

RLMagazine

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Works by Nate Lowman and Dan Colen at the de la Cruz Collection Contemporary Art Space

*A select group of patrons has put a spell on the Magic City's art scene*

One of Florida's biggest cities is in the midst of its latest renaissance, but this time, pastel architecture, gambling and Frank Sinatra have nothing to do with it. Thanks in large part to Art Basel Miami Beach—the world's premier international art show, which launched a little more

than a decade ago—Miami has become a capital of all things artistic and draws fans, dealers and artists alike to mingle among the beachcombers, trading money and masterpieces. But before Art Basel brought international attention, there was a small group of private museums specializing in contemporary art that collectively came to be known worldwide as the Miami model, and their influence is reaching far beyond the famed art show's walls.

"These are public exhibition spaces for private collections," says collector Dennis Scholl, whose space, called World Class Boxing, is open to the public during Art Basel but accessed largely by appointment during the rest of the year. "While this is not the only place where such spaces exist, Miami is the only place where there are a significant number."

Critic Tyler Green, who is credited with coining the term Miami model, concurs: "There aren't many cities where this concentration of private museums is possible. Miami's rare nexus of wealth, warehouse space and permissive zoning allows these folks to do what they want to do."

And what they want to do is collect and exhibit art in their own way without the restrictions of a board of directors or public financing. But Miami didn't always have great traditional museums in which collectors could display their art. Rather than wait for the next MoCA or MoMA to be built, starting about 15 years ago, these benefactors simply built their own institutions.

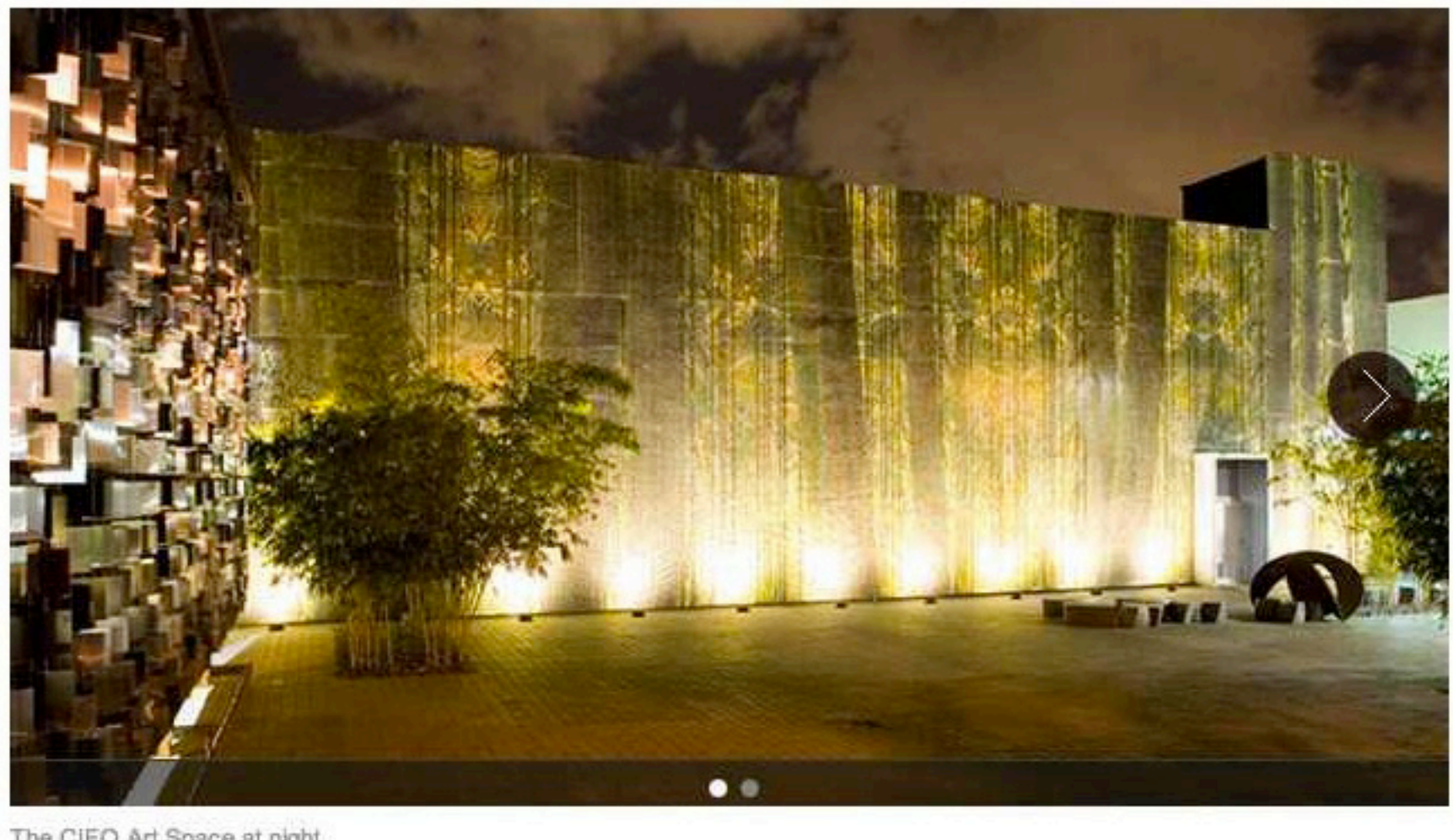
"The collectors have total control," explains Carol Damian, director of the Frost Art Museum at Florida International University. "It's their curatorial vision, it's their collection and it's their money, so they can do what they want, whereas a traditional museum is constrained by factors like money and a board. If you have a private museum, it's entirely that collector's point of view."

