

LOCAL STORIES

Meet Alette Simmons-Jiménez | Mixed Media Interdisciplinary Artist

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We had the good fortune of connecting with Alette Simmons-Jiménez and we've shared our conversation below.

Hi Alette, we'd love to hear about how you approach risk and risk-taking

Artists take risks... that's what we do. From the very beginning, we look outward and inward to discover our own process and style of expression. Every step is a risk. sometimes big sometimes small. But without risks, experimentation, exploration, and sometimes just going with your gut, nothing original can occur. It is essential to the creative process. In my opinion, there are no rules for making art. A lifetime dedicated to one viewpoint or one expressive pathway does not sustain my interest. I live and work to take risks, to discover and learn something new around each corner. The time I spend daily in the studio is dedicated to visualization, problem-solving, and a never-ending struggle to discover and create the best interpretation of my thoughts. I think that if I ever completely figure things out, I'll be done. The magic of making work will be over.





Can you open up a bit about your work and career? We're big fans and we'd love for our community to learn more about your work.

I'm a visual artist and I am always searching for clarity and new ways of expressing my thoughts. It would probably be easier to tell you what I don't do. I

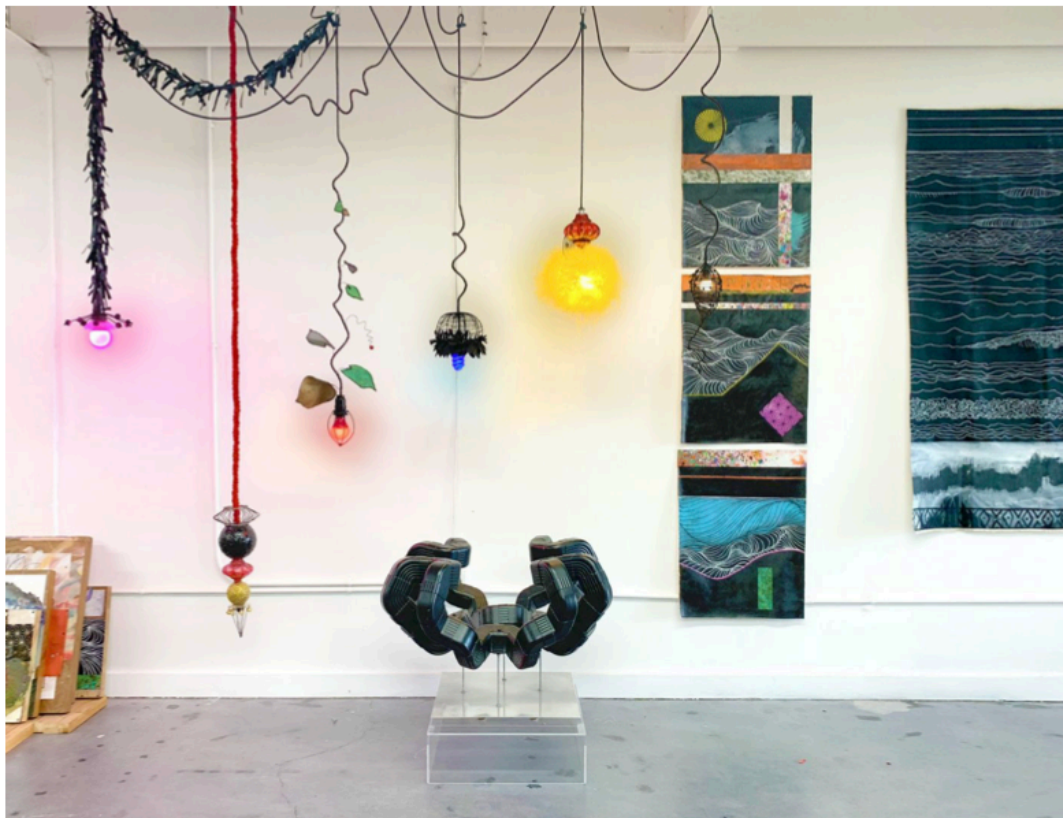
continuously explore materials, methods, and processes in the hope that I'll get it right one day. My interest is in examining the relationship between nature, society, and the self, and more specifically, the transformative power of the connection between Art and Life. I've always been compelled to get out and connect with nature. It awakens all of my senses. Whether it's immediate and in the moment, or experiences that surface from memory, nature is what triggers visual clues and becomes my vehicle to express current concerns. I create artwork in limited series, progressing somewhat spontaneously, using methods of collage, montage, construction, and assemblage. I'm interested in the alchemy of the process, that little bit of magic that makes something out of nothing. When I work in two or three-dimensions or when I'm filming video, I halfway orchestrate and halfway let go, allowing processes and actions to build the work. It is a constant push/pull progression, searching for the dialogue and connectedness between all the parts. In the end, I'm really interested in creating an experience of connectedness and coexistence: human to human, and human to nature. In my twenties, one of the very first times I was interviewed, I was presented with 10 simple questions. I answered them all and then commented to the interviewer that it seemed too easy. She told me – "I will ask you these same 10 questions 20 years from now. If you're still making artwork in your studio then everything will make sense. If not, then no one missed anything." Maybe I didn't quite understand then, but I do now. Overcoming the giant obstacles that artist's face just to continue working is the greatest and most important challenge. It takes a lifetime to be an artist! Getting to a place of confidence has been a long bumpy ride. It has taken me a very long time to get here and perhaps that's been by choice. I feel if I ever really figure it out then I'll just be done.





