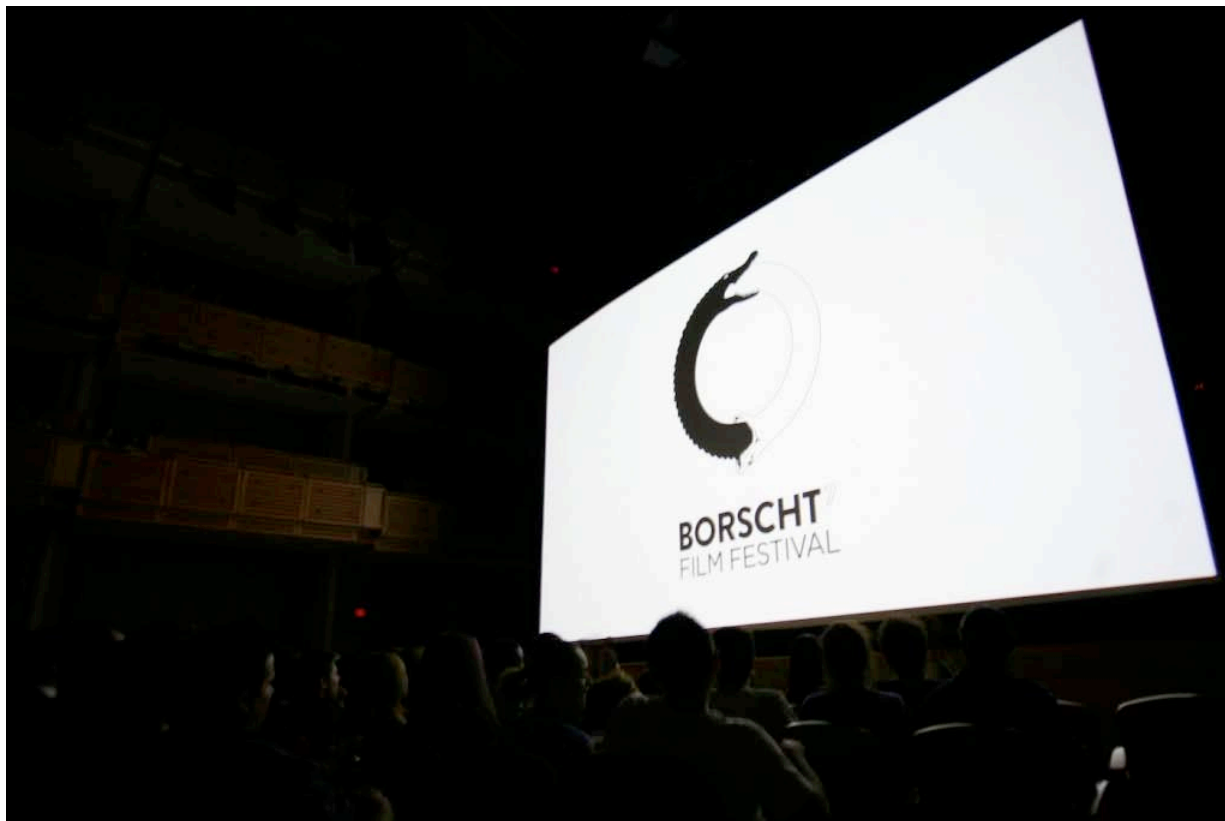


Borscht 7

Posted by nele on May 4, 2011 ,



The [Borscht Film Festival](#) was established in 2004, the brainchild of cinephile high-school students who saw the cinematic potential of their beloved hometown Miami, Florida as something of an untapped resource. The mission: Produce a festival, fully operated by the contributing artists themselves, using Miami itself as their collective muse.

On April 23rd, 2,100 people were in attendance at Borscht 7 at the Knight Concert Hall in downtown Miami's Adrienne Arsht Center – something that might not have been conceivable not too many years ago. After the success of last year's Borscht 6, several of whose films went on to screen or compete in other festivals like Cannes and Sundance Film Festival, the John S. & James L. Knight Foundation bestowed onto Borscht a two-year \$150,000 Knights Award Challenge grant. On the first go the Borscht team ended up commissioning 19 films to be created specifically for Borscht 7 (one didn't make it) and from green-light to finished product, not even 60 days had passed.

