



MINI CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

Paul Clemence and Julie Davicow
Foreword by Elisa Turner

 A Schiffer Book



CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

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FOREWORD



City Sky Series, 2005, C-Print, 10" x 10." Courtesy of Alex Heria.

As I write these thoughts on how the Miami art scene has flourished in the last few years, glaring sunshine broils our summer days. It's that time of year when people who live in South Florida often check weather reports, wondering when the next hurricane will tear our way. Experts say we are in the midst of an unusually active storm cycle, following the devastating hurricane season of 2005.

As the intensity of South Florida's stormy weather accelerates, another kind of acceleration surrounds us. Miami is experiencing a building boom and an attendant surge in real estate prices. Construction cranes, with their skeletal lop sided structures, jab the sky. Construction on office and apartment towers snarls traffic all over town.

Miami's art scene, once considered a backwater, is in the midst of a boom as well. Galleries and art venues continue to set up shop in Wynwood and the Design District, neighborhoods near downtown that are enjoying a renaissance. Property values climb. Art galleries with national and international reputations move to Miami. A few homegrown galleries are reaping international cachet.

The city's evolving art district does not match the bustle of New York's Chelsea neighborhood, but all kinds of markers, such as this very book, point to a swiftly maturing art scene, one that's sparking international attention well beyond the intense days of Art Basel Miami Beach. This art fair, in existence since December 2002, has rapidly climbed the charts in terms of its fevered popularity for an international crowd of contemporary art collectors. A sure sign of the fair's success is the way it has attracted an expanding flotilla of smaller art fairs that migrate here in early December. They aim to take advantage of the moneyed museum and collector crowd that Art Basel Miami Beach attracts like a dazzling 21st century lighthouse.

Some, especially those looking from the outside, tend to think that the Miami area's boom owes virtually everything to the vision of

Art Basel organizers, and to their decision to make Miami Beach the site of the first Art Basel organized art fair located outside of Basel, Switzerland, where the annual fair in June has enjoyed years of popularity and prestige as the best of its kind in the world.

That perception regarding Miami is false. Basel organizers were interested in Miami because the art scene here was already percolating and productive. In January 1999, I reported in the Miami Herald that Lorenzo Rudolph, at the time the director of Art Basel, had been introduced to Miami Beach city officials by collector Mera Rubell to discuss organizing a major art event in the city. "Art Basel is convinced that there is great cultural potential in the Miami area," said Samuel Keller, then an Art Basel spokesman, in January 1999. No doubt about it, the Basel fair gave the art scene here – an expanding core of artists, collectors, museums, galleries, critics, and writers – a considerable surge, one that those in Miami continue to witness.

I've been asked to write about milestones paving the way for the accelerated art scene we are now witnessing. South Florida has been famous for years for its warm and sunny winter weather. But warm winter weather was not enough to make Samuel Keller, the current director of Art Basel Miami Beach and Art Basel, want to invest in a startup art fair in Miami Beach. He and others in the Art Basel organization were looking for a place receptive to art, artists, and art lovers. They found such an artful spot in the balmy winter destination of Miami Beach.

Certainly the support of Miami collectors has been integral to the success of the fair and the growing art scene. Beginning with the first year of the fair, Miami collectors have opened their private homes and collections to fairgoers hailing from this country, Latin America, and Europe. Visitors to the fair flock in droves to these opportunities to see private, sometimes internationally famous collections of 20th and 21st century art. This kind of access has been virtually unheard of in Basel and the rest of Europe. Collectors have also been active here in local museums, by serving on

boards, participating in fundraising events, and making loans and contributions to permanent collections. Among these active Miami collectors are Norman and Irma Braman, Paul and Estelle Berg, Mireille Chancy-Gonzalez, Ella Fontanals Cisneros, Carlos and Rosa de la Cruz, Jeff Gelblum, Tony Goldman, Maggie Hernández, Steven and Rochelle Lanster, George Lindemann, Martin Z. Margulies, Peter Menéndez, Rafael and Marijean Miyar, Javier and Monica Mora, Arturo and Liza Mosquera, Jorge and Darlene Perez, Carl and Toni Randolph, Craig Robins, Donald and Mera Rubell, Marvin and Ruth Sackner, Dennis and Debra Scholl, Richard and Ruth Shack, and Marty and Cricket Taplin.

The city is a very different place from the one I came to know when I moved here from New York in the early 1980s. The television show "Miami Vice" was all the rage then. People joked about how life in Miami could fry your brain. For years the rest of the country said Miami Beach and its nearby cities was a place of sun and fun, a place "where summer spends the winter," to quote an old tourist brochure promoting Coral Gables. Yes, South Beach celebrity sighting is still fodder for gossip columns. But there is a difference. Now the Miami area flashes its cultural credentials, particularly in the visual arts.

How did it happen? There were lots of steps along the way.

In the early 1980s, the art scene was made up primarily of the Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami, the Bass Museum of Art in Miami Beach, and a handful of veteran gallery dealers, including Barbara Gillman in the Design District, Gloria Luria and Dorothy Blau on Kane Concourse in Bal Harbour, and Virginia Miller in Coral Gables. The Visual Arts Gallery was founded in 1977 at Florida International University, although the institution really started to show promise in 1980 when Dahlia Morgan was hired to direct the gallery, and even more so in 1985 when its name was changed to Art Museum at FIU. That institution now is called The Patricia & Philip Frost Art Museum. It's outgrown its location on the ground floor of a building at FIU, and in 2008 it will open an impressive new building of its own on the campus.

Although the Miami area was still considered a sleepy place for culture, new places took shape throughout the 1980s. Artists renovated blighted areas around town, lured by low cost rents. In 1984, the South Florida Art Center was founded by forward thinking artist Ellie Schneiderman on the west end of Lincoln Road Mall in Miami Beach. She secured grant money from the City of Miami Beach to make the art center happen; it offered studio spaces and a cooperative gallery. Another initiative evolved in Wynwood two years later. A group of affordable art studios, the Bakehouse Art Complex held an open house in May 1986, while renovations continued on the building, a former bakery that had been vacant since the early 1980s. By February of the following year, it was fully open. Visionaries Helene Pancoast and Faith Atlass found the finances to make the Bakehouse a reality.

