



A NEW BEGINNING

Miami local
Dennis Scholl
takes on a
new role that
just might
revolutionize
the city's artistic
community.

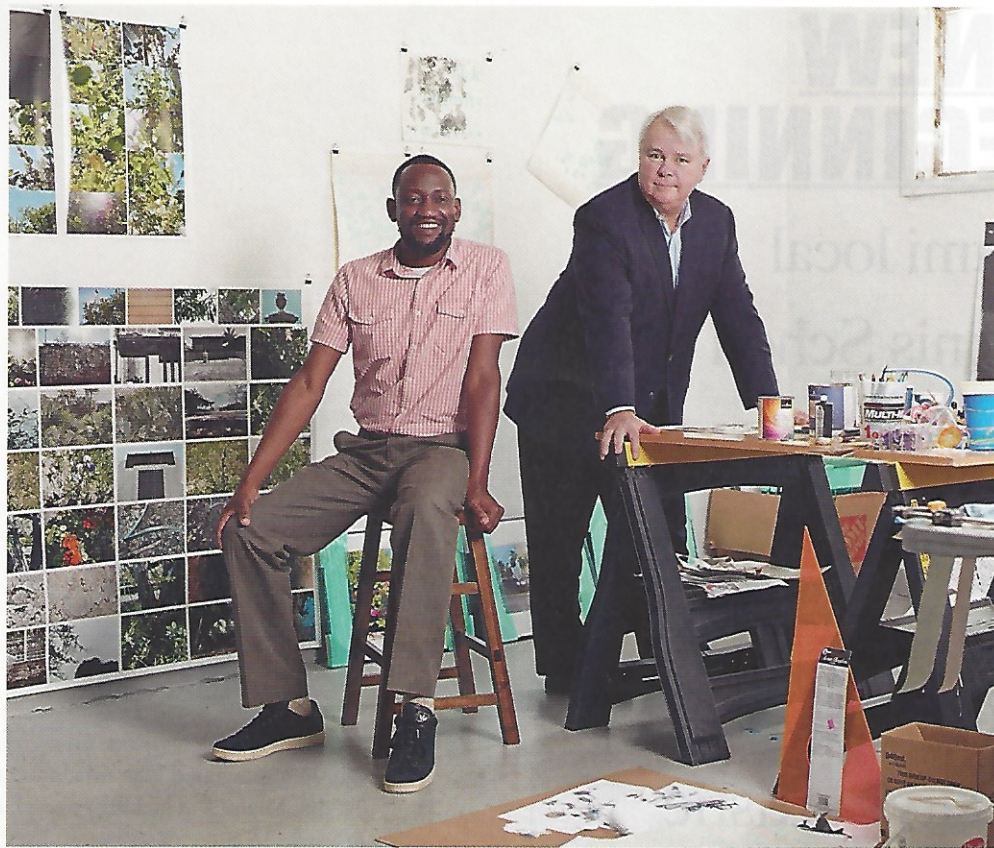
By Sari Anne
Tuschman

Talk about having a vision. Thirty years ago, an artist named Ellie Schneiderman felt that Miami was lacking good places for artists to work, so she created several studio spaces on Lincoln Road in Miami Beach, eventually scraping together enough money to put a down payment on three buildings on the then all-but-deserted thoroughfare and hoping perhaps to revitalize the neighborhood. ArtCenter/South Florida became well-known among artists in need of critical work space, and as the years passed, Lincoln Road indeed became the bustling retail hub it is today. Cut to 2014, when developers approached the ArtCenter's board of directors and offered to purchase one of the buildings—for a stunning \$88 million (the organization still operates out of one of the others).

Today, thanks to a strong stock market, this small cultural institution's endowment has grown to nearly \$100 million. But the ArtCenter isn't done seizing opportunities, which is why it asked Dennis Scholl—the esteemed Miami art patron, collector and former executive at the Knight Foundation—to usher the organization into this exciting new chapter as its president and CEO, a role he stepped into this past September.