For the creators of Borscht, putting Miami on a proverbial cinematic map is as much about highlighting and harnessing individual talent as it is about the stories and the glimpses into essential Miami that each film manages to capture. That particularly Miamian variable could be as obtuse as a Portuguese Man o' War inside of a glowing tank or as bombastic as Spanish programming on television. It takes people who have lived there to extract the delicate eccentricities Miami holds. For years, the city's image has been lost, buried under a heap of appropriated T&A. To get the stories that happen in the real Miami, the one across the bridge from South Beach, you're going to have to go a different kind of native. Here are some of the highlights from Borscht 7:

Piratas

Julian “Bearclaw” Rodriguez (5 min)

Starting the whole thing off was Julian “Bearclaw” Rodriguez’s documentary-style recounting of the theft of his precious boat at the hands of allegedly Cuban canal pirates operating in West Miami. Tug-boat wielding canal pirates is the clay of Miami. Any Miami native can relate to that kind of esoteric touch. But the real star was Rodriguez’s own comedic gravitas. From the way he hauls ass down the street, half-naked with a shotgun in hand, to the way he abruptly curtails his story, distracted by cute little canal ducklings – the whole five minutes was totally invigorating. “Piratas” was unexpected and produced more genuine laughs out of me than anything I’ve seen in a good while. It’s levity was infectious and as an opener for Borscht 7, it made one feel like they were in for a good ride.



The Haircut

Artex Productions (5 min)

A man walks into a barbershop looking to do something about his bad haircut following a less than perfect date. He walks in and is greeted by the creepy barber du jour and the feeling hits him instantaneously – there’s definitely something amiss in that place. As an audience member I could’ve told him that what was amiss was getting a haircut at 11 o’clock at night, but as he comes to find out, he has just entered a front for a coven of Matt Le Blanc worshippers.

Otto and the Electric Eel

Duncan Skiles + Andrew Zuchero + Otto von Schirach (6 min)

Cuban/German artist Otto von Schirach stars in “Otto and the Electric Eel,” which manages to be both one of the more “out-there” entries at Borscht 7, as well as one of the more conventional. An inter-dimensional eels sparks to life Frankenstein/Kelly Le Brock style as Otto prepares for his impending dinner date. Conventional arch, which made it feel like one of the more true-to-form short films on the docket, while anchored by its

strange ability to make the macabre look off-the-wall.

Play Dead

The Meza Brothers + Rachel Goodrich + Amigo the Devil (20 min)

'Homeward Bound' meets 'The Stand' in the Meza Brothers' kinetic envisioning of a Miami torn asunder by a zombie apocalypse, as seen through the eyes of a pack of dogs. Packed with a good dose of zombie gore, Tarantino-like squad member/ doggy profiles, a couple of AK-47s and one hilarious zombie who can't stop walking her dog, the Meza Brothers made quite the argument for bringing Miami down. So what kind of love letter to Miami is this? Well - doesn't it have as much a right to total disaster/zombie movie annihilation as any other Emmerich or Romero torn city? If some ascetic high up in the Alps can get a good disaster scene in last year's '2012', surely a Miami jogger can get what's coming to them too.



***I Am Your Grandma**

Jillian Mayer + Michael John Hancock (1 min)

