



POWER PLAYER

MAGIC CITY'S ART MAVEN

David Castillo hits Basel's main stage.
By Rebecca Kleinman

FROM TOP: Gallerist
David Castillo;
Pepe Mar's
Checkerboard.

"HARRY MAKES ALL KINDS OF DECISIONS," says art dealer David Castillo about his miniature schnauzer and stylish sidekick that melts hearts wherever he goes.

The two had just come from an Art in Public Places meeting, for which Harry donned a Goyard collar. Already fixtures on the local art scene, where Castillo has operated his namesake gallery since 2005, the dog and his master are rising to the art world's highest echelon in the Americas.

"As a Miami presence, I'm particularly honored to be selected to exhibit in Art Basel Miami Beach's main sector, Galleries," he says, after participating in its Art Nova or Art Positions sectors for five years, as well as the international fair circuit, from the Armory Show and Frieze in New York to Mexico City's Material.

It's a major coup, considering he's one of only two Miami participants within the prestigious sector. (For all the hoopla surrounding the city as the host of Miami Art Week, its patchy gallery existence has had minimal presence at the main event.) The move becomes all the more impressive for his personal story: Castillo is a Cuban-American who graduated from Hialeah

Senior High School, albeit as the class valedictorian, and matriculated at Yale University with medical school in mind until an art history course changed everything.

"A light bulb went off, and I remember feeling moved. It wasn't just intellectual," he says, of being bitten by the art bug. "I realized art wasn't just a thing, but a way you lived."

Humbler than his contemporaries, Castillo has paid his dues, from researching colonial silversmiths for a mentor to working at his first job as registrar for Miami's then-fledgling main art institution. Today he lives in a luxury high-rise across from the museum's starchitect-designed bayside iteration, Pérez Art Museum Miami. Originally focusing on the secondary market, Castillo transitioned to emerging artists like Xaviera Simmons, Shinique Smith, and Pepe Mar, whose careers he's nurtured en route to major collections and museum shows.

"I don't look at artists based on their career level, but on how they fit into the puzzle that's the gallery and how they engage you and draw you in through their narrative and beauty," he says.

