



New Times' MasterMind Awards finalists

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Jen Stark



Coral Morphologic



Subtropics: Experimental Music + Sound Art in Miami



Wet Heat Project

On February 11, Miami *New Times* will hand out four genius grants. As part of our annual [Artopia](#) cultural celebration, we will present \$1,000 to four MasterMinds — artists and people who make the arts work in the Magic City. What follows are our eight finalists. They reflect Miami at the turn of the millennium. Each expresses a unique vision, often using new methods and technologies to create or showcase art with plenty of soul.

What we hope to foster is a new way of viewing and listening to the subtropics — from the tiny life that inhabits our coral reefs to the sounds of our concrete landscape. These artists also help us connect the city at the edge of a continent with the rest of the world.

Here, in no particular order, are the finalists for *New Times'* first annual MasterMind Awards at the Freedom Tower.

Drawing inspiration from both her native Asian culture and American mass media, [Susan Lee-Chun](#) fashions fabric sculptures and installations that examine the polarizing impacts of race and the politics of identity. The Korean-born artist transforms floors, walls, and ceilings using patterned textiles and fabrics that match her wardrobe to construct unique spaces where she stages performances and photographs. In one work, a hand seems to creep from a mountain of plaid; in another, only dyed blond hair and pale skin emerge from an op-art world of mesmerizing lines on fabric. The results are a feast for the eyes and a twist for the mind.

The brainchild of longtime friends Colin Foord and Jared McKay, [Coral Morphologic](#) concocts installations that combine sound and light to transform the minute creatures that inhabit our coral reefs into strange, abstract works of surreal art. In the process, they bridge the gap that has long divided science and art. But don't let appearances fool you; their work also captures a world that speaks volumes about the social interactions in the concrete spaces we create far above the ocean's surface.

In our visually cluttered world, we often lose sight — no pun intended — of the sounds that surround us. Gustavo Matamoros wants us to stop and listen. For the past two decades, [Subtropics: Experimental Music + Sound Art in Miami](#) has used sound installations to help clear some of the



Details:

7-11 p.m. February 11. Freedom Tower, 600 Biscayne Blvd., Miami. Tickets cost \$15 presale, \$20 at the door. Ages 21 and over.

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visual clutter and sharpen our hearing. A native of Caracas, Venezuela, Matamoros uses mixed pieces, recorded sound portraits, installations, text, video, and radiophonics to open our ears to the vast soundscape we too often take for granted.

In another century, when art students ask what Miami artists were up to at the beginning of the millennium, scholars can hit the button on a yet uninvented machine and show one of the videos shot by [Wet Heat Project](#). Since 2007, Grela Orihuela and her partner Bill Bilowit have been visiting the studios of dozens of local artists, with their cameras rolling. The result is a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the creative process that is putting the Big Orange on the cultural map.

Who says Miami's 20-somethings only want to party? Who says they're not out there creating the next new wave in film? If they are, you'll see the result at the [Borscht Film Festival](#), a yearly event held at iconic venues showcasing the work of young local filmmakers who specialize in telling Miami stories "that go beyond the typical portrayal of the city as a beautiful but shallow party town." They may have left for the greener pastures of Hollywood or the Big Apple, but Borscht keeps them coming home at least once a year.

In a high-tech world that increasingly tempts artists to remove themselves from physical creation by clicking a mouse, [Jen Stark](#) still does it the old-fashioned way — she uses her hands. The native Miamian takes colored paper, cuts it, and glues the pieces together to compose multihued works that replicate infinity and echo the patterns and intelligent designs found in nature. It's an obsessive, time-consuming process that no machine, no matter how advanced, can match, because it's got the human spirit stamped all over it.

"There's not enough Miami punk rock. Not enough people going to shows. Not enough bands, not enough venues, not enough glass to break, levels on the volume knob, beer to drink, fences to jump." We agree with *New Times*' blogger Jacob Katel. Miami needs someone like Fabio Destroyio to set things right. His sub-underground [Destroyio Records](#) is single-handedly keeping punk and hardcore alive in clubs and on stereo systems across the Magic City. And in a videogame world where guitars are played by pressing buttons on plastic fretboards, Fabio reminds us that the sound of a finger on a vibrating string can still get feet stomping and heads banging.

The old cabaret show might be a dying art form, but [Little Stage Theater](#) is summoning the ghost of '30s and '40s musical theater to bring life back to a venue that made its debut on South Beach in 1937. Under the direction of executive artistic director Carson Kievman, SoBe Institute of the Arts rang in the new year with a multimedia arts cabaret that celebrated the reopening of the renovated theater. Interspersing original torch songs with theatrical vignettes from bygone days, the company has forged a contemporary experience that is reviving the Beach's moribund stage scene.