In 1984 the Center for the Fine Arts opened in downtown as a non-collecting art museum in a complex with the Main Library and

the Historical Museum of Southern Florida. The complex was designed by architect Philip Johnson. This was the same year that an "artist colony," as the *Miami Herald* sometimes called the South Florida Art Center, was slowly transforming Lincoln Road.

Also throughout the 1980s, several generations of Cuban-born artists drew attention to Miami. Many had left Cuba shortly after dictator Fidel Castro seized power in 1959. In 1983, the now defunct Cuban Museum of Arts and Culture presented "The Miami Generation" an exhibit of work by nine artists born in Cuba and educated in Miami. Artists making art in exile in Miami included Carlos Alfonzo, Mario Algaze, Maria Brito, Humberto Calzada, Pablo Cano, Ramón Carulla, Demi, Silvia Lizama, Connie Lloveras, María Martínez-Cañas, Arturo Rodríguez, Lydia Rubio, Rafael Soriano, and César Trasobares. In ways ranging from subtle to overt, their art reflected the anguish of being uprooted from their homeland, and their art sometimes got caught up in the city's volatile exile politics.

In the 1990s, changes occurred more swiftly as the decade came to a close. By the early 1990s, another generation of Cuban artists was finding their way to Miami, sometimes leaving Cuba by first moving to Mexico. These artists had belonged to Cuba's noted "80's generation," artists who had generally eluded censorship while being the first in a group to exhibit beyond the island and receive positive attention in the mainstream art world. Artists who had come of age as artists in 1980s Cuba finding their way to Miami included José Bedia, Florencio Gelabert, Tomas Esson, Glexis Novoa, and Rubén Torres Llorca.

Of this group, Bedia had the most stature when he arrived here around 1994. His art had already been included in two landmark exhibitions: "Magiciens de la Terre" in 1989 at the George Pompidou Center in Paris, and "Latin American Artists of the Twentieth Century" in 1992 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In 1990 the art fair Art Miami was established. In 1994, the Martin Z. Margulies Sculpture Park was founded at FIU with long term loans of Margulies' vaunted monumental sculpture collection. A year later, Suzanne Delehanty arrived to direct the Center for the Fine Arts, which changed its name the following year to Miami Art Museum (MAM). MAM not only had a new name, but a new mission as a collecting museum. As MAM's website explains, its mission is "to exhibit, collect, preserve, and interpret international art with a focus on the 20th and 21st centuries." More historical shows, which are often more accessible to members of the public bewildered by cutting edge art, are not ruled out if they fit with this focus. The website adds that the museum may present "works of art outside this time frame when appropriate."

A critical point in Miami's recent art history was the opening in February 1996 of the new building designed by architect Charles Gwathmey for the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in North Miami. MOCA's heavily publicized inaugural exhibition brought Miami and Miami based artists to the art world's surprised and somewhat grudging attention with "Defining the Nineties: Consensus

MIA CONTEMPOR

Paul Clemence

Miami, historically a favorite for experiencing a level of cultural richness few cities realize.

Fast becoming a critical part of contemporary art, and an incubator for artists, Miami is poised to become a cultural destination of the future.

MIAMI Contemporary Art is a significant cultural history and presents over 100 artists who played a role in bringing Miami to fruition, and reveals how this city defines this city.



4880 Lower Valley F

PREFACE

The idea for this book came from the enjoyment and excitement that two friends (coauthor Julie Davidow and I) share of this most fertile moment in the arts that we are experiencing in Miami today. It's a moment that says "Look where we are, look how far we've come, look where we can go." It is a moment full of pride, accomplishments, and promise. So inspired by this, we decided to put together our passions – Julie's for the arts, mine for building books – to try to capture and celebrate the people making the art that fuels this moment.

We came to this project from quite different backgrounds. Julie is a Miami native, for years involved in the arts, and an accomplished artist. I was raised in Brazil, educated as an architect, and am now a photographer. This meant that, although we had the same vision of this project, we came to it from different perspectives. This proved to be very helpful, as it allowed us a wider range of resources with which to tackle such an ambitious project.

From the start, the concept for the book was to be a very inclusive showcase of Miami artists. Featuring not only the best, or the more recognized or talked about names, but to reveal a vertical slice of this community and present artists in different stages of development, or who took different career paths. We wanted to show the stars with international careers whose work is in museum collections, along with the ones just beginning to make a name for themselves; the artists who inspired and taught others, and the countless artists with no gallery representation at all, hidden away in their studios, doing their art, getting out there and breathing creative energy into the city.

Of course, it would have been physically impossible to feature all of the artists that could have been in these pages. We had, somehow, to limit the number of entries. In doing so, unfortunately, many well deserving artists were excluded. So we take this opportunity to apologize to all the talented people who we were not able to include in this volume. It was never a question of merit only, but rather that we kept to the variety we intended the book to represent.

Another trying selective process, but this one highly enjoyable, was curating the artwork. Our approach here was not only to choose what was most representative of each artist, but also what

would maintain that quality on a five by seven inch photo on a book page, within the flow of the book. This flow was also a deciding factor for each layout design and length.

In addition, each artist was asked to submit a written statement about their work as well as their experience being an artist in Miami, thus revealing a more personal insight into their ideas and response to the city.

Through all of our decisions, a lot of time was spent poring over the images to allow a unique appreciation of these artworks. This time offered an intimate opportunity to relate to each piece, to learn more about each artist, to enjoy and examine the work, then enjoy and examine it again. I come away from this experience feeling this incredible artistic energy that challenges easy, stifling definitions, but is nonetheless very present. And I have a renewed respect and gratitude to these artists and their dedication to their craft.

To give the readers some perspective on how this current moment came to be, we invited renowned South Florida art critic Elisa Turner to write the foreword. Her writing is at once historic and informative. Her insightful text helps piece together the various people, institutions, collectors, philanthropists and, of course, the artists who are essential to creating the conditions in which this creative burst could flourish.

"*There is no cultural life in Miami!*" some like to say. Certainly we might still lack the scale of venues and institutions that other more traditional cities have in abundance. But, hopefully, this book will help the world to see that here, also, in our very young city, culture is very much alive and well. Although our cultural "apparatus" is still a work in progress, we already have the most essential requirement: a vibrant, talented, clever, and original group of artists seriously dedicated to create art.

