

Wynwood gallerist Castillo taking his art shows to Miami Beach

By Anne Tschida
Sunday, April 6, 2014
SPECIAL TO THE MIAMI HERALD



Wendy White's "El Clásico." From the "Metabolic Bodies" show at David Castillo Gallery through May 10, 2014.

A decade ago, David Castillo inaugurated his gallery in Wynwood, on Northwest Second Avenue and 23rd Street, becoming one of the anchors that would make this corner of the neighborhood the epi-center of a homegrown art scene. Next fall, Castillo will depart Wynwood to open a new gallery on Lincoln Road in Miami Beach, starting another decade that, like Miami itself, has morphed into a different metaphorical place and time than just a few years ago.

Sitting in his refurbished Wynwood warehouse-turned-gallery, Castillo reflects on the transformation of his own practice and of Wynwood as he readies for a group show for April that will be the second to last in this space. His move is not an indictment on this

neighborhood, he stresses, but part and parcel of a process that happens in every art community the world over.



Xaviera Simmons' 'Index Four, Composition Four,' 2013.

Emerging artists and galleries need certain elements that a nascent community, like Wynwood circa 2005, could provide and nurture — cheap rents, exposure through art walks like Second Saturdays, a density of artistic outlets that create a hip atmosphere. But situations shift and with that comes a changing of the guard. (Leading gallerist Fred Snitzer will also transplant his gallery from Wynwood to downtown).

“My intention was always to be here for a decade, and then to open elsewhere,” says Castillo. Like the neighborhood itself, both Castillo and his first grouping of artists were emerging on the art scene back in 2005. There were no cafes, parking was free but iffy on the side streets, and the only reason to visit was for the new art.

Fast forward to 2014: Wynwood has become a multi-faceted destination, which with luck will give it long-standing and deeper roots. Castillo in a sense also has deeper roots, now representing national established artists, mixed in with his current locals.

Consider the group show *Metabolic Bodies*, which runs through May 10. Two new names that Castillo now represents will be unveiled here: Sanford Biggers and Lyle Ashton Harris. New York-based Biggers is fresh off a solo outing at Mass MoCA and has been exhibited in the Tate Modern, the Whitney and the Studio Museum in Harlem, among other institutions. Like most of Castillo’s artists, Biggers crosses many lines in his art-making, incorporating video, installation, drawing and performance in his conceptual expressions, often digging into issues of Afro-



Jillian Mayer's video "Scenic Jogging," 2010.



Miami gallery owner David Castillo will move his space from Wynwood to Miami Beach later this year, 2014. Alissa Christine Photography

identities in the 21st century. Hip hop, Eastern religions and the African-American tradition of quilt-making inform his work, often all in one piece or installation. His Quilt 16 represents him in this show.

Ashton Harris, also based in New York with an international footprint, uses manipulated personal snapshots, pop iconography, collage and performance to explore complex black and gay histories. His work here, Watering Hole III, is a red-tinged collage of photos, including Elizabeth Taylor as Cleopatra and a grainy Black Power portrait.

Also in this selected group show is work by Quisqueya Henriquez, who has been with Castillo gallery from the beginning. Born in Havana and now based in Dominican Republic, Henriquez

shares similarities with all of Castillo's artists, past and present, as she focuses on personal, gender and historical identities. For Carmen Herrera Inside Popova, a digital print and collage, she literally implants an image of Minimalist Cuban painter Herrera onto a geometric design of Russian avant-gardist Lyubov Popova.

While Castillo feels this is the right time to move into new territory, some basics remain constant, he says, as is intentionally underlined in this group show. "From the beginning I wanted to show artists who explored identity," especially through a sculptural aesthetic and the various manifestations of that form today.

So for instance, Castillo represents Kate Gillmore and Jillian Mayer, two artists mainly known for their video. And Adler Guerrier, the locally based artists whose work is hard to pigeon-hole into a genre; he moves through sculpture, drawing, photography — sometimes in one work — while he delves into the vagaries of the community around us.

"Everyone still fulfills a long-term vision," says Castillo, whether they are emerging artists or well into a career. "There is a common denominator in the conversation that we are all having with the art. A dialogue. I don't have a set number on how many or how few artists should be with the gallery. If their vision makes sense and fits with the gallery artists, then we can have a relationship." Still, his artist list is significantly larger now than a decade ago, compared to 10 years ago, numbering 18 when it once was a mere handful.

The groupings of artists represented in his gallery throughout the years has risen organically, he says. The mixture of black, white and Hispanic, gay and straight, male

and female is also not on a “quota” system. “I didn’t pick this person because, ‘she’s a woman,’ or ‘he’s African American.’ I picked them because I knew they would work well with my [conceptual] vision, and they wanted to work with me.”

As for the new Lincoln Road location, on the 400 block in the same building where FIU has its architectural annex, it’s a dream spot. “This is where I wanted to be. It will be similar size but in the heart of the Beach. I love it there.”

For the most part, he says, the gallery serves as a vehicle for artists to explore and exhibit new works, and its fans will want to see the work regardless of the address. “After 10 years, most of the people who are interested in my artists don’t care about a Second Saturdays or whatnot, they will come to see a particular artist regardless of the geography.”

In the 21st century art market, most of the actual sales for a gallery like Castillo’s revolves around art fairs and connections within a global art world. To that end, he now spends half of the year travelling. By the end of the year, he will have brought his artists to 10 fairs, from Chicago to New York and Europe.

Many on Castillo’s roster are familiar faces about town separate from the gallery space. Guerrier will have a solo show at PAMM next fall, while Ashton Harris, Biggers, Henriquez, Susan Lee-Chun and Xaviera Simmons are currently displayed in the inaugural groups shows at the museum. The TM Sisters are featured this year at the Girls Club in Fort Lauderdale. And all 18 — including Francie Bishop Good, Luis Gispert and Shinique Smith — will reveal new works when Castillo opens up his doors on Lincoln Road come September.



Shinique Smith's 'Tiny Dancer,' 2013.

IF YOU GO

WHAT: “Metabolic Bodies” group show of eight featured gallery artists

WHERE: David Castillo Gallery, 2234 N.W. 2nd Ave., Miami

WHEN: Through May 10

INFO: www.davidcastillogallery.com.