Let's say your best friend was visiting the area and you wanted to show them the best time ever. Where would you take them? Give us a little itinerary – say it was a week long trip, where would you eat, drink, visit, hang out, etc.

Spread out over several days, here are some favorite Miami places to take out-of-town guests. From North and going South: First stop: my studio – everyone is always curious and always wowed by the great warehouse space in Little River. Then driving down a few blocks is Ironside Miami a hidden jewel box community of creative shops and good eats. While in that area I'd lead a swing through Little River Arts District and the Little Haiti area galleries and eateries. Continuing South we'd hit The Miami Design District for a relaxing outdoor stroll to see the gallery shows, great public art, and over-the-top high fashion storefront showcases, and a great ice cream parlor. And further South we'd definitely have a visit to the Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM) for the art, architecture, the view, and the absolute "COOL++" Rating. Not to be missed! Cross back a little west and dinner at either my fave Alter Miami by Chef Brad Kilgore or KYU wood-fired Asian inspired restaurant both in Wynwood with a quick drive-by Wynwood Walls (just because). And we all know we have to cross over to the beach ... so a visit to Oolite Arts for a quick tour of the art studios and a peek at the gallery to see what's new. Also, a short drive up Collins Ave. to another jewel in the Miami crown that can't be missed: Drinks at the Faena outdoor bar with a view of the giant box encasing a Mammoth fossil dipped in gold (Excellent!!) with dinner after at Pao by Paul Qui (Excellent again!!) all on Miami Beach. After all that glitz and glitter, I'd come back down to earth with a drive out in the Everglades, the River of Grass. Nothing more relaxing than walking, driving, a hike, or an airboat tour out in the swamp. For the slightly ambitious, there's a 15 miles bike (or tram) ride by lazy gators and curious buzzards to a walk up the Observation Tower at the turn around point of Shark Valley. Or a true favorite, for a most rewarding sensory experience, a simple drive around Loop Road at sunset. Deep in the swamp, stop at any of the Cypress Domes to see birds of every color come home to nest for the evening. It's an awesome sight. I promise a great night's sleep with pleasant dreams of swamp nymphs and other magical creatures.





Shoutout is all about shouting out others who you feel deserve additional recognition and exposure. Who would you like to shoutout?

There are so many people needed to hold up a creative career it's hard to be fair and mention everyone who's supported me. I'll mention just a few, to start, of course, my parents... they never really understood what I was doing, but they gave me the necessary DNA (thank you very much!) and they were always truly proud of the awards and accolades that came my way. Then there's my husband, who still doesn't understand how anyone would work such long hours for such little, or no, pay... but who has never questioned or hesitated for a second to shuffle around household finances to support a studio project. Then, my kids, I

thank all my lucky stars for them, they work magic by keeping me grounded and yet making me dream further than I ever imagined. And then, FRIENDS... they may be few but they're the ones who are always there for you, they promote you, and refer you when they can, without a thought to their own personal gain, they know where you want to go before you do and sometimes nudge you in the right direction, they're willing to let you do a little venting, and let you rant on and on, and on, and that friend who's always willing to come and put in some physical labor with forever long hours to finish up work for a deadline. And last, but never least, a shout-out has to go to the amazing people who collect my work, and especially those who allowed a door to open and became a friend too. But, there is another side to support, mentorship, and encouragement: it comes from the community as a whole. Connecting with others is part of a successful career and very needed to balance the seclusion that comes with most studio practices. I've always been compelled to reach out and build a community around myself and my work. Looking back, it's been a lifesaver. I founded and directed Artformz Alternative, an artist-run collective for 8 years. By an odd twist of fate, I stumbled into the position of Program Chair and Chapter Chair of ArtTable.org for 3 years. Ongoing today, although stalled due to the Corona Virus, is artandcompanypodcast.com, audio interviews that document the careers of my friends and colleagues in the Miami art scene. It's my community here, their support and friendship that sustains my work. As we've witnessed during this COVID Pandemic, it's very hard to go it alone day after day. Being out there, involved in the community is absolutely necessary as a survival tool. If your efforts are honest and based on a sincere desire for openness and connection, you'll be rewarded over and over again. To mention just a couple of the many people and local community organizations, including their great worker bees: I'd shout-out "THANKS!" to Dennis Scholl and Oolite Arts, Michael Spring and the Miami-Dade Division of Cultural Affairs, the Miami Design District Art Programs including Tiffany Chestler as the program's previous director, Chris Ingalls of MBI, Ruth Grim from Daytona Beach's Museum of Art & Sciences, and posthumously to the awesome curator Michael Rush when he was at the Palm Beach ICA.

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