Paul Clemence

INTRODUCTION

Miami is a natural playground for inspiration. A collision of land, and sea, and sky at the edge of the continent; dipping its geographical thumb into the Caribbean, testing the waters of possibility. Steamy days and sultry nights set the stage for endless narratives. An expansive sky radiates with brilliant light, casting a sparkling spell on Biscayne Bay, glancing off the rising towers of downtown. Its glow sweeps the streets of its inequities, if only for a brief moment. This is the magic hour in Miami that captivates everyone. Lush and tropical, the surrounding vegetation wraps its tendrils through the concrete, defying encroaching development to overcome its true, natural state.

This is a city of endless contradictions. The economic disparities between its neighborhoods combine with a convergence of peoples and cultures to create a rich, didactic brew. The flavors, sights, colors, and sounds spill onto the streets from these diverse neighborhoods, and seep into the work of its many artists. Obsessively, compulsively, instinctively, like archaeologists these artists unearth the origins and complexities of our humanity to expose the infinite diversity of self. They are our conscience and our mirror – exposing our hopes, our dreams, our frailties and our mortality. They are our cultural ciphers, divining truth from a cacophony of influences. Ultimately, when the politics of our culture fails, the vision of the artist prevails.

Miami has always provided safe haven for artists. Existing for decades outside of the forces of the art market, the city has been a frontier where artists staked claim to blighted neighborhoods, responding to the streets, the climate, the decadence and despair, and each other. A freedom to explore and experiment has been an intrinsic part of this culture. Here, artists have been able to create their own definitions. Not only defining their work while finding their voices, but defining the kinds of environments in which they wanted to see their work exhibited. With a tenacious, entrepreneurial spirit, a growing population of Miami artists set forth to establish venues outside of the limited gallery system in the city.

The evolution of a city is impossible without the existence of a core of creativity. There is a symbiosis that develops amongst its inhabitants, and like any natural system, it requires all of the elements to be in place in order for it to function, thrive, and survive. We need the pioneers, the innovators, the teachers, the students, the stars, the renegades, the clowns, the transients, and the outsiders. The pioneers forge new ground, in new neighborhoods, and generate interest and excitement where before there was none. The entrepreneurs boldly set their own course, thus show-

ing the way for the more tentative to do the same. The ebb and flow of artists moving in and out of the city impart bursts of energy to spark continued growth. All play an undeniable role in fostering the character of our creative community.

Miami is my hometown. My history is wrapped up in its streets. The countless transformations to its distinctive, colorful neighborhoods can not silence the whispers of its past or mine. And the foundations of its future, gleaming new skyline are built on its legacies, as are mine. My father first came to Miami in the late thirties, and moved here with my grandfather and uncle in 1947. My great-grandmother and mother came to Miami Beach in 1958. I heard endless stories of the heyday of Miami Beach, soldiers training on the sands off of Ocean Drive, tanks that rumbled past our home during the Cuban Missile Crisis. And I would sit on our porch with my grandfather, an artist turned businessman who had attended Cooper-Union in New York, and receive my first drawing lessons. My parents exposed me to every possible cultural experience they could find in the city. The Bass Museum, the early FIU Gallery, Virginia Miller and Dorothy Blau galleries, theatre at the Coconut Grove Playhouse and Jackie Gleason Performing Arts Center, symphonies and opera at the Dade County Auditorium. Early on they enrolled me in art classes at the Metropolitan Art Museum Center where I visited resident artists in their studios. I knew then what I wanted to be.

There was not much art going on here growing up, so it has been with great pride that I have watched my city mature to this point. After many fits and starts, and years of hearing "*Miami has so much potential*," I believe that we are finally reaching a moment that will fulfill that potential. Many of the artists in these pages I know personally. Some were my teachers, others fellow students – their energy and spirit played a role in realizing my own potential as I transformed, from business owner to artist. Some are my close friends – whose confidences I enjoy daily, and who support me in my own struggle to evolve as an artist. Others are newer acquaintances, and some I know by name and reputation only. They challenge me, inspire me, confound me, and humor me. Their tireless commitment to their work, developing their craft, and constantly pushing to excel motivate me to do the same. But it is the diversity of the human experience as revealed through the work of the artists in these pages which is most profound. The infinite perspectives and interpretations that can be had of our world remind me that we are all valid and thriving here in Miami.

Julie Davidow

MI CONTEMP

Paul Cleme

Miami, historically a city experiencing a level of vision few cities realize

Fast becoming a critical temporary art, and as artists, Miami is poised as cultural destinations

MIAMI Contemporar the significant cultural and presents or played a role in bringing ami to fruition, and r defines this city.

That first show at the Moore Space was "Humid," curated by Dominic Molon of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. It brought together twenty-six artists working in Miami, Chicago, London, Los Angeles, New York, and Pittsburgh. Miami artists in that intriguing exhibit included Kevin Arrow, Hernan Bas, Natalia Benedetti, Cooper, William Cordova, John Espinosa, Naomi Fisher, Luis Gisbert, Mark Handforth, Jason Hedges, Norberto Rodriguez, and Elizabeth Withstandley.



From "Humid" at The Moore Space, 2002, installation view, *A wall I built with my Father, wood, drywall, metal, ongoing project of variable dimensions and locations* by Norberto Rodriguez.

In non-profit spaces around town, it's important to note the presence of shows at the Centre Gallery of the downtown Wolfson Campus for Miami Dade College (formerly called Miami Dade Community College) and the ArtCenter/South Florida in Miami Beach (the renamed South Florida Art Center). The shows were put together by curators Goran Tomcic and Tami Katz-Frieman, who also are no longer in Miami. They made a notable impact while they worked here chiefly in the mid 1990s to around 2000, calling attention to artists who have since enjoyed international recognition. These curators worked outside the more entrenched bureaucracy of museums. Their contributions were important in setting the stage for today's expanding art scene.

In "Currently: Art Focus I, Summer 1999" at the ArtCenter, curators Tomcic and Katz-Frieman put together a show that I described at the time as one that "bristles with urban grit and glamour, fashion and foolishness." It included works in photography and other media by Frank Benson, Luis Campos, Ximena Carrion, Leslie Merry, and Wendy Wischer. That show coincided with "Booty Bass," an exhibit at the Centre gallery curated by Tomcic featuring early photography by Naomi Fisher and installations that imaginatively reinvented blasting car stereos by Luis Gisbert. That summer in 1999 offered another show of work by yet another significant artist in town who no longer works here. Complementing these shows was a solo show by that artist, John Espinosa, at Frederic Snitzer Gallery. It's important to note that Gisbert, Fisher, and Espinosa have been featured in group shows at MOCA, while Bas had a solo show at MOCA in 2002 and Espinosa had one in 2004.