"Dennis is a visionary," says Kim Kovel, chair of the ArtCenter's board. "He sees a blank wall or an open space and immediately has hundreds of ideas on what to do with it. The ArtCenter is that blank wall. We were a struggling community arts nonprofit that was suddenly transformed into one of the best-endowed cultural organizations in Florida. We needed a leader who could activate our resources for the benefit of the arts in Miami, and Dennis has the skills we needed."

Of the game-changing sale of the building, Scholl says, "The board felt like it was a significant ►



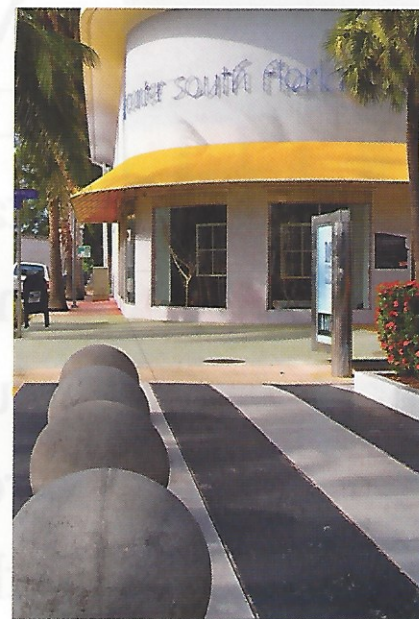
opportunity for the ArtCenter to have a new beginning. It was a way for the center to reach out and help support artists in our community in a way that was different than just providing them with studio space. The endowment means we're going to be able to do a lot of different things the artists of this community need, not limited by capital like so many nonprofits."

During his seven years at the Knight Foundation, Scholl created and oversaw a national arts program that gave away nearly \$200 million to organizations serving a variety of artistic mediums. In his new position at the ArtCenter, Scholl is looking forward to continuing that philanthropic work, now focusing on the medium he loves the most. "It's an opportunity to work with the visual arts—my first passion," he says. "I believe strongly the ArtCenter can be a national model for how to support artists in a community."

As for his plans, they are both lofty and far-ranging, a Scholl signature. Among them is finding a new home for the nonprofit in order

to accommodate a larger studio program as well as other initiatives. "A studio presence is baked into the DNA of the organization, but there is also a lot of interest in exploring a residency program in which we [can] bring significant working artists into our community and give them the opportunity to make work," Scholl says. "One of the other things that will be important is for us to provide direct support to artists, to single out the most talented in our community and support their practices and careers. We need to find a way to help those artists realize projects that might otherwise be beyond their grasp."

For Scholl, his new role represents not only a chance to foster local talent, but also to change the perception of Miami's art community around the country. "I think the ArtCenter has an opportunity to be an artists' support organization that is renowned on a national level, and that's important to me," he says. "This city has an amazing visual-arts community, and we want to elevate it to the point that anytime



you're thinking about contemporary art in America, Miami will be in the mix."

To that end, he also wants to ensure that people continue thinking about the art scene in Miami before and after Art Basel. "There has been a perception that Miami is the most important place in the art world five days a year," says Scholl, who mentions that the ArtCenter will be opening its artists' studios this week, as well as hosting a special brunch on December 9. "But I believe we have a quality of artists that can be brought to the international art world in a way that has them considering Miami and Miami artists beyond those five days a year."

Under Scholl's leadership, the ArtCenter's future seems not only bright but potentially limitless. "We want the arts community to feel the ArtCenter is their place to gather when they have new work to present, to hear a discussion by an internationally renowned artist or to get together and talk," he says. "If I do my job, we will be able to create a place that has all those things." •

Previous spread: Installation view of ArtCenter/South Florida's exhibition "An Image," featuring works by Harun Farocki (left) and Alan Gutierrez, among others. Above left: Resident artist Adler Guerrier (left) with Dennis Scholl in Guerrier's studio at ArtCenter/South Florida at 924 Lincoln Road. Above right: A view of the ArtCenter's former building at 800-810 Lincoln Road, which was sold for \$88 million.