

THE MAGIC CITY

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALESH HOUDEK

THE REVOLUTION WILL SERVE WINE AND CHEESE *Wynwood's Gallery Walks Are Helping to Redefine a Neighborhood*



Glitter sculptures by Wendy Wischer at the David Castillo Gallery.

I'm there with a blow-dryer at night: *Finish, finish!*" chuckled **Hernan Bas**, describing his brushwork during a recent talk at the Rubell Family Collection. When it comes to the much-in-demand canvases of the Miami art scene's reigning It Boy, quick-drying acrylic paint is his material of choice. "I have no patience for oil," added Bas.

That's an apt metaphor for the current state of Miami's art world—both the latest crop of barely legal New World School of the Arts grads eager to make their mark, as well as the gallery owners and collectors just as impatient to tear through their slim portfolios in search of the next art star. **The post-Art Basel frenzy continues**, and in its wake no one has time for anything as laborious as letting the paint dry. Indeed, the numbers speak for themselves: Prior to Art Basel's 2002 arrival in town, the bleakly industrial Wynwood neighborhood was home to only a handful

of galleries—alongside **crack houses and a disturbing tableau of the walking wounded**.

Five years on, that urban blight now uneasily coexists with upwards of 70 galleries and "alternative" spaces. It's a flowering—both creatively and economically—which can still be hard to spot during

across the sidewalks.

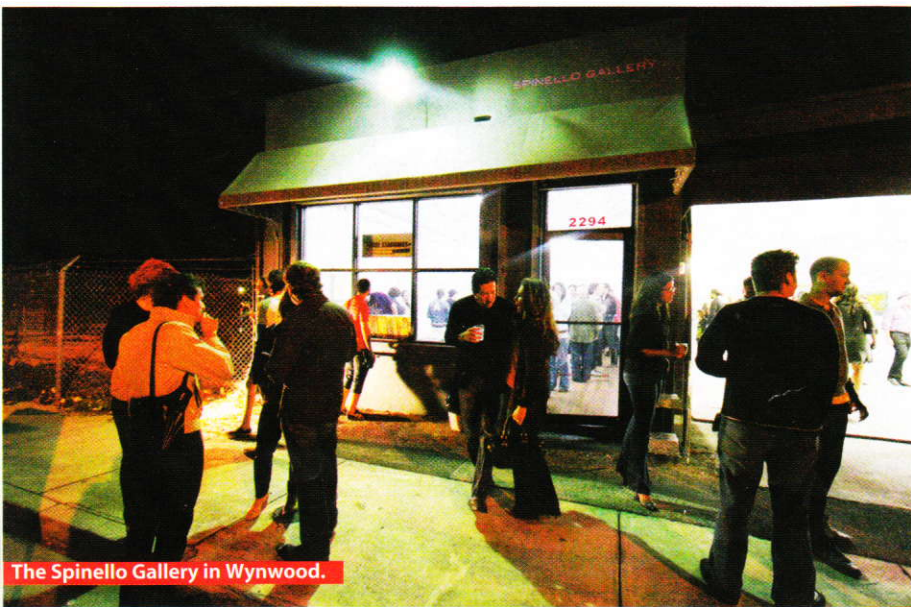
"This is Paris in the '20s!" gallery owner **Snitzer** previously enthused to me, and by the month's Gallery Walk, it's hard not to share his vision. True, there's plenty of dross competing for attention, and more than a few galleries w

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the day. But on the second Saturday of each month, those warehouse gates and doors fling themselves open to host the Wynwood Gallery Walk—a coordinated series of exhibitions and openings that draws rōving crowds of hipsters and the well-heeled alike, all stepping gingerly around the broken glass strewn

rush mentality is matched by their aesthetic shod programs. But wading through the young'uns on the make also brings evidence that Miami is now home to some of the most exciting artists around, from New York to, yes, Paris.

Snitzer was presenting the debut so



The Spinello Gallery in Wynwood.



Performance artist María José Arjona at Gallery Diet.

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Fort Lauderdale's **Alex Sweet** (a New World grad, natch), whose portraits of ominously jungle-shrouded warriors—all intricately burned into slabs of wood—were nothing short of jaw-dropping. Around the corner at **Gallery Diet**, performance artist **María José Arjona** invoked the psychic fallout of the daily violence in her native Colombia, blowing misleadingly playful bubbles that burst into blood-red splotches on the gallery walls, herself, and any less-than-spry passerby. The **David Castillo Gallery** offered up the alien-pod-like, glittering sculptures of **Wendy Wischer**, while the **Dorsch Gallery** featured **Brandon Opalka's** striking 131-foot-long Day-Glo wall mural, *The Great Republic*.



Gallery owner Brook Dorsch and painter Brandon Opalka in front of Opalka's *The Great Republic* wall mural at Dorsch Gallery.

A few blocks away, the scrappy **Twenty Twenty Projects** spotlighted the paintings and silk-screens of **Daniel Newman**, maintaining its proletarian-chic vibe by handing out cans of **Busch beer—no vodka sponsors here**. And despite the appearance of a who's who of scenesters, no spottings of Bas, either. "I don't go out to the Gallery Walk," Bas explained back at the Rubell fete. "I feel like I get swamped, and sometimes I don't want to talk to people." The glad-handers, the advice seekers, the (ahem) nosy journalists? They send him running back to the seclusion of his studio: "I like the friends I had before I was

'Hernan Bas.' "

It's a sentiment apparently shared by the art-pow of sculptor **Mark Handforth** and filmmaker **Dara Friedman**, latter of whom anxiously bolted away inside Twenty when asked to pose for a photo. But Friedman needn't have worried: The pair went otherwise unnoticed. Yes, Handforth's sculptures remain hot sellers at auction, regularly fetching six figures. And Friedman's videos have turned heads in international exhibitions from the Whitney Biennial to the Museum of Modern Art. But both figures established international reputations for themselves in Miami's pre-Basel days. **And for today's scenesters, that period may as well be the Stone Age.** 📧

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Artist Susan Lee-Chun in front of Sylvan Lianni's *Kaddish* at Locust Projects gallery.



Artists Jason Hedges and Alex Sweet at the Fredric Snitzer Gallery.



Scott Murray, director of Twenty Twenty Projects, and Alex Kuechenberg.