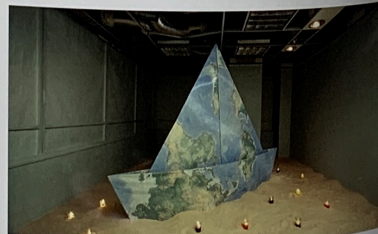
"I think right now there's a very special moment in the young art scene in Miami," Katz-Frieman told me that summer of 1999. She is now chief curator at the Haifa Museum of Art in Israel. When she made those remarks, she was referring in particular to William

Cordova's experimental narrative drawings shown earlier that year at Ambrosino Gallery, and to the work of John Espinosa. "I consider the show we curated [at the ArtCenter] as a continuation of this very special moment....Now, there are young people who are very talented and have a clear, crystallized voice. They're working at a very high level."

Josh Levine, a former Miami based artist who now works in Los Angeles, also did his part to contribute to the percolating activity here in the visual arts. He curated a summer show, "2 x 2" at the ArtCenter and included drawings by William Cordova and Nina Ferre, as well as other work by Annie Wharton, Luis Gisbert, and by Levine himself. The show was part of the center's ongoing efforts to highlight homegrown talent. These efforts have been decidedly uneven, and even though curators from prestigious out of town museums have been regularly stopping in Miami for years to visit major private collections and museums, they have rarely made the ArtCenter/South Florida a must see stop.

The current director of the ArtCenter/South Florida, Jeremy Chestler, recognizes that the center has needed to become less set in its ways and attract fresh, new talent in order to remain relevant to the art community here. He says that over time the center had become insular. It had a number of resident artists who were traditional painters, even though younger artists work in more experimental media. Some artists had kept studios in the center for as long as twelve to nineteen years. Now juried artists can have a studio for three years, applying for a second three year term; but six years is the limit. "The quality of the artists-in-residence and the exhibitions are starting to get more people's attention. We are reinventing ourselves and becoming more relevant," he says. The center is also hosting more seminars, talks, and other events that are professional resources for the art community.

A show timed to coincide with Art Miami in January 2000, and was really planned to set the stage for the galvanizing art event that this art community believed would be The Big One, the much talked about Art Basel Miami Beach likely to debut in December 2001, truly surprised collectors, artists, curators, and other art supporters with the enthusiastic response it generated. This show was "Departing Perspectives." It was loosely curated by dealer



From "Departing Perspectives," 2000, Installation view of *The Dimension of our Hope (detail)*, mixed media, variable dimensions by Roberto Behar and Rosario Marquardt.

Frederic Snitzer in a building on Brickell Avenue slated for demolition, the old Espirito Santo Bank Building. "Departing Perspectives" was one of many well attended art exhibits on view around Miami during that week. It coincided with cutting edge exhibits at the Rubell Family Collection, located in the Wynwood warehouse before it was fashionably renovated and expanded in 2004, and with the newly installed contemporary photography collection of collector Martin Z. Margulies, also located in a Wynwood warehouse that's since been expanded.

I called the enthusiastic response for those exhibits of contemporary art "a milestone in the area's coming of age saga." The response "demonstrated a clear desire for innovation in the visual arts and a real hunger for challenging exhibition spaces."

A reported 1,200 visitors showed up for the opening night gala of "Departing Perspectives," which raised funds for the New World School of the Arts, where Snitzer has taught since 1993. In the event's three-day showing, another 1,200 visitors walked through the building. Although these attendance figures are not huge, I recall an unprecedented feeling of electricity in the crowd exploring that transformed building. I remember that Karen Rifas told me then that the spirit of the crowd reminded her of the "high after Christo." She was referring to the sense of community Miami experienced nearly twenty years before, when "Surrounded Islands" by Christo and Jeanne-Claude was completed in Biscayne Bay in May 1983. In eight floors of abandoned office cubicles and hallways, NWSA students exhibited their art alongside more seasoned Miami artists like Karen Rifas and Carol K. Brown, also teachers at NWSA, and Robert Chambers, Maria Martinez-Cañas, Lydia Rubio, Rubén Torres Llorca, and Annie Wharton.



Purvis Young's *Goodbread Alley*, 1972. Overtown, Miami.

On the sleek marble surfaces of this abandoned corporate interior, Purvis Young painted his signature rearing horses. It was startling to see his work in this corporate environment, but of course Young is an artist with special links to Miami's urban growth.

Young is a self taught artist championed for years by Miami Dade Public Library System librarians Margarita Cano and Barbara Young (no relation) after he made astonishing works of impromptu public art in the early 1970s by plastering dozens of painted

boards along "Goodbread Alley" in Miami's Overtown. This historic black enclave fell into swift decline when construction for Interstates 95 and 395 destroyed homes and displaced businesses there in the early 1970s. For years Young has been a chronicler of Overtown's fate, obsessively painting weeping Christ figures, pregnant women, rearing horses, and rumbling trucks. As an outsider artist, he was often included in museum and gallery shows beyond Miami, but in 1999 Miami collectors Don and Mera Rubell acquired a studio full of thousands of his paintings, putting his art in the ranks of major cutting edge contemporary artists.

In "Departing Perspectives," there were some forty artists showing works in all kinds of media. Hernan Bas turned in a coy reference to Felix Gonzalez Torres' cascading piles of candy; Bas's piece was made with strawberry flavored Slimfast cascading from a corner. Bhakti Baxter, an artist who went on to be part of the influential alternative exhibition space called "The House," and has since received attention outside Miami, made a striking collaborative installation with light with Jay Hines and Julian Picaza. As I wrote at the time, "Eugenia Vargas also played with local allusions to airy esprit de vivre with her glass enclosed room billowing with constant, mechanically produced bubbles, a spectacle that charmed viewers as they stepped out of a stairwell." Vargas summed up the work then to me in this way: "Bubbles are happy and they also describe Miami, I had a lot of fun with this. It's not about the frenzy of 'We have to make a great piece and see if we sell it.' It's about the pure pleasure of making."

