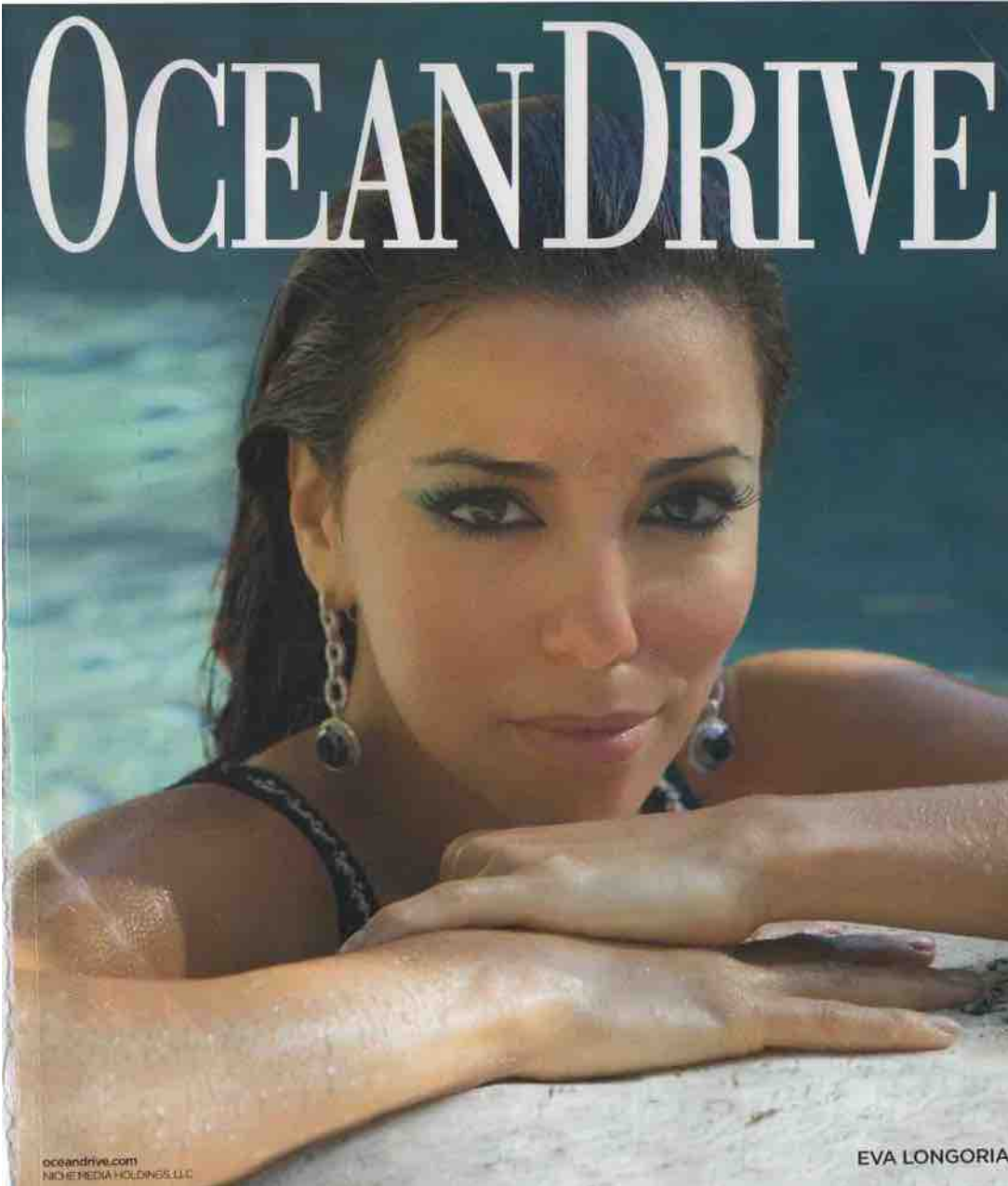


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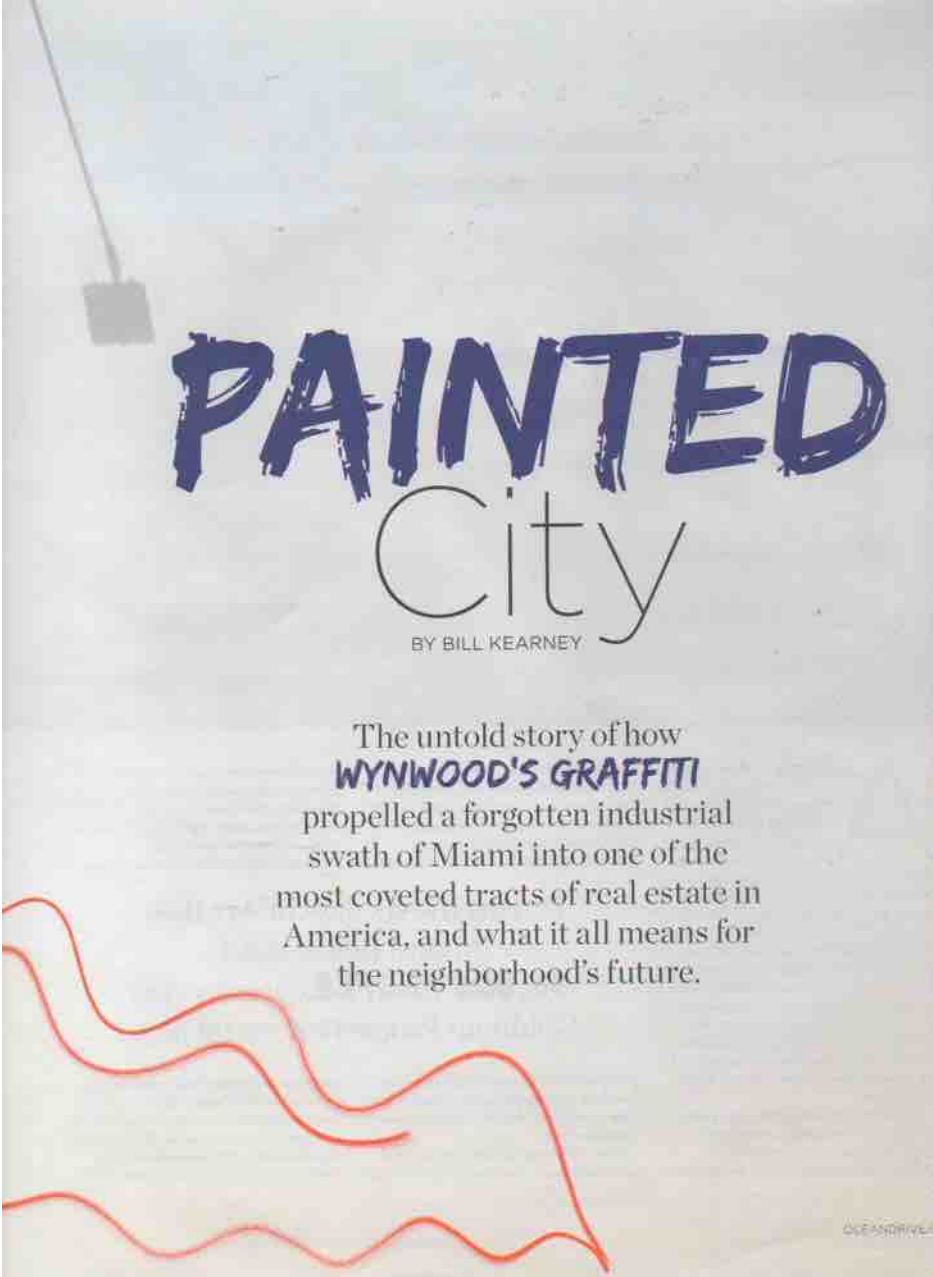


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EVA LONGORIA

New York street artist Kenny Scharf putting up his mark for Wynwood Walls. Over 300 artists have left their mark on the neighborhood in the last three years alone.





