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## Miami arts projects get a financial boost

■ For the fourth year, the Knight Arts Challenge rewarded unconventional ideas with nearly \$3 million in grants.

BY ANDRES VIGLUCCI  
aviglucci@MiamiHerald.com

Opera in unusual places, a new Shakespeare fest, bus tours of weird Miami led by artists, and a new dance troupe. All kinds of music in the parks, plus mentors for teen writers and free museum-grade art schooling.

These are a few of the creative endeavors to snag grants in the latest round of the Knight Arts Challenge.

All told, 31 groups ranging from boundary pushing start-ups to the well-established received grants totaling \$2.91 million in the fourth year of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation's program, conceived to sustain and extend Miami's arts explosion by opening the competition to anyone with a good art-related idea.

"That's the beautiful thing about the contest," said Dennis Scholl, the foundation's vice president for the arts. "You see the ideas come from anyone and everywhere in the community.

They come from the Everglades; they come from Calle Ocho. And anybody can win."

Among this year's winners is a small group, Artists in Residence in Everglades, which received \$30,000 so that artists who labor in the park's natural environment can connect with Miami's urban art scene.

The Miami-based foundation outlined five goals in this year's diverse set of grants: Bringing art into residents' everyday lives; telling Miami's story through art and writing; helping develop a distinct Miami style of dance; exposing young people to the making of art at a high level, and bringing Hispanic masters to South Florida through a theater festival and exhibits and performances.

The three largest grants, of \$300,000 each, went to: The Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale to highlight the post-World War II CoBra movement centered around artists in Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam; the Museum of Contemporary Art in North Miami for its new art institute, which will provide kids free instruction in art history, museum

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studies, studio art, design and creative writing, and Miami City Ballet to establish a fund for new works.

"These three projects are significant game-changers," Scholl said.

The 2011 grants bring the total invested in Arts Challenge projects by the foundation to nearly \$19 million. The financial boost to recipients is actually double that, however, because they must raise matching donations from other sources.

Knight grants have helped launch or solidify some arts initiatives that have become integral pieces of the local cultural landscape, including the Borscht Film Festival, the O Cinema in Wynwood and Sleepless Night Miami Beach. The foundation considers the challenge program to be so successful that it's launching a national arts program to support creative projects in eight other U.S. cities, including Detroit, San Jose and Philadelphia. The latter is also getting its own Arts Challenge.

Other 2011 grants include:

- \$100,000 to Bas Fisher Invitational for its Weird Miami Bus Tours, which introduce locals and visitors to some lesser-known places and cultural projects. The grant will enable Bas Fisher to invite artists to create tours and exhibitions as well as create an interactive online presence.

- \$120,000 to the Peter London Global Dance Theater to help establish a Miami contemporary dance company.

- \$150,000 to Coral Morphologic, in collaboration with the Miami Science Museum, for a multimedia project at Miami International Airport. To promote the aquarium exhibits at the planned new science museum, high-definition screens in MIA's terminals will show "fluorescent corals as living art forms and icons of the city," a foundation statement said.

- \$100,000 to the Miami Downtown Development Authority to expand its popular winter series of free concerts with summer performances at the historic Gusman theater.

- \$75,000 to the City of Miami Little Haiti Cultural Center for workshops in traditional Haitian arts in papier-mache, textiles and other materials, and a subsequent community festival to exhibit the results.

- \$240,000 to Florida Grand Opera to mount an annual production in an unconventional venue.

For more information on the winners, visit [www.knightarts.org](http://www.knightarts.org).