By the spring of 2001, art supporters in Miami could see how emerging contemporary artists were doing something that differed significantly from the past. Instead of complaining about how galleries and museums were not showing their works enough or at all, bold minded artists were taking things into their own hands. They were making their own spaces to show their work. These spaces were a far cry from the glamorous spaces like Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, a Miami offshoot of the Paris gallery that's located in Wynwood today, although most of these adventurous, chiefly artist run spaces were either in a still unfashionable Wynwood or a short drive away.

An early example of this "can do, make do" spirit afoot in Miami's art scene took place in another part of town, considerably south of Wynwood. This was at a space known as Box, first located in the warehouse district near Tropical Park, and then in downtown Miami.



Front and Center, 2003, opening at BOX.

MIAMI CONTEMPORARY

Paul Clemens

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Fast becoming a critical destination for temporary art, and an important role in bringing Miami to fruition, and redefines this city.

MIAMI Contemporary is the significant cultural institution that has played a role in bringing Miami to fruition, and redefines this city.

making in New York, Miami, and Los Angeles," curated by MOCA director and chief curator Bonnie Clearwater. Regrettably, this show did not travel to other cities, but it still had a major impact on this city's art community by presenting Miami artists in the company of national and international figures. Artists with ties to Miami in this show were José Bedía, Robert Chambers, Teresita Fernández, the late Félix González-Torres, Quisqueya Henríquez, and Rubén Torres Llorca.



From "Making Art in Miami: Travels in Hyperreality," 2000, installation view "Motoshag" by Robert Chambers and "Untitled (Three Asian Cheerleaders)" by Luis Gispert. Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami.

Not surprisingly, there was grumbling about the Miami artists who did not make it into this inaugural exhibit. The show was nevertheless a major step in highlighting Miami artists in a significant institutional space in greater Miami.

That "local" artists were rarely exhibited in the major institutions here, except possibly during the broiling summers when tourists stayed away and the few Miami collectors were not in town, had been a sore point for years between the artists and museums here. In current parlance, "Miami-based" has replaced the more provincial sounding adjective of "local." As Robert Thiele told me in 2000, there was an earlier time when he and other artists here "were doing our work but not aiming at a larger audience, when museums...generally had a hands-off policy in terms of the home-grown product."

Since its inaugural exhibit, MOCA has played a leading role in showcasing Miami based artists in a variety of inventive ways, in both group and solo shows. Some artists are discovering that it's no longer always the case that they need to move away from Miami to find recognition elsewhere, especially in New York, to get attention on their home turf. Or they are discovering that being from Miami now has a cachet that once only belonged to places like New York, London, and Los Angeles.

"Everywhere we go there is interest in Miami. Miami has an amazing mystique outside of Miami. It's a new hub," says Neraldo de la Paz. De la Paz, with Alain Guerra is part of an artist team known as

In the summer of 2005, I met with Hans Ulrich Obrist, who was in Miami to choose artists for a group show he was co-curating for the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art in Oslo, Norway. The show was "Uncertain States of America: American Art in the 3rd Millennium," which has traveled in Europe and the U.S. It first opened in Norway in the fall of 2005. Miami artists in that show were Jae Hwang, Cristina Lei Rodriguez, and the TM Sisters. Miami artist, curator, and critic Gene Moreno and I contributed essays to the show's catalog. Obrist asked me to put together a "collage" of articles I had written for the Miami Herald about the growing scene here. "We are interested to know how this 'Miami miracle' happened," he told me.

After MOCA opened in 1996, as I later noted in my "collage," the "Miami miracle" grew. In December 2000 an important show contributing to that miracle or mystique (call it what you want) was "Making Art in Miami: Travels in Hyperreality" at MOCA. It was the museum's fifth anniversary show. It brought together work in a range of media by twenty two artists. The artists in "Making Art in Miami" were Hernan Bas, Natalia Benedetti, Robert Chambers, Westen Charles, Cooper, William Cordova, John Espinosa, Naomi Fisher, Robert Flynn, Dara Friedman, Luis Gispert, Adler Guerrier, Mark Handforth, Jason Hedges, Beatriz Monteavaro, Gene Moreno, Jorge Pantoja, Norberto Rodriguez, David Rohn, Eugenia Vargas, Annie Wharton, and Elizabeth Wisthandley.

The research that curator Bonnie Clearwater prepared for this show underscored the growing strengths of Miami's art community. In her catalog essay "Making Art in Miami," she discussed the importance of artist-run exhibition spaces and the presence of strong private collections. She notes how the city's emerging artists were often taught in various Miami art schools by a previous generation of artists, particularly Carol Brown, Robert Huff, Karen Rifas, and Robert Thiele. In her catalog essay "Navigating the Hyperreal," she links art in the show to the area's long tradition of creating fabulous fantasies, from Vizcaya, industrialist James Deering's Renaissance styled villa built in 1916 on Biscayne Bay, to the theme park of Disney World in nearby Orlando. Further, she connects the art and fabulous tradition to an essay by Italian novelist Umberto Eco called "Travels in Hyperreality," in his book by the same title.

Also in late 2000, the Miami art community became more self aware, when an invaluable archive, The Vasari Project, was created with the Miami Dade Public Library by former Miami Herald art critic Helen L. Cohen and now retired librarian Barbara Young. With oral histories, ephemera, and all kinds of documents, The Vasari Project records the Miami art scene from 1945 to the present. The Miami Art Exchange, a loose coalition of artists and their supporters, was also set up this year with support from Miami dealer Bernice Steinbaum. The Miami Art Exchange is now a website, newsletter, and blog thanks to the tireless efforts of Onajide Shabaka.

At the Miami Art Museum a series of solo shows dedicated to eight Miami artists began in 2001. Curated by Lorie Mertes and Amy Rosenblum, it was launched with fanfare. This series was

called "New Work Miami." Dividing MAM's downstairs "New Work" gallery in half for each artist, the series gave solo shows to Frank Benson, Consuelo Castañeda, Robert Chambers, Naomi Fisher, Dara Friedman, Adler Guerrier, Glexis Novoa, and Robert Thiele.