PAINTED City

BY BILL KEARNEY

The untold story of how
WYNWOOD'S GRAFFITI
propelled a forgotten industrial
swath of Miami into one of the
most coveted tracts of real estate in
America, and what it all means for
the neighborhood's future.

OCEANDRIVE

At the moment, Wynwood is an unlikely, and therefore exciting, mélange. The line out the door at Panther Coffee, once the dominion of the young, scruffy hip, is studded with property prospectors in slacks. Ducati is opening a store up the street. Two new condos are slated to break ground half a block west, yet there's a clutch of feral chickens in a side lot. The neighborhood is so hot *The New York Times* website ran a video on Wynwood style. You wouldn't have recognized it from how it was six years ago. At that time, it was a desolate, mostly drab, and sometimes dangerous warehouse district outlined by working-class housing. I worked in the area, and it was hard to find a sandwich, or even anyone to say bello to. I was even held up at gunpoint, although admittedly only once.

Why the eruptive change? In a word, graffiti—acre after acre of resplendent colors, massive images, ideas, turmoil: a curvy 10-foot tree goddess, a horned man-beetle the size of a van,

lost businessmen metamorphosing into larvae. Turn down any street and you're likely to be wowed. In a month, the images might be replaced by new ones. Welcome to Wynwood, 2014. And this place is about to change even more—Jugofresh has moved in, Ralph Pucci furniture

all of Wynwood's street art, says over 300 artists have created here in the past three years. During the six days of Art Basel Miami Beach 2013, 50,000 people came to visit Wynwood Walls, Goldman Properties' mural park. It's not just street art that's blossomed. Property

During the six days of Art Basel Miami Beach 2013, **50,000 PEOPLE** came to visit Goldman Properties' mural park.

just opened a 5,000-square-foot showroom, and Zak The Baker is opening up shop shortly. There's even word of a hotel and 500 residential units in the next five years.

Robert William de los Rios, the man behind wynwoodmap.com, a site that aspires to catalogue

values are climbing fast. Retail rented for \$10 a square foot in 2003. Today it's \$40 on coveted streets such as NW Second Avenue in the mid 20s, and North Miami Avenue in the 30s. Warehouses might have sold for \$40 a square foot in 2000. Today, depending on location, it's \$250 to \$300,



according to Tony Cho, president and CEO of Metro 1 Properties. And it's all because of the paint. If the stakeholders handle the change thoughtfully, what is now wonderful might just continue to be.

Graffiti is normally considered vandalism by landowners. Artists are arrested, sometimes tragically, as with the death last year of Israel Hernandez Llach (aka Reefu), who died after being struck with a stun gun by Miami Beach police. Yet in Wynwood, landowners cultivate artists, and artists ask permission to work. How did the hood become a freewheeling outdoor museum where everyone seems to get along? If forced to hang it on one name, that name would be Tony Goldman, who passed away in 2012. Goldman was a property developer responsible, in part, for the rebirth of New York's Soho as well as South Beach. His method has often been to establish a beachhead in forsaken neighborhoods by buying up land and opening restaurants. In 2004 and 2005, Goldman bought over 25 properties in



ABOVE: Miami property developer Tony Goldman had the vision for Wynwood Walls back in 2008; TOP: *Wall Street Labyrinth* by the Spanish artist Ligen.

Wynwood. "What it had was pedestrian potential, great light, and the setting for an arts district," he wrote in *The Wynwood Walls and Doors* book. "I love revitalizing run-down, abandoned historic communities! That's what turns me on!"

