

# Miami Herald

## 7 Jorge Pérez's foundation gave a \$3.2 million boost to 25 Miami arts organizations



*Guitars Over Guns, an organization that links students from vulnerable communities to professional musical mentors and teaches them self-confidence, artistic skills and resilience, is one of 25 Miami nonprofits that will receive a CreARTE grant.*

BY CONNIE OGLE  
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Since March of 2020, Miami arts organizations have struggled to stay alive and relevant in an economically devastating pandemic. Now, help is on the way for some of them.

The [Jorge M. Pérez Family Foundation](#) has announced its second round of CreARTE grants, which will disburse \$3.2 million — more than double what was given in the [initial round of grants in 2019](#) — to 25 cultural organizations in Miami. “The last 18 months have been incredibly trying for our local arts community, which is why, as a family, we wanted to honor the individuals and organizations who persevered in their mission,” said Jorge M. Pérez in a statement. “We cannot wait to see what each grantee accomplishes in the coming months and years.”

The two-year grants, which range in amount up to \$200,000, will go to both existing partners and new grantees, benefiting such organizations as Oolite Arts, Miami New Drama, O, Miami poetry festival, Miami Book Fair and HistoryMiami Museum.

With 224 proposals in hand, narrowing the list of grantees to 25 was difficult, said Belissa Alvarez, the foundation's director. The CreARTE selection committee focused on nonprofits across three areas: arts access, arts education and artist fellowships and residencies.

"It's definitely a hard process," Alvarez said. "There are so many amazing organizations in Miami doing valuable work. But we had the Pérez family, The Miami Foundation staff, our partners in the program and 11 external reviewers. ... We had a lot of help."

Alvarez said that the foundation hadn't initially intended to include so many grantees from the 2019 round, but their proposals were too good to pass up. "They rose to the top. It was so gratifying for us that we were already partnering with them."

There are nine new partners, including Bookleggers Library, a nonprofit, community mobile library with the goal of getting free books to the people of Miami. Co-founder Nathaniel Sandler said the grant will increase the range of the library's book bike, which will soon make its permanent home at the [Underline](#), Miami's linear park and urban trail.

"We are growing, and this sort of large, institutional and quite frankly beautiful help is immeasurable," he said. "We'll be able to add staff and resources and all the things you need for a small nonprofit to keep growing."



*Readers check out Bookleggers Library mobile bike at an event at Miami's Underline. The mobile library nonprofit received a grant from the Jorge Pérez Family Foundation.*

Guitars Over Guns, which supports students from vulnerable communities by linking them to professional musical mentors, was a grantee in 2019. This second round of funding is special, said chief operating officer Jono De Leon, because the foundation fosters respect and integrity, resulting in a true partnership.

“Having partners like the Pérez Foundation and specifically this program allows us to create conditions for our youth to thrive,” he said. “This grant program represents an incredibly needed change in philanthropy. The relationship between granter and grantee is one that’s focused on mutual trust and shared vision for impact, and it truly has been a collaboration. This relationship began with ‘Let’s sit down, and you teach us about what you have in place.’ They listen louder than they speak.”

Here are the 2021-2022 grantees:

**In the Arts Access category:** Bookleggers Library; City Theater; Commissioner; Sweat Records + Books & Books.

**Arts Education:** Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts; African Heritage Cultural Arts Center; Arts for Learning at GableStage; Guitars Over Guns; Homestead Miami Mariachi Conservatory; Juggerknot Theatre Company; Miami City Ballet; Miami Music Project; Miami New Drama, Nu Deco Ensemble; O, Miami; and Young Musicians Unite.

**Artist Fellowship and Residences:** Bakehouse Art Complex; Community Justice Project; Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator; HistoryMiami Museum; Miami Dade College - Miami Book Fair; Miami Light Project; Oolite Arts; and The Fountainhead Residency.

Read more at: <https://www.miamiherald.com/article255389671.html>