

# locustprojects

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### Exhibition Dates:

*Cristine's Secret Garden*  
February 13, 2019 to  
March 30, 2019

### Opening Event:

Wed. February 13, 2019  
Reception: 6:30 – 8:30 pm

### Public Hours:

Tuesday to Saturday  
11am – 5pm

## Locust Projects presents *Cristine Brache: Cristine's Secret Garden*



Image: Cristine Brache's grandmother, Juliana

Locust Projects is proud to present *Cristine's Secret Garden*, an expansive new body of work contained within a site-specific installation by Miami and Toronto-based artist Cristine Brache. The exhibition will open with a public reception on Wednesday, February 13, 2019 from 6:30-8:30pm.

Born in Miami to Cuban and Puerto Rican parents, Brache grew up surrounded by the Orisha shrines of her grandmother and the front-yard shrines of Caribbean-American neighbors who practiced Santeria. A combination of elements from the religions of the Yoruba who were enslaved in human trafficking from the 15<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, displaced and subjugated indigenous people of America, and the Spanish Colonists who forced these groups to adopt their Roman Catholic traditions, Santeria centers upon rituals and ceremonies devoted to a pantheon of Orishas, or saints. Identified by human attributes and characteristic strengths and weaknesses, Orishas rule over the forces of nature and the endeavors of humanity.

The name, Santeria, derives from a pejorative Spanish term for the 'deviant' worship of saints. Based more in ritual than dogma, Santeria practitioners believe they have a predetermined destiny and, if they wish to fulfill it, they must perform rituals for the Orisha(s) most relevant to that destiny. In her installation at Locust Projects, Brache

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makes direct reference to the type of front-yard arrangements of saint statues she encountered as a child. Known as “casa de santos,” these shrines serve as a homemade site for maintaining the interdependency between Orisha and worshiper. Due to the need to assimilate with the icons of Catholic religion, the figures often pass as depictions of Catholic Saints, like Saint Barbara (saint of justice and strength) and Saint Lazarus (saint of the ill).

This notion of a coded, self-made worship drives Brache’s installation. “Brache expands upon the survivalist mutations of Santeria which draped Yoruba beliefs in a cloak of Christianity and positions *Cristine’s Secret Garden* as a space in which to consider the possibility that we can continue this kind of adaptation,” says Lorie Mertes, executive director of Locust Projects. “The artist feels as women, for example, we can mutate idolatry further, trading in the doctrines of “our forefathers” for idols crafted from our actual lived experience.”

## **Exploring boundaries of private and public space in relation to womanhood, the exhibition centers around porcelain shrines of the maternal figures in the artist's life.**

In *Cristine’s Secret Garden* we are given access to a private space beyond barred doors and windows. An elegant plume of curved maple-wood fence elegantly bisects the space, cradling and curving around shrines built from concrete block, contorting around them like a spinal cord, bending, but not breaking.

At the center of each shrine are sculptures of Orishas, all beautifully handmade, largely in porcelain. Drawing on several generations of women in her own family and community, Brache’s Orisha’s are saints to “fairer” virtues: Exhaustion, Vulnerability and Vanity. These virtues are personified by the female figures and their attendant symbolic attributes and offerings: mirrors, flowers, clocks, weaponry, weight scales, animals, a water fountain made of telephones, and other objects. The materials used – mostly porcelain and concrete, silk and soil – simultaneously evoke characteristics of strength and vulnerability.

Adopting Santeria's codification of Orishas and their attributes, Brache creates as a template for humanizing and preserving the central figures in her life, celebrating their many facets. We are privileged visitors/voyeurs in *Cristine’s Secret Garden* glimpsing what is a sealed survival system, operating covertly within a larger, often hostile, authoritarian or Patriarchal system, seeking light, growth and regeneration.

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## About the Artist

Often unapologetic, diaristic, and placing the viewer in the position of the voyeur, Cristine Brache's work ambiguously deals with identity, power dynamics, and templates of the female body and psyche in relation to public and private space.

Cristine Brache (b. 1984, Miami, FL) lives and works in Toronto, Canada. She received her MFA in Fine Art Media at the Slade School of Fine Art, London. Her solo and two-person exhibitions include those held at Fierman Gallery (New York and Puerto Rico); Essex Flowers (New York) and Anat Ebgi (Los Angeles). Her work has been featured in group exhibitions at Ritter Art Gallery (Boca Raton); Team Gallery (New York); the Museum of Contemporary Art (Miami); the Institute of Contemporary Art (Miami); Bow Arts, (London); Glasgow Short Film Festival (Scotland); Quartier21 (Vienna); and the Museum of Moving Images (New York); among others. She has a debut collection of poetry entitled *Poems* (Cod ette, 2018). Her poetry has been published in Publishing Genius, New York Tyrant, and Fanzine, among others. Writing about her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, and *Cordite Poetry Review*. Brache was awarded the 2017-18 South Florida Cultural Consortium Visual and Media Arts Fellowship and a 2017 Borscht Short Film Commission Grant.

Above Image caption: Cristine Brache in her studio, photo courtesy the artist

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## ABOUT LOCUST PROJECTS

Locust Projects is Miami's longest running alternative art space and only visual arts organization dedicated to commissioning ambitious, site-specific, temporary installations. As an incubator of new art and ideas, we provide local, national, and international artists with the time, space and resources to push their practice without fear of risk, institutional limits, or commercial concerns. Through Wavemaker grants, we provide incubator funding to Miami-based artists who seek to create socially-engaged projects in non-traditional venues in underserved neighborhoods and support local artists with access to professional development resources, workshops and temporary r+d space to incubate creative careers. We inspire public curiosity in new art through access to artists' practice and process and promote the exchange of new ideas through public programs and community collaborations and partnerships.

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