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# IN THE MIDST

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Jean Blackwell Font | Marilyn Valiente |  
Maruchi Carmona | Mila Hajjar |  
Perla Sofia Gonzalez | Rochelle Berman |  
Rosaria Vigorito | Toa Castellanos

WIRTZ GALLERY  
5750 Sunset Drive  
South Miami, Fl. 33143  
Part of First National Bank of South Miami

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Curators:

Pedro Hernandez and Marilyn Valiente

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Wirtz Gallery

5750 Sunset Dr.

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National League of American Pen Women/

Coral Gables

[www.nlapw-coralgables.org](http://www.nlapw-coralgables.org)

## CURATORIAL STATEMENT:

Throughout the world, social media and news headlines tell us that even today as women, only based on our gender, we are limited by some mindset, decreed or unspoken rule made by society. Limits that are often perpetuated even by other women. We are often not allowed to listen to our own voice, our intuition, or make our own decisions. History and current events remind us that those that are seen as outside the norm were and are silenced, out casted, thrown in prison, killed, or marked in a way that defines us in one offensive word. We must hide our beliefs, intuitions, talents, and ideas, that may be viewed outside the realm of “normal” as to not be a threat.

These 8 women exhibition, by the National League of American Pen Women/ Coral Gables branch, is conceived to bring honor and attention to those women who dared to be outsiders. They are and were groundbreakers, kept in the shadows by society. The aim is to increase the viewer’s awareness as how women are conceptualized, villainized and depicted, in hope of change for the wellbeing of all, both men and women.

*In the Midst*, was conceived to give each artist the freedom to interpret the concept in her own artistic voice. It is as diverse as we are as women.

Marilyn Valiente,

Co-curator

President National League of American Pen Women, Coral Gables

# JEAN BLACKWELL FONT

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Jean Blackwell Font is the co-founder of Font Squared and collaboARTive; she is a mixed media artist, an arts marketer and administrator living and working in Miami, FL. She is a business owner, a daughter, a mother, a wife, a sister, an aunt, a friend, a student, and an artist.

Working in assemblage, collage and collagraph, Jean never stops learning about art and her own artistic practice, learning from people she knows personally or from studying the lives, art, and work of those she admires.

Influenced by artists Mimmo Rotella, Betty Saar, Doris Salcedo, and Joseph Cornell, the artist has developed a visual vocabulary to express her ideas and concepts around the social and cultural demands placed on female existence.

Jean seeks to connect to the deepest Self to uncover intuitive and ancestral memories that lie within all of us. Through her practice, Jean explores cultural and emotional symbolism to communicate ideas of memory, loss, and the unseen connection that binds generations of women, specifically, across centuries and geographies.

Her artwork has garnered the attention of several important collectors in Miami and is now part of Florida International University Special Collections.



**FAMILY TREE.** Installation of collagraph, collage, assemblage.  
Dimensions: Variable.

This installation includes collagraphs developed from Zoom conversations with a diverse group of 15 women. Together, we created a visual collection to discover ancestral memories and genetic histories buried deep within the subconscious. The resulting images are a growing and universal “Family Tree” that stretches across 15 generations and 5 continents. This geographically and culturally diverse “Family Tree” is displayed as one would find in a matriarchal home - the vast and varied branches of a woman’s reach through time and space.

This work investigates the delicate, fragile, and magical act of pursuing one’s own path, while responding to the obligations and responsibilities that society and family place on a woman who is a mother, spouse, daughter, sister, caregiver and provider - and also happens to be an artist. This work is a culmination of creative practice in the midst of all the things a woman is expected to do and be.

# MARILYN VALIENTE

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Marilyn Valiente is a contemporary multimedia artist. Originally born in Cuba she immigrated to the United States at the age of 8 and has lived most of her adult life in Miami.

After her post graduate degrees, working as a psychotherapist and raising her two sons she focused her attention on her love for art and the creative process.

Now a full time artist her artworks are visual representation of her emotions, her studies in psychology and her many years of working as a psychotherapist. Bold colors, texture and lines dominate the visual field with what appears to be a very spontaneous and intuitive process, as she deals with the human condition and struggles.



**LOOKING THROUGH THE VEIL OF LIES.**

Mix Media, 18 x 18 inches.

The temptress who wears her headdress wrong, the older women seen as a hag that hides in the forest and eats children, the witch that must be burned at the stake, the young helpless frail maiden that must be safe from evil by her prince charming, the evil stepmothers in competition with her stepdaughter for who is more beautiful; are a few examples of the way women are depicted in fairytales.

