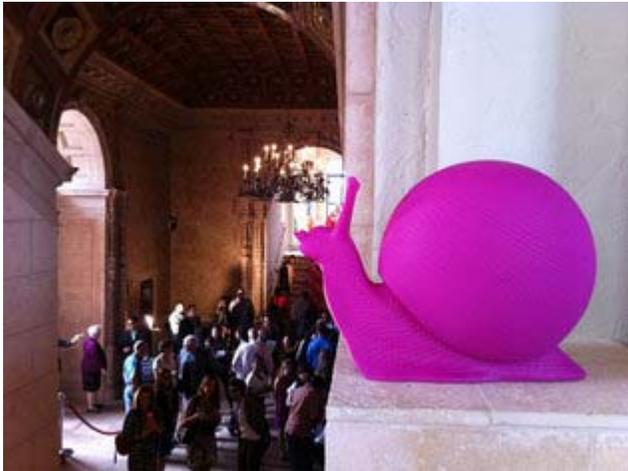


Basel notebook: Everglades fauna invades Freedom Tower



Hannah Sampson / The Miami Herald

Iconic 2010 "Pink Snails" reappear at the Foreverglades installation.

Brightly colored giant bunnies, miniature fishermen and fairly normal-sized reptiles have taken over Miami-Dade College's Freedom Tower. With supplies.

Most of the 300 creatures — made of resin, recyclable plastic and aluminum — are equipped with backpacks or water bottles, a nod to the at-risk resources of the Everglades and the threat of global warming. The installation, called "Foreverglades," was celebrated with a brunch and gathering of about 200 people Tuesday.

"This is the eye-catcher to say let's do something, let's save the planet," said

Belgium-based artist William Sweetlove. He teamed up with Italian collective Cracking Art Group for the installation, showing through Jan. 26.

Sweetlove's visions of how to solve the world's food problems — expressed through his art — are technological and controversial: creating genetically modified giant dogs and cloning them for food, finding a way to make smaller elephants so they can better withstand heat and shrinking the size of humans so they need less energy and food.

The installation was born from an idea Gloria Porcella, curator and co-owner of Galleria Ca' d'Oro, was kicking around a year ago: "Why don't we put some alligators crawling up the Freedom Tower?"

Today, they are. Alligators and crocodiles are also positioned outside and inside, and turtles and frogs climb the indoor staircases. A giant orange rabbit surrounded by frogs and a ring of smaller bunnies anchors one side of the tower's second floor. The other is home to the fishermen, alligators and a host of compliant turtles.

Galleria Ca' d'Oro, with locations in Coral Gables and Italy, made a public art splash in 2010 when it brought dozens of giant pink snails (also a Cracking Art Group project) to Miami Beach during Art Basel. Some smaller versions make an appearance in the Foreverglades installation.

Porcella, also curator of the project, said there have been many requests to show the creatures once their time at the Freedom Tower is over. And she has a request of her own: "All these animals are looking for a mama and a papa," she said. They will be for sale, at prices ranging from \$1,200 for small pink snails to \$18,000 for the big crocodile and \$19,000 for the big bunny.

Hannah Sampson

Presidential coifs

President Barack Obama has long been a tempting subject on the contemporary arts scene, but Martin van Buren?

Sculptor Brian Tolle put van Buren and the nation's 42 other past presidents atop the current president's head in a sort of symbolic hair-do titled No. 44.

The other presidents stand about three inches high in acrylic, posted as chess pieces in a punk-rock spike on the Obama bust. Obama himself stands six-foot-one, on a pedestal. "It's the president's actual height," said Joseph Ellis, an associate at the New York gallery CRG, which is showing the sculpture at Art Basel Miami Beach.

The showing of No. 44 (\$45,000) marks an unofficial grand reopening for CRG, a Chelsea gallery left with chest-high water after Hurricane Sandy. The gallery remains closed, and Art Basel Miami Beach is the first time CRG has shown any works for sale since the storm. "Miami was a huge priority for us," Ellis said.

Douglas Hanks

Back to Basel, despite Wolfe diss

Last year the Art Basel VIPs found author Tom Wolfe among the crowd, researching a new book. *Back to Blood* is now out, and it doesn't portray the Basel VIP crowd in a very cheery light. "Maggots" was his choice of description.

A few showgoers this year mentioned the book; others seemed to be sporting the Tom Wolfe signature look, dressing in all-white suits.

No relation, said Miami developer and collector Craig Robins, wearing a smart white suit, no tie. "What's the Tom Wolfe effect?" he said. "I do read a lot, but I don't read Tom Wolfe."

Fair director Marc Spiegler, a former journalist, dodged the matter, saying "I gave up literary criticism." Said Miami collector Norman Braman, chairman of the Miami Beach host committee, of Wolfe's depiction "It's a cheap shot. Look at the quality of the people here."

Jane Wooldridge

Solar flair

Wherever you are in the world, the sun is same.

“It’s yours,” said award-winning British architect Asif Khan, whose immersive installation is stealing the show at Design Miami/.

Khan collaborated with Swarovski Crystal Palace on “Parhelia,” which means “beside the sun” in Greek.

Inspired by ice halos that grace the northern regions of the world, Khan carefully placed 1.4 million Swarovski crystals in honeycomb holders amid multiple panels to emulate the phenomenon.

The oversized structure resembles a home and is situated in its own room about 100 yards from the fair’s entrance.

“The house form is how we draw houses as children. I wanted to awaken something inside of us and remind people of a comfortable environment,” said Khan.

At 20-feet high, the edifice is striking, but manages to be welcoming and warm despite its minimalistic properties and white space. Fifty percent of the crystals are of the “aurora borealis” genus (originally developed in the 1950s with Christian Dior).

Khan suggests starting on the north side to see the perfect circle of light, then encourages you to walk around to the right to see how the halo follows you and changes, at some points into smaller circles and at others into simple lines.

“You can never stare at a fire for too long, right?” asked Khan as he put his nose up to the structure and smiled.

The real “aha moment” comes when you crouch down to walk “inside” the structure. Immediately, you find yourself sheltered in a glistening room lit by two circular holes – one in the ceiling of the structure and the other in the roof of the Design Miami/ tent (think Pantheon in Rome), giving you a view of the ever-changing Miami sky.

Inside, you’ll also notice that there is a singular LED light bulb, which is what creates the giant halo or “artificial sun” that’s visible from the exterior.

“I want people to enjoy the stillness here and the passing of time,” said Khan. “The Miami sky is so unique and this is an unexpected place for you to have your moment with it.”

This is the Swarovski Crystal Palace’s seventh consecutive exhibition at Design Miami/, following installations by luminaries like Ross Lovegrove, Greg Lynn, Fredrikson Stallard, Eyal Burstein, and Erwin Redl.

Galena Mosovich