Another pivotal museum show from this year was at the Bass Museum of Art on Miami Beach. This show was "globe>miami>island" in December 2001. It was titled with a typographically quirky title that seemed to suit the quirkily creative mind of the man who provided the globally generous and effervescent organizing spirit for the some thirty artists in this show. Many, but not all, worked in Miami. The show came with a strong catalog essay by Amy Capellazo, an early director of the Rubell Family Collection. It was curated by Robert Chambers, who has been pivotal in his own right in the city's maturing art scene. Not only has he been featured in the noteworthy shows of Miami artists at MOCA, MAM, and Miami Art Central, the museum founded here in 2001, but he has been a catalyst by encouraging other artists to exhibit and produce their best work, particularly while he was teaching in the art department at University of Miami. One of his many students, artist Annie Wharton, fondly remembers his "patient" way of working with and nurturing aspiring artists. He's also had a significant networking influence by helping artists to make contact with out of town venues, such as the alternative space Exit Art in New York.



From "At this time: 10 Miami Artists from the Rubell Family Collection," 2005, installation view of Cristina Lei Rodriguez, Reclaiming Ruins, 2004, plastic, resin, and selected objects, 72" x 72" x 144".

In particular, "New Work Miami" at MAM illustrates this mixed legacy. For example, Frank Benson no longer works in Miami, and Consuelo Castañeda seems to have kept a relatively low profile here since her solo show at MAM. MAM curators didn't anticipate

the rapidly rising star of Hernan Bas, although Bas's early, grainy drawings in Slimfast were a part of "Making Art in Miami: Travels in Hyperreality" at MOCA. In the MAM series, Chambers, Fisher, Guerrier, Friedman, Novoa, and Thiele have continued to turn out solid work, although they have not enjoyed the same levels of recognition. Both Fisher and Bas have seen their "star power" in the art market rise considerably, and they have both been championed by internationally known Miami collectors Donald and Mera Rubell.

While extremely important to Miami's recent art history, these shows at MOCA and MAM did contain hits and misses. For instance, neither the MAM series nor the MOCA show included photographer María Martínez-Cañas. By 2000, her distinctively manipulated, mostly black and white photography was in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The MAM series and the MOCA show also didn't include the collaborative team of artists Rosario Marquardt and Roberto Behar, although Marquardt and Behar have since had a solo show at MAM curated by Cheryl Hartup, and María Martínez-Cañas has since been exhibited at both museums.

The three MAM curators just mentioned are not working in the city now. Amy Rosenblum left the museum soon after "New Work Miami" was launched; Cheryl Hartup left in 2005 to become chief curator at the Museo de Arte in Ponce, Puerto Rico; and Lorie Mertes left in 2006 to head the Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia. Remaining at MAM is senior curator Peter Boswell.

Other curators now having an effect on shaping the kinds of shows that present Miami based artists among the national and internationally known artists are Mark Coetzee, director of the Rubell Family Collection, and Silvia Karman Cubiña, director of the Moore Space.

In 2005, Coetzee showed "At This Time: 10 Miami Artists from the Rubell Family Collection." They were Hernan Bas, José Bedía, Pablo Cano, Cooper, Naomi Fisher, Mark Handforth, Jae Hwang, Norberto Rodriguez, Cristina Lei Rodriguez, and Purvis Young. Karman Cubiña curated "metro pictures" in 2006 at the Moore Space and at MOCA with Miami artists Adler Guerrier, Susan Lee Chun, Beatriz Monteavaro, and George Sánchez-Calderón. Also in the show was work by Quisqueya Henríquez, who now lives in the Dominican Republic but who had previously lived in Miami and was part of MOCA's inaugural exhibit, "Defining the Nineties."

The Moore Space resulted from an effort in 2001 spearheaded by influential Miami art collector Rosa de la Cruz, who had approached Craig Robins, a Design District developer and collector, about putting together a show that would spotlight Miami artists for the first Art Basel Miami Beach. Although that fair was postponed, the show was still mounted in a space that later became known as The Moore Space, a lively exhibition space for international concerns in contemporary art that has, through initiatives like its guest curator program, helped Miami artists be more in touch with wider circles in the art world.



4880 Lower Vall

MI CONTEMP

Paul Clemens

Miami, historically a temporary art, and artists, Miami is poised to become a cultural destination for a few cities.

Fast becoming a temporary art, and artists, Miami is poised to become a cultural destination for a few cities.

MIAMI Contemporaria the significant cultural role it played in Miami to fruition, and defines this city.

It was founded in 1997 by artists Manny Prieres, Jose Reyes, and Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, and continued through 2004. It was started, as Rodriguez explained to me, "because of frustration. All three of us were looking for a venue to exhibit in those days and we weren't having any luck." The first show at Box was made up of the founders' own work. He recalls that over time they showed over forty artists, including Hernan Bas, the artists' collaboratives FeCuOp and Friends With You, John Espinosa, Naomi Fisher, Luis Gispert, Jae Hwang, Gean Moreno, Kyle Trowbridge, Stella Rey, David Rohn, the TM Sisters, and Pedro Vizcaino.

Another example of this innovative spirit took place north of Wynwood, near Miami Shores. These were the "Home Shows" staged by Eugenia Vargas. Beginning in 1999, Vargas intermittently invited fellow artists to take over her one story home. She gave them free rein to convert nearly every room into an impromptu gallery for showing all kinds of work, including sculpture, photography, installation art, video, and painting. It was in her living room that I first saw a colorful mound of used clothing assembled into what seemed to be an indoor volcano by Guerra de la Paz.



From "The Home Show," 2002, installation view of *Tribute*, recycled garments, variable dimensions by Guerra de la Paz.

"Isn't it beautiful?" I remember her asking me with a swift grin. Other artists who took part in these home Shows" included West- en Charles, Lou Anne Colodny, Denise Delgado, Gean Moreno, and Chuck Ramirez. She recalls that William Cordova curated one of these "Home Shows," and Robert Chambers curated the last one in September 2002, which she kept up until January 2003, making it the one that ran the longest.

Vargas explained to me in 2001 why she did these "Home Shows." Her answer resonates now more than ever at a time when the art market seems especially pervasive and powerful. An opportunity like a "Home Show," she said, "gives artists more independence. People can do whatever they want without pressure. I think it really stimulates young people."

