

### Grants open to artists in Miami-Dade



Like every artist, I dream of an old-school patron eager to stroke checks that let my freak flag fly. In 1508, when Pope Julius approached Michelangelo with a fat stack of the Church's lira to paint the 12 apostles on the Sistine Chapel, Il Divino agreed to do it if he could paint an entirely different vision. Il Papa obliged, and the world's greatest ceiling was born.

ArtCenter/South Florida is Miami's new Church, and is about to bless us all with an abundance of creative magnificence. A fixture on Florida's artistic scene for 34 years, ACSF is best known for its Lincoln Road studios and galleries. With former Knight Foundation VP/art world luminary/uber collector Dennis Scholl in charge, and former YoungArts impresario/artist whisperer Esther Park now running programming, and with the \$88 million sale of its building in 2014, ACSF is about to turbo-charge Miami's cultural renaissance.

Scholl sums it up nicely: "We've got to get these dollars on the streets, and the Ellies is a good start."

Ellie Schneiderman founded ArtCenter in 1984 with the basic mission of helping artists to help themselves. A scientist who became a potter, she saw that Miami's burgeoning artist community didn't have a place to work, so she acquired Lincoln Road buildings and put artists in the empty retail spaces. Scholl remembers those days fondly. "Coupled with the ballet dancing in the storefronts," he says, "you could come here and have a cultural experience that was organic and like nothing else in our community."

The Ellies were created in Schneiderman's honor, open to all artists who reside in Miami-Dade County and providing grants from \$2500 to \$25,000 to realize the significant visual arts projects burning within each of us.

"Anybody in any corner of this community that has a great artistic project, we want to hear from you. Want to know what you're thinking about," says Scholl. "And we're looking to try to help you."

Scholl and Park have nearly 50 years of granular art world experience between them. While they may not admit it, both are also excellent artists themselves, he as a documentary filmmaker and she as my favorite hip-hop DJ. They understand and revel in the artist's journey. I could feel the passion in Scholl as he told me: "We want you to make something you've never made. Get out of your comfort zone."

Applying for grants is a loathsome yet mandatory process for artists. What struck me while applying for the Ellies was the simplicity.

"I had to make it easy for me, so it's going to be easy for you," quipped Scholl. Basically, you summarize your project and hit enter; if it has merit, you get the money and go...just like Michelangelo.

Along with the Ellies, another game-changing ACSF initiative is Talks, a Locust Projects collaboration that provides direct access to the top curators driving contemporary art. I recently attended the Talk by Trevor Schoonmaker, fresh off his triumphant "Prospect New Orleans" project, in which he guided 73 world-renowned artists toward some of their best work.

"We don't just fly them in, put them up on the stage, and ship them out the next morning," says Scholl. "They've agreed to stay an extra day or two, and do studio visits with local artists." Certainly one thing we artists need most in our practice is exposure to people in the broader contemporary art world.

## ArtCenter/South Florida Ready to Fund Art Ideas

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“We’ve got to create greater international cultural exchange between our visual arts community and our individual visual artists and the rest of the world,” adds Scholl. “We just have to get better at it.”

A third initiative is Art Films, a collaboration with O Cinema that presents the best films by and about artists, with the director or protagonist present. “Our goal is to create an atmosphere in which people can come and just talk about what they’re doing, and how the work is going, and solve problems with each other,” says Scholl.

I attended a superb recent screening by the photo-based artist Laurie Simmons, whom Scholl describes as one of a handful of women who have “changed the face of photography.” The Sunday morning screening included a delicious brunch at Wynwood Yard followed by a dynamic Q&A with the artist.

“The DNA of the ArtCenter is residencies,” says Scholl. “This will always be an artist-centric organization. Currently, they are deep into visioning the optimal site for the next residency facility. Potential locations include South Beach, North Beach, and Miami. “The decision will be driven in the same way that Ellie’s was 34 years ago -- we gotta go where the artists are,” says Scholl.

Let’s all go with them! Subscribe at [artcentersf.org](http://artcentersf.org).

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