



IN HIS SPACE: David Castillo, 34, has run his eponymous gallery in Wynwood Art District since 2005, whose 'Untitled (#191)' is at right, and Susan Lee-Chun, whose 'You Art Cordially Invited to Tea Time' installation is at left.

AL DIAZ / MIAMI HERALD STAFF
Cindy Sherman,

{profile}

Wynwood gallerist in a good position

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David Castillo sums up his life's work experience in two words: art dealer.

"It's the one and only job I've ever had," says the mild-mannered owner of David Castillo Gallery in Wynwood.

In a short time, Castillo, 34, has quietly developed an international reputation for helping emerging Miami talent and staging quality conceptual shows. But you wouldn't be aware of his success by the understated way he runs his gallery or by his youthful, preppy looks that, because he's expecting a photographer, he has embellished today with a professorial bow tie.

Upper-crust members of the contemporary art world may not

notice Castillo's tie, but they have taken many hard looks at his carefully winnowed roster of emerging and midcareer artists and his steady lineup of thoughtfully curated solo and group shows.

Only three years old, the Castillo gallery has snared for the first time a coveted spot at Art Basel Miami Beach's container village in Collins Park, a well-attended fair satellite known as Art Positions. It also was one of only three U.S. galleries chosen to participate in another selective fair, Preview Berlin, in October.

"It's a nice vote of confidence that an international committee from outside can see all that goes into the shows we have created," Castillo says of his Art Basel selection.

Born in Madrid but raised by his Cuban parents in Miami from the age of 2 months, Castillo studied history and art history at Yale

University and at the Angelicum, an arm of the Pontifical University system in Rome.

"I thought I would study science, but my freshman year I took first an art history class, and I knew that was me," he says. "I wasn't thinking business. I thought I would stay in academia."

But while a senior at Yale, Castillo was hired by the American Decorative Arts Curatorial Department at the university's art gallery, where he did research for collectors. Soon some of them were asking him to make art purchases for them.

Castillo's first deal: a Wifredo Lam painting.

"I started with a major work of art, not digesting fully what that represented for a long time," he says.

But that sale helped him start to build a client base and a reputation: doing academic research on the historical relevance of works, a talent he brings to his shows now by eloquently writing about how the work of his young artists builds upon the history of contemporary art.

"I opened my gallery in 2005, but I've been an art dealer for almost 13 years," Castillo says, adding that he transformed the dilapidated warehouse space at 2234 NW Second Ave. into a 3,000-square-foot gallery without financial support from relatives or investors.

He has expanded next door into another 1,500 feet, adding a project room and expanding his lineup of conceptual-art group shows to include guest artists he doesn't represent.

"I did it all on my own with my sales of my artists and secondary-market works," Castillo says. "Fortunately, there was a significant momentum from collectors here in the first six to eight months of my opening my gallery. People told me I wouldn't make money the first year, but I was making money after six months."

Castillo's container at Art Basel will be dedicated to a site-specific installation of new work by Quisqueya Henríquez, a Cuban artist who lives in Santo Domingo and whose Modernist works deal with

BATTLING AT STEREOTYPES:

Quisqueya Henríquez's 'Collage Made According to the Laws of Change' will be in the David Castillo Gallery's container at Art Positions.

issues of cultural identity and stereotypes. She will bring to the container a new, more stylized set of her collages of "Frankenstein" baseball players, with their wheels for legs and super bats as arm extensions. The container's interior walls will be transformed by a textile pattern created by the Danish architect Arne Jacobsen, placing Henríquez's baseball players in the midst of European art history.

"Everything I show or represent are works I respond to," Castillo says.

Artists say they like Castillo's hands-on approach with regard to their careers. He helps them get their pieces into museum and public-art displays and into the hands of the right collectors for their work.

"He's very nurturing," says Leyden Rodríguez-Casanova, 35, who has been represented by Castillo for two years.

When he first met Castillo, Rodríguez-Casanova says, he was concerned about having to pro-

duce work for the sake of sales.

"I told him I wasn't interested in collectors, because I wasn't interested in doing work contingent on the purchase of it, but that I wanted to work with the integrity of an idea and what I needed that to be."

Then, Rodríguez-Casanova says, he stopped himself: "I don't know why I just told you that because you might be my future dealer."

Castillo's response: "I'm glad that you understand that there are different types of artists, and that way I don't have to explain it to

you."

"He cultivates the relationship," agrees artist Frances Trombly, 32, who signed on with Castillo almost a year ago. "He's really interested in a more educational approach to the work."

In addition to Henríquez, Rodríguez-Casanova and Trombly, Castillo also represents Andrew Guenther, Aramis Gutiérrez, Pepe Mar, Glexis Novoa and Wendy Wischer.

His next step?

"At some point," Castillo says, "I would like a venue in New York."