Private collectors Don and Mera Rubell, along with their adult children Jason and Jennifer, were catalysts in the change taking over the city's

art community. A vital Wynwood pioneer is their impressive Rubell Family Collection, focused on art from the 1960s to the present, which opened to the public in 1996 in a 45,000 square foot former DEA warehouse for confiscated goods. After it opened, other spaces sprung up in Wynwood in converted warehouses to present edgy, emerging artists, some from Miami and some not. These included Locust Projects, founded on a shoe string budget by artists Western Charles, Cooper, and Elizabeth Withstandley with much of their own money in 1999; they first rented the space a year earlier. In 2002, Locust Projects formally acquired non profit status, and in 2005 it became one of twelve alternative art spaces around the country to receive a "Warhol Initiative" grant from the Warhol Foundation.

Dorsch Gallery, a commercial space run by Brook Dorsch, first started in a modest walk-up apartment on Coral Way in 1991. It moved to a Wynwood warehouse in 2000, and has played an important role in exhibiting up and coming Miami artists. Diaspora Vibe Gallery, founded in 1996 in rented space at the Bakehouse by Rosie Gordon Wallace, later moved to the Design District and gives artists of Caribbean descent a valuable forum. Edge Zones in Wynwood is an artist-run exhibition space offering artists opportunities to show work and network with out of town curators.

The House, in the nearby Edgewater neighborhood, was particularly important in giving shape to this "Miami miracle." The House was felled by a developer's wrecking ball in 2004. But for the previous four years, it had created novel exhibits in its two-story, white frame house, mixing edgy if uneven work by artists from Miami and other cities with work by the artists who actually lived there, Martin Oppel, Tao Rey, and Bhakti Baxter. Daniel Arsham was another gifted artist who played a strong curatorial role for The House, and Robert Chambers curated a memorable show there. "The camaraderie they've built helped in a great way to create an artists' community here that expands beyond Miami," said Bonnie Clearwater for a story I wrote for the Miami Herald in June 2004. By that time, the artist community here was starting to flourish in the wake of Art Basel Miami Beach. (The House artists' next step was to start a gallery in the Design District, Placemakers).

When the first Art Basel Miami Beach was postponed, galvanizing effects of this camaraderie and "make do, can do" spirit were clear. Intense disappointment followed the postponement of the first mega art fair in 2001. Although they had planned the fair long before the terrorist strikes on the World Trade Center of September 11, 2001, fair organizers decided that December 2001 was not the time to launch a new art fair. Collectors were leery of flying. Insurance prices for dealers and shipping art works skyrocketed. Miami's art community rallied, and went on with most locally planned events. One event planned for that fateful month of December 2001 was greeted with spectacular enthusiasm. This was the wildly innovative "globe>miami>island" at the Bass.

When the first and long awaited Art Basel Miami Beach took place in December 2002, it enjoyed a critical and commercial success that in large measure continues, and the fair capitalizes on the current strong market for contemporary art. The fair sparks more initiatives in the city, which compete for attention in an increasingly hectic week. Private collectors in Miami use the Art Basel Miami Beach week to launch their own exhibits



The House, 2000.



Sears Building at The House, 2001, curated by Robert Chambers.



The House Demolition, 2004.

and programs in order to attract international attention, but many of their efforts benefit the art community here throughout the year.

A promising new institution, Miami Art Central (MAC) founded by collector and philanthropist Ella Fontanals Cisneros, opened in December 2003 during the second Art Basel Miami Beach. It opened with a vote of confidence in the Miami art scene. MAC's inaugural show was called "10 Floridians," but nine of the Floridians worked at the time, or had worked, in Miami. The artists in this show were José Bedia, Robert Chambers, Dara Friedman, Jacin Giordano, Luis Gispert, Adler Guerrier, Mark Handforth, Gean Moreno, Glexis Novoa, and Sergio Vega. In an important step to expand networking between the Miami art community and the international art world, well-connected out of town curators were asked to select the artists for this inaugural exhibit. Only one curator for this exhibit was working in Miami at the time. That curator was Paula Harper, the art professor at the University of Miami who has for years been a vital player here in the art community. She chose Robert Chambers.



From "10 Floridians," 2003, installation view of paintings by Jacin Giordano. Miami Art Central.

The following year, The House collapsed and another artist run space started up in the Design District in response to its demise. This is the Bas Fisher Invitational, founded by Hernan Bas and Naomi Fisher. "We just wanted to provide space for people to really do absolutely whatever they want, for and by themselves," Fisher explained to me. "We prefer to offer solo shows to artists...it is hard to get a good sense of an artist if you just see an artwork in a group show here and there, and we felt that many people we knew who were interesting artists were only publicly experienced piecemeal." She expresses a belief in the importance of cultivating creativity without art market pressures. Her remarks recall those made by Eugenia Vargas about her Home Shows and the landmark "Departing Perspectives." Says Fisher: "We believe that having the forum for a solo show without the pressure of a

commercial debut would allow an artist to blossom." She relates that in the summer of 2005 Bas Fisher Invitational hosted its first group show. This was a collaborative show organized by Bhakti Baxter and Jason Hedges. "Many great dialogues resulted from it," she recalls, adding that Hans Ulrich Obrist saw a video there by the TM Sisters, and chose it for the exhibit "Uncertain States of America."

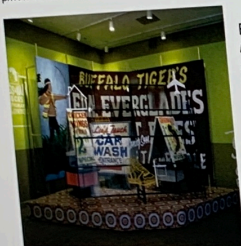
Two years after MAC opened near the University of Miami, the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO) opened in downtown, just blocks from where construction continued on the Carnival Center for the Performing Arts. Again CIFO opened during what some now like to call "Basel Week." The building was designed by architect Rene Gonzalez. Walking into CIFO is a bit like walking through a bamboo forest transplanted into the heart of Miami. Visitors are greeted by a beautiful façade of glass Bisazza tiles depicting bamboo thickets. The vibrant green façade can be seen to symbolize how Miami is becoming a breeding ground for culture and the arts. CIFO develops exhibits based on emerging artists from Latin America.

The story of Miami's growing art scene continues as the city's cultural profile rises. The legendary and pioneering choreographer Merce Cunningham, who has worked over the years with visual artists Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and others hailed for their own pioneering contributions, premiered a new work at Miami's Carnival Center for the Performing Arts in early 2007. The work involved collaborations with a host of cultural organizations in the city. Specifically, Daniel Arsham, recommended to Cunningham



Daniel Arsham, *Downstage Left*, 2007, gouache on mylar, 25" x 33" set design for Merce in Miami at The Carnival Center for Performing Arts. Courtesy of Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris/Miami.

by Bonnie Clearwater, collaborated with the choreographer in the creation of sets and costumes. Cunningham also worked with composer David Behrman. In 2007, MOCA presented an exhibition of Cunningham's collaborations with visual artists, including Arsham of course, from 1998 to the present, to coincide with the performance. MAM is planning a new building within walking distance of the Carnival Center for the Performing Arts. When Suzanne Delehanty stepped down as MAM director at the end of 2005, the museum chose Terence Riley to be the new director. He came to MAM from the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where he was chief curator for architecture and design. An architect himself, he began this position in March of 2006. His job will be to steer MAM into the next stage, expanding the private collection and giving it an appropriate home in a new building.