Fairytales are depictions of what is important in society. These limiting views of women passed on from generation to generation continue to penetrate our consciousness even in the most progressive society. The lay hiding in the back of our mind ready to leap out when we are least aware.

Why women are so treating to men that she must place her in box, mandate what she is allowed to wear, keep her from working or going to school? Why control her and limit her opportunities.

From the day she is born it is not her skills or abilities that limits her; it is her gender. This series of painting depicting women in the various roles and limitations, aims at looking at identity and societal expectation even in the most modern society today...

# MARUCHI CARMONA

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Maruchi Carmona is a multimedia Cuban-American artist residing in Miami, Florida. She graduated from Miami Beach High School and has an AA Degree in Arts from Miami-Dade College and a BA Degree in Liberal Studies with Minors in Visual Arts and Art History from Florida International University. Her art works have been exhibited in Miami-Dade, Broward, and West Palm Beach, in Florida; New York City, New York, Union City, New Jersey, and Groton, Connecticut. She has also exhibited in Dallas Texas, San Juan, Costa Rica and Panamá, República de Panamá. etc.

She is featured in private collections in the United States and abroad. She co-founded “Art@47th”, an artists’ studio and “ArtStudio 4724” located in the Bird Road Art District Area, Miami, Florida. She was part of the women group “W-10” and exhibits with the eclectic artists’ group “Seven plus one”. She is also a member of International Biennale Artists. She received an Honorary Award from “Celebrating the Genius of Women, “Orlando, Florida. and the National League of American Pen Women which she holds the title of 1st Vice –President of Coral Gables Branch.

Maruchi’s work relates a profound search to express her inner feelings to the viewer. Her abstract mixed media acrylics paintings, as well as her works in oils, at times exude tranquility and balance through the colors of her palette, while other times her work reflects dissonance she finds in the contemporary world. Acrylics, oils, pastels and recycled materials intermingle in her work for color, form and texture. Her work in sculpture ceramics has an unprecedented unique style.

At this moment in time the unison scream of women can finally be heard across the globe. In doing so, others less fortunate, in places lacking human rights for all are inspired to fight for them; even if it means death and punishment or both.

My paintings are representing these women who are fighting constantly to express their ideals and are often silenced, and their plight are not heard beyond their countries. The universal outcry for their inhuman treatment should be a priority to all nations on Earth. Let's raise our voices so that theirs can be heard!

Let's remember the word of one of those women, Malala Yousufzi:

"I raise my voice not so that I can shout, but so that those without voice can be heard."



**THE SCREAM.** Mix media on canvas. 60 x 40 inches.

# MILA HAJJAR

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Mila Hajjar is an Italian and Venezuelan architect, writer and artist. She graduated with honors in architecture from Università Federico II, Naples, Italy, and took courses at the University of Szomathely in Hungary, Carabobo University in Venezuela, and Escuela de Escritores in Spain.

As an artist, she has participated in more than a hundred and fifty exhibitions in United States, Europe, Asia and Latin America. She has won several international awards including the Soho International Art in New York, the International Art Show d'Estiu Catalonia, Spain and first prize Maneiro Art Salon, Venezuela.

Mila loves to experiment with all media, oil, acrylic, encaustic, collage... Her style changes according to what she wants to express. For her, painting is a meditation that leads her to a deep state of peace.

Women for centuries have been considered only for their body. The first artworks highlights their reproductive system as a symbol to perpetuate the human specie.

Over time, both in art and literature, its beauty has been emphasized, either as a canon of purity or as a seductive power.

Spirituality was added to physical attributions. Then the sacred woman is born: the Goddess, the Saint, the Virgin, Mother Nature...The intellect of women, on the other hand, has remained in the shadows.



**GIALLO.** Mix media on canvas. 20 x 20 inches.

My series "What we have in our heads" wants to bring out what women think, exalt their imagination, their ingenuity, their open-mindedness. To express this concept, I have used different types of materials and techniques because they somehow reflect the complexity of our thoughts.

# PERLA SOFIA GONZALEZ

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Perla Sofia Gonzalez Marinello was born in Havana, Cuba. Since she was a child, she had an extraordinary strong relationship with art. As an architect with a major in Urban Planning, and as an educator, she has practiced her career for decades in Cuba, Spain, Brazil and USA.

After retiring from the City of Miami Planning Department, she has finally achieved her long term dream of creating art full time. Writing, painting, doing photography, and (as a genuine Gemini) communicating her message, is her passion.

