

## Fresh Art

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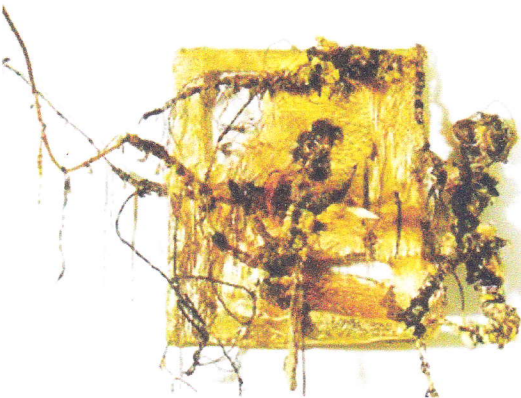
Pepe Mar



by Colleen Dougher

**Pepe Mar**'s collages, sculptures and mixed-media installations share a distinctive style, yet his approach to making them seems as fluid as the club, music and fashion scenes that inspire them. His works include big-lipped, snarly-faced collage sculptures and a tribal mask constructed from shoe boxes, beer cartons and images from fashion magazines.

Mar's work is constantly evolving, and the 32-year-old Miami artist says "I'm Afraid of Everything," the large colorful mixed-media installation he created last year for a show at [Girls Club](#) in Fort Lauderdale, left him with fresh ideas and a hunger for even larger installations. Mar says the four-month process of creating that work from sea sponges, wires, glittery doodads and dollar-store treasures was much like painting. Each layer brought him closer to the time when the objects he'd been collecting and incorporating "started coming alive."



"Golden Drama"



This was not a new experience for Mar, who began creating mixed-media works from found objects while in high school in Brownsville, Texas. “Even if I’m young, I have a lot of years of work behind me,” he says. “And when I think of what I’ll do next, I’ll look at my really old work and that gives me ideas. I think it’s really nice to look back at what you did before and bring it to the present, but revamp it and rework it and update the idea. You think, ‘Oh, my God, I was making it like this so long ago, but now I’m going to make it this way.’ ”

The process is working for Mar. Since moving to Miami in 2000 after graduating from California College of Arts and Crafts, he has participated in more than 60 group shows and 11 solo shows. His art has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Artnews* and *Art in America*. He is represented by [Castillo Gallery](#) and, as of last year, is pursuing a master of fine arts at Florida International University.

“I’m a very social person, so for me, it’s such a treat to be back in a setting where other artists are working,” Mar says.



“Meet Me at the Underground”



In February, he installed “**Meet Me at the Underground**” at *9 Solos*, a show in which nine FIU artists exhibited in a designated space in the Moore Building in the Design District. By that time, Mar, who frequently works in bright colors, had begun creating gold and silver cabezas (Spanish for heads) that poke fun at traditional busts that sit atop museum pedestals.

“They’re a little bit making fun of all of this artwork that is very official, like bronze sculptures,” he explains. “My work has always had a homemade look, so people always are like, ‘Oh, my God, you should make things out of bronze.’ People wanted me to make things that have more weight.”

Instead, he began constructing busts from lightweight baskets and thrift-store finds and adding gold leaf and, yes, pedestals. “The way they’re put together is very economical

and crafty, but with gold leaf, they become these precious sculptures in a way so I'm playing with the idea of the bronze sculptures," Mar says.

But the gold leaf isn't just for busts. "Meet Me at the Underground" bridged Mar's previous statuesque figures to "Golden Drama," a large mixed-media work made from fabric, plaster, paint and gold leaf. Tubing stretches from it to a figure atop a staircase on the other side of the space, representing the evolution of Mar's art.

An untitled work from Mar's *Face-Off* series is on display through July 31 in ***Mystic Visage***, an exhibition of masks, at **World Class Boxing**, 170 N.W. 23rd St., in Miami. Call 305-438-9908 or visit [Worldclassboxing.org](http://Worldclassboxing.org). "I'm Afraid of Everything" is on exhibit at ***Set to Manual***, which runs through Sept. 30 at Girls' Club, 117 N.E. Second St., in Fort Lauderdale. Call 954-828-9151 or visit [Girlsclubcollection.org](http://Girlsclubcollection.org).

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