

The Faces of Miami Art



The artists started to straggle in around 11:00 on an overcast Tuesday morning. They milled about the native landscaping on the western end of Lincoln Road, the new mall area that includes reflecting pools, cypress trees and a promenade floor of black-and-white *pedra portuguesa* stones. They had received e-mails, some of them forwarded that morning, to show up for this 944 photo shoot.

These are some of the faces that make up Miami's vibrant art scene, one that started to bubble up over a decade ago and, with the help of the international spotlight that is Art Basel Miami beach, has burst into a hot spot all its own. For a region once known as a culture-free zone, contemporary art has almost singlehandedly put Miami on that vaunted cultural map.

While local artists were planting the seeds, Art Basel helped to pull it out of provincial boundaries — artists could now see the best and brightest in modern and post-modern art. And it started to work in reverse: The more galleries and studios that opened up, the more likely it became that international interlopers would trip over their work. As this year's Art Basel rolls around, Miami can count a number

of Whitney Biennial and other prestigious award winners, artists who have solo shows and gallery representation in far flung ends of the earth, and whose work literally drives local real estate and cultural development.

Back on Lincoln Road, it was a little like a flash mob — those impromptu gatherings, usually signaled with last-minute text notifications, whose mission is to do something silly and have fun and then disperse.

Gavin Perry and Beatriz Monteavaro showed up because, as Monteavaro says,

“Why not? It’s cool.” Both are represented by heavyweight gallery Fredric Snitzer, one of only two local galleries in the official Art Basel fair in the Convention Center.

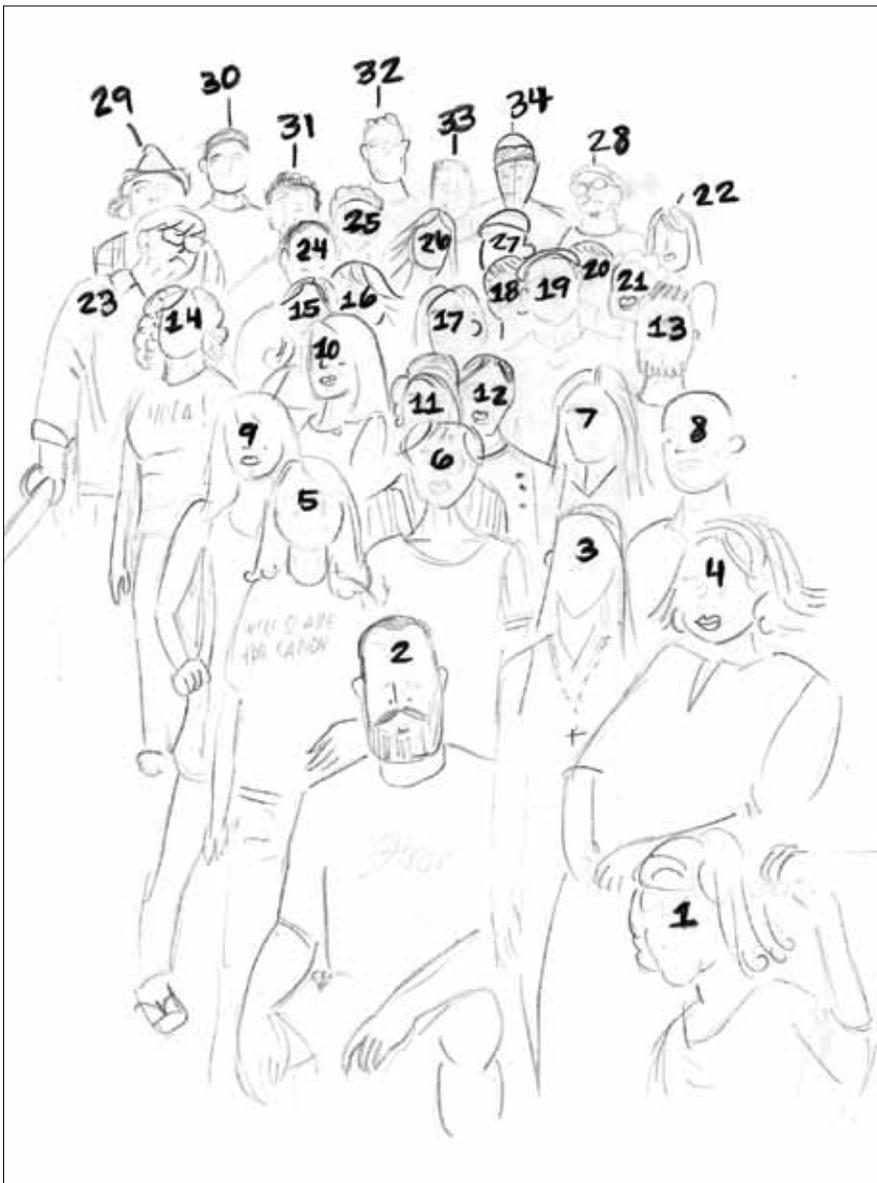
Sam Borkson, of the popular Friends With You collective famous for their plush toys and general enthusiasm, wasn’t quite sure what the shoot was all about, but says, “Hey, why not?” The spontaneous nature of the gathering appealed to the motley crew.

