Downtown Miami/Brickell bucket list

The best things to do in downtown Miami and Brickell? Watch a Miami Heat game at the American Airlines Arena, shop at the Seybold Building, have drinks in Brickell City Centre, score tickets to ‘Hamilton’ and more. 12

‘Hamilton’ arrives in February for the first time in Miami.
2 filmmakers shine light on Liberty Square, Little Haiti

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When Miami Gardens resident Faren Humes was working as a location manager for the Academy Award-winning film “Moonlight,” she learned all about Liberty Square. Now, the independent filmmaker is expanding her own film project, “Liberty,” based on the lives of residents at the public housing complex in Liberty City.

Filmmaker Edson Jean, whose work has appeared on HBO and Complex Networks, is developing another film, inspired by his mother’s first years in Miami, that centers on an underpaid nursing assistant’s efforts to help her family in Haiti.

Both filmmakers have been awarded $50,000 each as part of Oolite Arts’ Cinematic Arts Residency program. The funds will help them develop and screen micro-budget feature films — all in Miami.

“Not only are these filmmakers products of our city, their stories are rooted in our community, and will bring to the screen narratives audiences are hungry for,” said Dennis Scholl, president and CEO of Oolite Arts. “We hope this Cinematic Arts Residency can be the step these filmmakers need to significantly advance their careers.”

Humes is using the residency to expand her much-celebrated short film “Liberty,” jury award winner for Best Short at the Berlinale’s Generation 14, SXSW and Miami Film Festival. The plot focuses on the main character Milagros, as “she grapples with the disappearance of her mother’s memorial just as she is forced to leave Liberty Square so that her longtime neighborhood can be razed to create a new housing complex.”

“I’m looking forward to capturing how Liberty Square mirrors many communities across the States,” Humes said. “I’m very thankful to do so with the support of a local arts organization with ties to the community and a demonstrated commitment to independent voices.”

Jean, an actor, writer and director, who has directed eight, 23-minute episodes of the comedy “Grown” for Complex Networks, also wrote, directed and starred in “The Adventures of Edson Jean” which aired on HBO and HBOGO.

“I aim for my work to be of service to stories specific to the Caribbean and Latin experiences in Miami,” Jean said. “Telling these stories, I am able to reach out to those who experience them and let them know that they are not alone.”

Oolite Arts’ first two Cinematic Arts Residents, Xavier Medina and Monica Sorelle, are now starting the second year of the two-year residency.

Organizers said the “farm-to-table style” residency program helps filmmakers receive the support they need to shoot, produce and screen their projects from start to finish in Miami. By displaying their talents on micro-budget features they can be prepared to take on large-scale projects.

A national jury of film experts chose Humes and Jean because of “their extensive experience making short films, their authorship of projects that center on Miami stories, and because their proposed projects embrace the ethos of micro-budget filmmaking: the idea that creative stories can be brought to the screen with a lean and inventive approach to production.”

The panel included filmmakers Kenny Riches, Chanelle Aponte Pearson and Monica Peña. Andrew Hevia, producer of “Moonlight,” and Ka-reem Tabsch, filmmaker and co-founder and co-director of O Cinema, helped conceptualize the initiative. They will work with the two residents.

Oolite Arts’ Cinematic Arts Manager Jason Fitzroy Jeffers leads the program.

Four filmmakers received Special Jury Mentions, and will receive $1,000 toward their film projects. They are Carla Forte, Hansel Porras Garcia, Mark Pulaski, and Danny Rosenberg. To find out more, visit www.oolitearts.org/cinematicarts.