

locustprojects

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Exhibition Dates:

The Litany

November 17, 2018 to
January 26, 2019

Opening Event:

Friday, November 16, 2018
Reception: 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Miami Art Week Reception:

Tuesday, December 4, 2018
Reception: 6 pm to 8 pm

America: A Hymnal

Performance:

Thursday, December 6, 2018
10 am to 5 pm

Regular Hours:

Tuesday to Saturday
11am – 5pm

Locust Projects presents *Bethany Collins: The Litany*



Image: Bethany Collins, *America: The Hymnal*, 2017, Book with 100 laser cut leaves, 6 x 9 x 1 inches, Edition of 25, Image courtesy the artist and PATRON Gallery and CANDOR Arts.

Locust Projects is proud to present *The Litany*, a major site-specific installation with a durational performance intervention during Art Basel Miami Beach 2018 by the Chicago-based artist Bethany Collins. The exhibition will open with a public reception on Friday, November 16, 2018 from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm.

In the center of Locust Projects' Main Gallery is "My destiny is in your hands", a 20 x 15 ft room-within-the-room, the interior of which is covered with white embossed wallpaper on which Collins makes use of the official state flowers of the American South to memorialize moments of repeated violence throughout American history. Collins uses floriography, or the language of flowers, which enjoyed a resurgence in 19th century Victorian-era England. Flower meanings and tussie mussies, also known as "talking bouquets," allowed for the sharing of covert messages otherwise difficult to speak aloud. Between 1827 and 1923, there were at least 98 different flower dictionaries in circulation in the U.S. alone. The language of flowers is also found in state symbols—from flags and anthems to poems and official seals— acting as visual representations of a government, a people, their history, and shared values. According to flower dictionaries published in the 19th century, Delaware's official state flower, the peach blossom conveys the message "I am your captive." While Louisiana's iris means "I burn for you." And Alabama's camelia translates to "My destiny is in your hands."

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In the center of “My destiny is in your hands”, is a copy of “America: A Hymnal”, an artist book by Collins from 2017.

The hardcover-bound book consists of 100 versions of the song “My Country 'Tis of Thee”. Since the original version’s debut by the Rev. Samuel F. Smith on July 4, 1831, the lyrics of “My Country 'Tis of Thee” have been re-titled and re-written at least one hundred times between the 18th and 20th centuries. Each re-writing—usually done in support of a passionately held cause, from temperance and suffrage to abolition and even the Confederacy—articulates some version of what it means to be American. Like the meanings of state flowers, these patriotic hymns are sometimes love letters, sometimes indictments, or both.



PERFORMANCE DURING ART WEEK 2018:

A day-long performance of “America: A Hymnal” will debut at Locust Projects on December 6, 2018 as part of Bethany Collins’ solo exhibition, *The Litany*. All 100 versions will be sung by volunteers and small choirs continuously throughout the day. In its many lyrical variations, “America: A Hymnal” presents a chronological retelling of American history, politics and culture through one song. Visitors are invited to come and go quietly throughout the day of the performance, which will take place between 10 am to 5 pm on Thursday, December 6.

Image above: Bethany Collins, *America: The Hymnal*, 2017, Book with 100 laser cut leaves, 6 x 9 x 1 inches, Edition of 25, Image courtesy the artist and PATRON Gallery and CANDOR Arts.

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About the Artist

Bethany Collins is a multidisciplinary artist whose conceptually driven work is fueled by a critical exploration of how race and language interact. In her *Conronym* series, for instance, Collins transposes definitions from Webster's New World Dictionary of American Language onto American Masters paper, then aggressively obscures much of the entries with an eraser. What remain are specific snippets of meaning that are poetically charged through their isolation, as well as the crumbled paper bits left behind by her erasing.

As Holland Cotter noted writing in *The New York Times*, "language itself, viewed as intrinsically racialized, is Bethany Collins' primary material."

Her works have been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions nationwide, including the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Drawing Center, the Wexner Center for the Arts, and the Birmingham Museum of Art. Collins has been recognized as an Artist-in-Residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem, the MacDowell Colony, ArtCenter/South Florida, the Bemis Center and the Hyde Park Art Center, among others. In 2015, she was awarded the Hudgens Prize.

Above Image caption: Bethany Collins in her studio. Photo credit: Chris Edwards

ABOUT LOCUST PROJECTS

Locust Projects is Miami's longest running alternative art space and only visual arts organization dedicated to commissioning ambitious, site-specific, temporary installations. As an incubator of new art and ideas, we provide local, national, and international artists with the time, space and resources to push their practice without fear of risk, institutional limits, or commercial concerns. Through Wavemaker grants, we provide incubator funding to Miami-based artists who seek to create socially-engaged projects in non-traditional venues in underserved neighborhoods and support local artists with access to professional development resources, workshops and temporary r+d space to incubate creative careers. We inspire public curiosity in new art through access to artists' practice and process and promote the exchange of new ideas through public programs and community collaborations and partnerships.

Locust Projects' exhibitions and programs are made possible with support from: The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; The National Endowment for the Arts Art Works Grant; the Hillsdale Fund; the Miami Sports and Exhibition Authority; The State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture; The Kirk Foundation; Vhernier; the Team LAB Annual Education Fund; Locust Projects Exhibitionist and Significant Others Members.