Perla's beginning art media was pen and ink, first related to architecture, and later exploring other themes. She is deeply interested on ancestral ways of expression, semiology and spiritual themes. More than a decade ago she started exploring other techniques, adding color to her creative endeavor. Portrait has become one of her favorite forms of artistic expression, as she deeply enjoys capturing details of people's personalities and feelings.

She is a Signature Member of Miami Watercolor Society, and a member of Florida and Gold Coast Watercolor Societies. Her art pieces have been shown at innumerable judged shows, and she has received multiple awards. Her book "El Enigma Cotidiano" with a selection of her own poems and paintings was recently published.



**THROUGH THE EYES.** Acrylic on canvas. 20 x 24 inches

For my segment of this art show I have selected women that have impressed me because of their deep rooted strength. At the start of my process, I followed my intuition and the immediate feeling that each of their images produced.

To my surprise, when I later started to research their lives, struggles, love stories, and individualities, I found that this strength was interwoven with a strong sense of vulnerability. Each one of these women had lived difficult and raw experiences that changed them forever.

The women I chose are related through art. They belong in different time periods; however, I imagine them together, in a common stage, highlighted by their similarities. Janis Joplin, Amy Winehouse, Nina Simone, Isadora Duncan creating through music; Frida Kahlo, Georgia O'Keeffe and Yayoi Kusama through painting. They all left the arts richer with their feminine energy and talent. They all knew what being a woman represented. I modestly included myself as an active observer of those great Masters.

# ROCHELLE BERMAN

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Fine Art Photographer Rochelle Berman grew up in NYC and currently lives in Miami, Florida.

She received her Fine Arts degree in Photography and has been in love with the art form ever since. Classically trained, Rochelle began her studies with black and white film photography.

She has created images using creative techniques as double exposures, solarization, photo montage and other darkroom techniques.

As an award winning artist, Rochelle has shown her work in local and international exhibitions. She is a member of the (NLAPW) National League of American Pen Women one of the oldest professional organizations in the arts.



**RELEASE.** Digital Photography. 26 x 36 inches

As a Fine Art Photographer, I love to experiment into new avenues of visual expression. I utilize photo layering and collage techniques to create my "Dreamscapes". My inspiration comes from extensive world travel as well as natural environments ; especially the ocean, beach and mountains.

I hope to evoke a magical dream-like intensity utilizing light, color, form and textures that will transcend the purely material representation. I invite my viewers to slow down, contemplate, relax and be inspired.

# ROSARIA VIGORITO

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Formerly a NY lawyer and law librarian professor, with an MFA from the NY Academy of Art, Rosaria Vigorito is now an established and award-winning artist, who exhibits locally, nationwide and internationally in different venues, including art fairs, galleries, government institutions and museums

She is also a board member of two nonprofits – ArtsUnited and Lesbian Thespians; and a member in good standing with the Broward Art Guild, and the National League of American Pen Women – National, Coral Gables and Fort Lauderdale Chapters. She also loves offering her art to help various charitable organizations, most recently Stonewall Museum, OurFund, SFGN, Children’s Diagnostic Center, Island City Theater and Wilton Art.

Rosaria has her studio in Miami.

I perceive my artist role as that of a messenger, philosopher, outlier and empath. My unique and noticeable style involves mosaic style fragmentation, raw emotive lines and vibrant colors, combined to explore various themes, such as the female form, portraiture, androgyny and the inner psyche.



**UN TIPO.** Acrylic on Canvas. 30 x 24 Inches.

# TOA CASTELLANOS

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Toa Castellanos is a Cuban American artist whose work has been dedicated almost entirely to women issues: from the objectification of women through mass media, to the cultural limitations put on women and girls, to the violence effected on them in the streets, the work place and their own homes.

Though classically trained in drawing, painting, and print making she has experimented in many mediums, most recently in collage and textiles.

She recently returned to Miami after a two year hiatus during the pandemic, and this is her first exhibition since her return.



**SHE WILL BURN EVERYTHING**

Quilted Textile. 34 x 24 inches

During the demonstrations against the repressive Iranian government last year, many women demonstrators unveiled their heads and burned their hijabs as protests for the actions of the police against women who rebelled against the restrictive and violent action of the morality police which resulted in many deaths. Since then, men and women have relentlessly continued their protests led by these valiant women who have cut their hair, burned their veils and run in the streets shouting for their freedom.

My work is an homage to their bravery and the inspiration they have brought to their sisters and their nation.

**BEHIND EVERY SUCCESSFUL  
WOMAN IS A TRIBE OF  
OTHER SUCCESSFUL  
WOMEN WHO HAVE HER  
BACK**