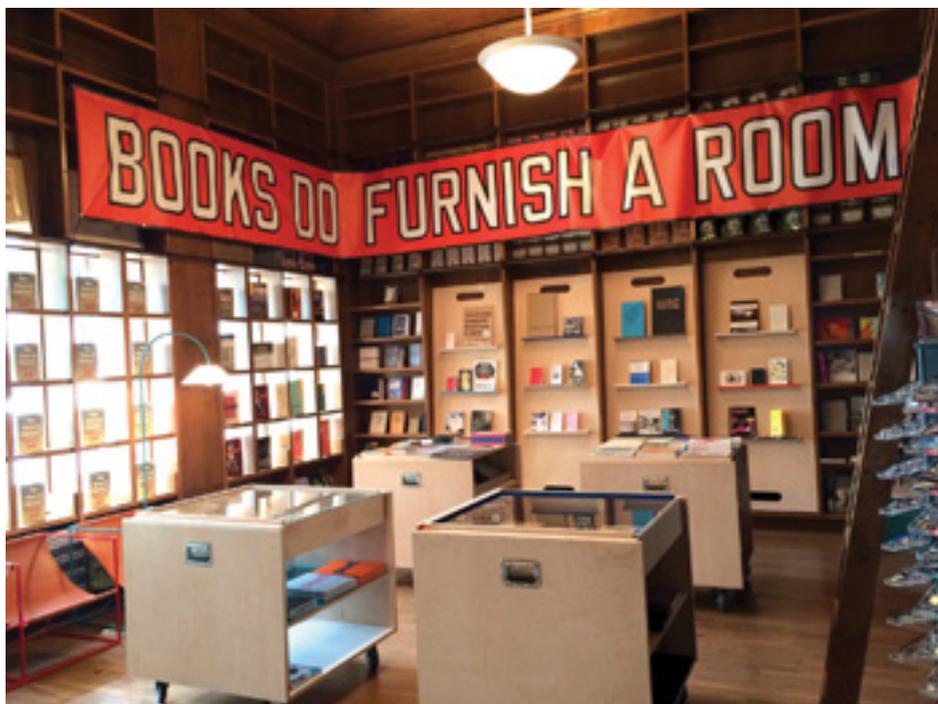
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contributor Gaspar González. There will also be dance performance by the Tattooed Ballerinas and a concert from the Spam Allstars.

Throughout the week, murals will be painted on the tent; there'll be talks about African-American and Afro-Cuban musical and literary history in Florida; bizarre tales of haunted houses and mermaids; and readings from the second edition of the local Sweat Broadside Project.

The Swamp, says Mendez -- who arrived with the Mariel Boatlift and has witnessed the rise of the new Miami -- is long overdue. "There has long been a literary culture in Florida, sometimes hidden," she says. But recently "there has just been this explosion of the arts," and it seemed only right for that energetic outburst to get its own venue and platform at the book fair.

Sunday will close with a mini-film festival from the Borscht indie-film crew; a drag queen and queer reading brunch; and music and food courtesy of the Rhythm Foundation and a condensed version of its Big Night in Little Haiti.



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Another new feature this year: the EXILE Artists' Book Lounge, brainchild of local artist Amanda Keeley. She inaugurated the first "pop-up" artists bookstore at Locust Projects art gallery in September -- a quirky and engrossing installation that was filled with publications made by artists.

"Artists' books are not traditional monographs or exhibition catalogues that simply display photos of an artist's work," explains Keeley. "These books are conceived as works of art, in and of themselves. They are affordable and accessible, usually mass distributed and produced, intended to reach a broad audience."

When she returned to Miami in 2013, Keeley says, she was surprised there were no alternative spaces highlighting such works. But instead of a traditional brick-and-mortar store, "I decided that EXILE should be experimental and adaptive. By having a traveling pop-up-shop business model, it allows the store to reach different communities and to evolve with each location."

After Locust, her store migrated to Books & Books in Coral Gables, not coincidentally run by one of the book fair's founders, Mitchell Kaplan. Now, it will pop up at the fair, where, she hopes, "it will be a relaxed atmosphere where people can come and browse, relax, mingle, and enjoy some of the events we have scheduled -- readings, performances, live printing. It will be a lot of fun to gather a community together and share in our passion for print culture."



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The works in the lounge will not be all local, and not all books. The book fair describes the EXILE offerings as performances, lectures, and workshops revealing the “radical history and legacy of artists’ publications.” Yoko Ono will provide the wish trees (on which visitors tie their written wishes); Isis Miller will jump-start the Flash Poetry Mob; and naturally, Dada and Fluxus will be discussed.

Performance artist Domingo Castillo will do some “live” printing, and the Peter London Global Dance Company will interpret the concept through movement. “EXILE is collaborative in nature,” says Keeley. “We provide artists a platform to present related projects that connect to the selected theme.”

Clearly, as the cliché goes, this isn't your grandmother's book fair. Both Mendez and Keeley have a vision that falls within the current trend that's not just local, but national and international. For many in the arts community, standing alone has gotten to be a lonely position -- trying to involve as many disciplines as possible at happenings and events is the future. It cultivates broader awareness; someone only familiar with dance will encounter poetry; electronic music will be an aural addition to browsing the latest novels; contemporary art will complement an author reading.

So it's no wonder that public radio station WLRN is involved in these new fair ventures, as is the Jewish Museum of Florida, the Rhythm Foundation, HistoryMiami, and the various independent dance, music, and arts groups. And the Knight Foundation has funded most of it.

There truly will be something for everyone at the fresh tents and lounges of the 2014 Miami Book Fair International.

The fair runs November 16 through November 23 at the downtown Miami-Dade College Wolfson campus. The Swamp will be at the corner of NE 3rd Street and NE 2nd Avenue; the EXILE Artists' Book Lounge will be in Room 2103, Building 2. Check out the complete listings at

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