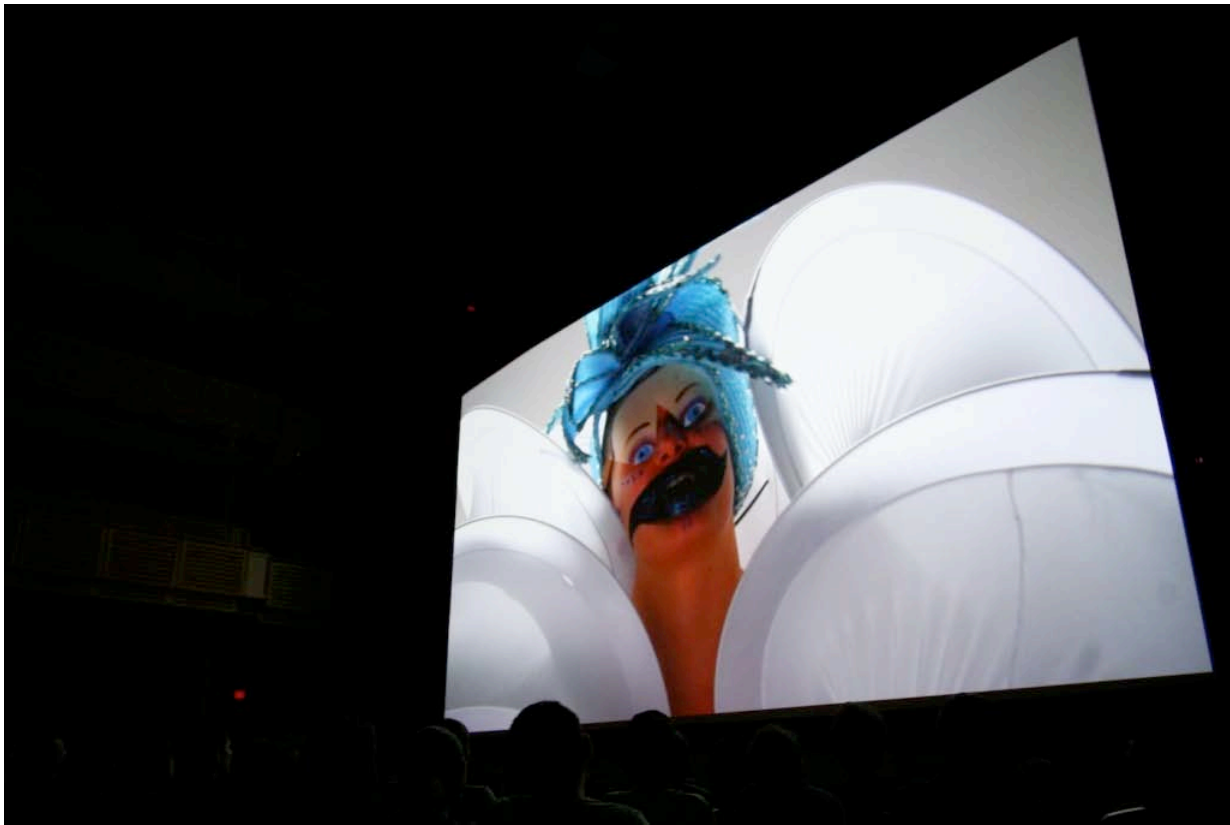
***We as Me in 3-D**

Jillian Mayer (1 min)

***Life and Freaky Times of Uncle Luke**

Jillian Mayer + Rakontur + Uncle Luke (7 min)

And then there was performance artist Jillian Mayer's notable triumvirate: "I Am Your Grandma" - a clear crowd favorite, "We as Me in 3-D" and "Life and Freaky Times of Uncle Luke". "IAYG" is Mayer's ode to her unborn grandchild. The message was clear: 'Your grandma was a freak. You better believe it.' A one-minute googoo ga ga ala Aphex Twin about sums it up.



“We as Me in 3-D” served as a performance art piece that deconstructs and anthropomorphizes 3-D. Could be read as Mayer’s way of reverting what many see as a trendy blight in film. Or not.

Her last, “Life and Freaky Times of Uncle Luke” has Miami’s iconic and notorious 2 Live Crew MC enjoying a lollipop as he reflects on changing the rap game, prevailing in the face of the Supreme Court and the burgeoning of Miami under his leadership as Mayor of the city. Eventually, Uncle Luke falls prey to the man once again in a scientific probing experiment that plays like ‘Marathon Man’ by way of Yo Gabba Gabba. The kiddie TV show set and general artsiness aside, it manages to put some perspective on someone whose use, and some feel – abuse, of the right to free speech helped America to not be such a prude.

We’re still not completely sure if Uncle Luke – whose repertoire covers golden oldies such as “Me So Horny”, “Face Down, Ass Up” and “Pop That P***y” was serious when he addressed the audience after the final film that night and announced that he did truly have plans to run for Mayor of Miami. As far as the eclectic group of 20-somethings that run the Borscht Film Festival are concerned, he’s got their full support.



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