The shared focus of these four is almost entirely on contemporary art, further distinguishing them and other Miami model organizations from private museums. "The pure square footage in these spaces devoted to art from the last five or 10 years is very large, particularly for a city of Miami's size," says Green. Together, they boast nearly 125,000 feet of exhibition space, roughly half of which houses "very recent" work, with the vast majority of the rest of the art being from the past 40 years.

Four exhibition spaces in particular stand out: Mera and Donald Rubell's Family Collection, Martin Margulies' Warehouse, Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz's Collection Contemporary Art Space and Ella Fontanals-Cisneros' CIFO Art Space. Although there are others with quasi-public gallery spaces, these four have grown to the point of truly functioning like museums, complete with formal hours, education programs, extensive libraries and a variety of grants for financing the work of emerging artists and curators.

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The CIFO Art Space at night

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For example, on view until August 2, 2013, at the Rubell Family Collection is Alone Together, a show that explores contemporary artists stripped of context, with each being given his or her own room. The pieces on display include influential works of installation art, such as the sexually explicit "Oh! Charley, Charley, Charley..." by Charles Ray and Cady Noland's "This Piece Has No Title Yet," a room-filling opus made from beer cans, American flags, scaffolding and mixed media. Also on view is Oscar Murillo: Work, the artist's first solo exhibition following a five-week residency at the Rubells' museum—a Yaddo-like experiment—during which time Murillo produced hundreds of works.

Martin Margulies, on the other hand, has dedicated his 45,000-square-foot Warehouse to procuring seminal, historically significant pieces of contemporary artwork. It is widely seen as George Segal's most important private collection and is best known for highly recognizable sculptures, such as Miami's 1968 work "The Subway" and Anselm Kiefer's 1989 work "Sprache der Vögel," which are part of the permanent store, and the city's most important photography collection, a portion of which is always on display.

Rosa and Carlos de la Cruz's interests lie in 21st-century art from abstraction- and process-focused American artists, and this theme carries through their 30,000-square-foot de la Cruz Collection Contemporary Art Space that opened in Miami's Design District in 2009. "I like the way artists are becoming more interested in the process than in the final outcome," says Rosa de la Cruz. "Artists are allowing you to see the process and not cover the conception of the work."

Finally, Venezuelan collector Ella Fontanals-Cisneros uses the CIFO Art Space to showcase her collection focused on Latin American abstraction, which is one of the largest collections in the world, with more than 600 pieces. She has a unique assortment of geometric abstraction art, which is produced by a group of Latino American artists with a largely forgotten history who have begun to gain recognition only recently.

Each of these collectors was essential in bringing Art Basel to Miami Beach and earning the Magic City its fast-growing reputation in the contemporary art world. In concert with a handful of Miami's other collectors, they successfully approached Art Basel's holding company, MCH Swiss Exhibitions Ltd., about launching an international fair in their hometown. In agreeing to do so, MCH presented one condition: Every year at festival time, these Miami model collectors must open their homes and spaces to the public. Although initially taken aback, the Rubells, the de la Cruzes, Fontanals-Cisneros and Margulies all ultimately flung open their doors. Since December 2001, their home tours and exhibition openings—launched in honor of the fair each winter—have become some of Art Basel Miami Beach's most noteworthy attractions.

In the years since the Miami model pack brought Art Basel to their city, all have formed a unique synergy. "It has been a two-way street," says Damian. "The attention Basel has drawn to these collections pushes [the owners] to consistently maintain them and to see them as more than just for the locals. They really are a showpiece for Art Basel and central to the Miami experience."

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| CIFO Art Space 1018 North Miami Avenue Miami, FL 33136 305-455-3380 info@cifo.org www.cifo.org Open Thursday and Friday, 12 p.m.–6 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m.–4 p.m. (only during exhibition dates; check website for details) Admission: varies per exhibition | The Margulies Collection at the Warehouse 591 NW 27th Street Miami, FL 33127 305-576-1051 mcollection@bellsouth.net www.margulieswarehouse.com Open Wednesday through Saturday, October through March, 11 a.m.–4 p.m. with extended hours during Art Basel and Art Miami Adults: \$10 Miami-Dade County students (with valid ID): free |
| De la Cruz Collection Contemporary Art Space 23 NE 41st Street Miami, FL 33137 305-576-6112 info@delacruzcollection.org www.delacruzcollection.org Open Tuesday through Saturday, December through October, 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Admission: free | The Rubell Family Collection 95 NW 29th Street Miami, FL 33127 305-573-6090 info@rfc.museum www.rfc.museum Open Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Adults: \$10 Children under 18 and students with ID: \$5 |

SUZANNE WEINSTOCK KLEIN is the executive editor of *Caviar Affair*. Her work has also appeared in *Departures*, *BlackBook* and *Avenue*, among others, and on Elle.com.

✦ COURTESY DE LA CRUZ COLLECTION CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE
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