From "Miami in Transition," Development Opportunity For Sale, 2006, mixed media installation, variable dimensions, by Michael Loveland. Commissioned by the Miami Art Museum.

In the first follow up to its "New Works Miami" shows, MAM presented a provocative group show that is directly inspired by Miami's current building boom, with the transformation of downtown and the gentrification of surrounding neighborhoods. Luxury condos proliferate and affordable housing becomes harder than ever to find. The show was mounted in the spring of 2006, and was called, aptly enough, "Miami in Transition." It was curated by Lorie Mertes and curatorial research assistant René Morales, and came with a brochure featuring an important essay by Morales. The range of work and artists in the show touched on many aspects of Miami's recent and accelerating art scene. Artists in this show were Daniel Arsham, Natalia Benedetti, Vicenta Casañ, Xavier Cortada, Patricio Cuello, Andres Ferrandis, Mark Handforth, William Keddell, Leila A. Leder Kremer, Nicolas D. Lobo, Michael Loveland, Gleixis Novoa, Martin Opper, Placemaker, Tao Rey, Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova, George Sánchez-Caldern, Tina Spiro, Ivan Toth Depeña, Thomas Brian Virgin, and Purvis Young.

Just because art is made in Miami does not guarantee that it's worth looking at more than once. But a number of strong works being created here do make intriguing statements about current strands of multi-faceted contemporary art and culture. These works do that in a significant range of media.

There's a lot of talk now about whether the city's art community is witnessing a "Miami style," and what such a hard to define phenomenon would look like. I think back to a story written during the Basel Week of 2005 by my Miami Herald colleagues Enrique Fernandez and Fabiola Santiago.

Once so much art made here seemed preoccupied with exiles' experience of a lost homeland in Cuba or in other Caribbean and

Latin American countries suffering tumultuous politics. Miami, as a city of immigrants, has become an adopted home for so many artists who've migrated here permanently or for extended stays. Like so many things about the community here, this conversation is changing. In the November 30, 2005 Miami Herald story I just mentioned, dealer Fred Snitzer speaks of today's Miami generation. Such a term is years removed from the "Miami Generation" identified in 1983 by the Cuban Museum of Arts and Culture exhibit, with a show by nine Cuban-American artists reviewed by the previous Herald art critic Helen L. Kohen.

Many of the current Miami generation of up and coming artists attended New World School of the Arts. Snitzer points out that these artists grew up in times molded by effects of the Mariel Boatlift of 1980, the memory of Biscayne Islands shimmering in pink plastic in Christo and Jeanne-Claude's "Surrounded Islands" of 1983, the chaos of Hurricane Andrew of 1992, and the emigration crisis over Elian Gonzalez of 1999 and 2000. These artists also grew up seeing shows and installations by José Bedia. Bedia is known for his riveting and utterly distinctive way of mixing ordinary objects with painting, drawing, and elements of Afro-Cuban ritual.

Other elements making up today's Miami style, look, or generation. To suggest what a place is like where the sun and fun are inextricably mixed with grimmer realities, Cooper is quoted as having coined the term "sunshine noir" in jest. Influential private collectors here have spurred interest in contemporary art. Artist and Frost Museum curator Elizabeth Cerejido notes the rise of artist-run spaces in recent years. This "can do, make do" spirit, as I have called it, has further contributed to the new levels of creativity we are witnessing. But to confine those new levels of creativity into one label? So far, I don't know anyone who has come up with a lasting label. As Elizabeth Cerejido says at the end of the Miami Herald story, "The city is up for grabs." The city is still defining and re-inventing itself, and artists here contribute to that essential, evolving process.

August 2006, Miami

Elisa Torres



Full to Wailing and Back Again, 2002/2004, outdoor installation, projected light using a source four light and gobos, pattern, approx 26" diameter, by Wendy Wischer.

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CARLOS BETANCOURT

"How wonderful yellow is. It stands for the sun."
Vincent Van Gogh

A cocktail with my dearest friends anywhere; the crisp light; the huge blues; Morris Lapidus; pink flamingos on a Cypress tree in the Everglades; the Bacardi Building; it is not New York, it is what it is; a monumental Bahamian Starfish on a sand bar off Government Cut; Fire and Ice club; the everlasting sky; its multi-people-cultura viva; two and a half hours from Puerto Rico; Hiakutaki comet in a starry night in the Keys; awareness of the present; freedom *y alegría por la vida*; Keith Haring Pop Shop in Miami Beach; somewhere in Biscayne Bay reading a book in the morning on my boat, encircled by *delfines* swimming in clear emerald seas and a modern skyline beyond; *un pescado frito con tostones*; the kitsch; Lincoln Road and Wynwood – now and then; the old rehab asylum on Española Way; Christo "Surrounded Islands"; the best drag queens; the Raleigh Hotel pool, or any pool; the Ceiba tree *en la pequeña Habana*; the Miami Circle; Miami Beach in the 80's and early 90's, (the 00's ain't that bad either); in a swamp behind Clyde Butcher's place; the artists and the artworks, the collectors and, (wow), the collections; tracking a hurricane; full moon nights at Fairchild's; the old lady in Miami Beach forever coordinated in fuchsia or chartreuse, (and a glittered hat); fishing off Stiltsville; *los poetas*; el mar, el mar, el mar.



Tropical Cottage I – Muchas Manos and Conch, 2001. Metallic lambda print, 40" x 46". Private collection



Interventions in California – Photo Performance with Deity, Luis and Modern Day Semi, 2005. Metallic lambda print.



Interventions in California – Photo Performance with Deity, Luis and Modern Day Semi, 2005. Metallic lambda print.

CARLOS BETANCOURT

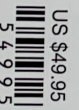
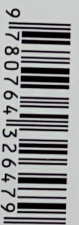
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