Natasha Lopez De Victoria, one half of the video/performing duo the TM Sisters, was all smiles, commenting that she liked

the diversity of the group — artists from various galleries or none at all, from across disciplines.

The location of the shoot, the 1111 Herzog & de Meuron parking garage/retail building, was right on point. With tenants like Taschen, Inkanta Design Store and Artsee, the hyper-modern, mixed-use building shines a light onto the far reaches of creativity in architecture.

So when the 35-plus artists assembled at the contemporary building, photographer Alissa Christine posed them on a staircase, five or six rows deep.



**THE FACES OF MIAMI ART
(ARTISTS NAMES)**

Row 1

- 1. Ana Menedez/Mendez*

Row 2

- 2. Gavin Perry
- 3. Jen Stark
- 4. Jipsy Nefaris*

Row 3

- 5. Beatriz Monteavaro
- 6. Christy Gast
- 7. Monica Lopez De Victoria
- 8. _____

Row 4

- 9. Susan Lee Chun
- 10. Jiae Hwang
- 11. Agustina Woodgate
- 12. Julie Davidow
- 13. Nicolas Lobo

Row 5

- 14. Michelle Weinberg
- 15. Natasha Lopez De Victoria
- 16. Natalya Laskif
- 17. Jenny Brillhart
- 18. Christina Pettersson
- 19. David Rohn
- 20. Felecia Chizuko Carlisle
- 21. Erin Parrish
- 22. Frances Trombly

Row 6

- 23. Books III*
- 24. _____
- 25. Alvaro Ilizarbe
- 26. Martiza Molina
- 27. _____
- 28. Brandon Opalka

Row 7

- 29. Farley Aguilar
- 30. Leyden Rodriguez- Casanova
- 31. Manny Prieres
- 32. Arturo Sandoval III
- 33. Sam Borkson
- 34. Typeo



After some juggling as to who would stand where, Borkson took off his shirt, provoking more disrobing by his fellow men, like Nicolas Lobo, who was part of a great minimalist installation based on pirate radio in last year's NADA fair.

The women stayed loyal to their shirts, and Farley Aguilar, who was having a big solo painting show at Spinello Gallery, kept his hat firmly on. Sometime tagger and muralist Brandon Opalka refused to take off his black tee, which displayed a memorial to his friend, graffiti artist YNOT, who was killed in a club parking lot earlier in the year. The towering Perry took off his black shirt to reveal a white wife beater. He sat in the front row so as not to block out anyone else's image, clothed or otherwise.

The TM Sisters weren't the only performers on site. A tardy Maritza Molina, who once laid upon a bed of pointed, high-heeled shoes for a piece at the Bass Museum in a show that took the place of the Art Basel that was canceled that year due to 9/11, took to dramatic posing. David

Rohn, who has appeared as a German art collector, a female real estate agent and a Muslim woman in burqa over the years, remained stoic.

No one was content to stay put — everyone switched positions, whipped off poses and hand signs, and giggled a lot. Passersby couldn't get a handle on it: This was no South Beach model shoot, why would anyone want to photograph these human specimens?

The question might be answered during this month's Art Basel fairs and festivities. In fact, the whole month of December will offer up a chance to match artwork to these faces, which belong to some of Miami's best homegrown talent.

It will be hard to miss Borkson, who along with partner Arturo Sandoval will be putting on a big Friends With You event called Rainbow City. The installation, first unveiled in a park in Toronto earlier this year, includes blimps, bouncy fun houses and colorful smiley things.

Then there's an MTV fundraiser at Wynwood's Soho Studios on December 11,

where the TM Sisters, along with Susan Lee Chun and Felecia Chizuko Carlisle, two others from the shoot, will perform. Or check out the open studio days during Basel at the brand spanning new LegalArt spaces — designed by artist Daniel Arsham — just opened across from CIFO in downtown Miami. There you'll find the TM Sisters as well, along with Jiae Hwang and Manny Prieres.

Prieres for his part will also be showing a piece during the quirky and always fun Littlest Sister fair at the gallery that represents him, Spinello. Numerous compadres from the shoot will join him there, including Aguilar, Christina Pettersson, Typoe, Michelle Weinberg, Sleeper, Agustina Woodgate and David Rohn. Spinello will also have a big booth at the Scope fair in Midtown, visit the Carol Jazzar Gallery, highlighting the vibrant, psychedelic works of Jen Stark.

Or follow Rohn's trail. He'll be setting up shop behind the street-front window of Art Center/South Florida on Lincoln Road for a performance piece called "Basel, Basel, Basel — it's only fun until someone takes an eye out."

Inside the Center, for the retrospective group show Good 'n Plenty, Monteavaro will have some of her trippy, sometimes creepy but always cool works on display. Brandon Opalka will be there too, and also in Wynwood for the unique Arts For a Better World fair. And all over those walls in Wynwood, the prolific street art from the graffiti collaborative Primary Flight will be impossible to miss.

Up in Broward, a solo outing from Frances Trombly will run for an entire year at the Girls Club, while others from David Castillo (who represents her), Leyden Rodriguez-Casanova and Lee Chun, will be found down in the Wynwood gallery.

These artists are putting their best faces forward during Basel and, fortunately for Miami, long after. They are the faces that have changed Miami in the eyes of the world, for better and we think, for good.