After buying in the area, Goldman was looking for a way to make it charismatic. In 2008, he found it. Jeffrey Deitch, then a gallerist in Soho, wanted to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Keith Haring's birth by re-creating the artist's famous mural of dancing figures on the same building at Bowery and Houston Street where the artist had created it in the early '80s. Goldman happened to

own the building, and the two teamed up and completed the Haring project. The passion of the public response was not lost on Goldman. He would later write that the Wynwood concept came to him as a 4 AM vision—"Wynwood's large stock of warehouse buildings, all with no windows, would be my giant canvases to create and display the greatest street art

ever seen in one place." Goldman Properties would use the 18 walls just up the block from Joey's Italian Café, which they had opened that year, as a starting point. Goldman asked Deitch, who had an expertise in street art, to partner as a curator. Goldman would offer air fair, a hotel, and supplies to the artists, and give them an outsized wall to paint without worry of arrest. "People are always asking me how much I'm being paid for this wall or that wall," says Shepard Fairey, one of Goldman's first artists, and probably the most famed street artist in America today. "I go, 'Look, not being arrested is being paid enough.'" The formula worked. The first batch of artists also



Paint
 fuel the street art scene in
 is style evolved out of fear of
 sthetic.

Is giving you walls?
 could paint and screen-print on
 ay very quickly, so I could do a lot
 hen go out and quickly glue it up
 given walls. I paint them. It lasts
 at means I can spend more time
 etic of two, three colors and more
 ts that can work as one-color
 r speed and simplicity. So, really,
 now that I don't have as many
 rable and unique.

What's in the Walls now?
 e was wheel pasted, but it started
 d so that was even more of an
 es that are in the mural were
 I sent me a list of cultural, political.

What's in Miami when you were here
 ynwood. I'm out stickering, I'm out
 ing murals.

“Everyone is walking
 around as if they
WERE STONED
 because you're always
 seeing something new.”

—DAVID POLINSKY

included the likes of Barry McGee and Clare Rojas from San Francisco, Swson, Futura, and Kenny Scharf from New York; the duo Os Gemeos from Brazil; and Miami artist Jim Drain. They began painting the 18-walled alcove five months before Art Basel Miami Beach 2009. By the time the fair came to town, the Walls were complete and were a smash hit.

Goldman always gave the artist carte blanche, which allowed artists such as Barry McGee, Vhils, and Lique to thrust themes of disenfranchisement, homelessness, and materialism in the face of a boom-and-bust city, a city with a tradition of opulence and class inequality. Wynwood abuts Overtown, one of the most underserved areas of Miami. Race riots occurred in both Wynwood and adjacent Liberty City in the '80s and '90s. And the Walls wouldn't exist at all were it not for the fact that Wynwood, post WWII, was a resortwear manufacturing hubbed fueled by low-cost immigrant labor living there. As that industry declined, so did the area. “Everything was considered dangerous,” says celebrity photographer Manny Hernandez, who grew up in Wynwood in the 1980s.

After the success of Wynwood Walls, and the energy it brought to the block, other landlords began to follow suit, and a tradition was created. There are no rules, to speak of, but there are manners. Robert William de los Rios has become somewhat of an agent between artists and landlords. “There's the respect of going up to the artist that's currently there [on the wall] and saying, ‘Hey, you know, we want to put someone else on this wall. If you'd like, we can put you somewhere else. Let's get something fresh.’”



iece by Luis Valle, Diana Contreras, and Buddah Funk.

The result is a semi-controlled visual chaos. "It's just so fun—everyone is walking around as if they were stoned because you're always seeing something new," says David Polinsky, the developer of 250 Wynwood, which is about to break ground as the area's first residential project since graffiti defined the neighborhood.

When Goldman created the Walls, he tapped into a vein, but the art-focused blood in that vein had been flowing for years. As early as 1999, photographer Paul Greco was holding art gatherings at Charcoal Studios, a live/work space he bought after experiencing a warehouse lifestyle in Paris. Developer David Lombardi, who now owns 40 properties in the area, saw the first glimpses of an art scene after meeting Greco and attending an opening at the pioneering Dorsch Gallery in 2000. It inspired him to convert factories into loft space, as well as build Wynwood Lofts in 2005. "What really spurred it was cheap, well-located space," says Cho. "This story has repeated itself all over the world. Artistic people are usually people without a lot of means," and Wynwood fit the bill.

"I first bombed down there in 2004," says Shepard Fairey. "I have friends from Miami that were like, 'Oh, you know, Wynwood, that's where the cool, grimy stuff is bubbling up.'" One of those friends was Books III Bischof, who focused Fairey on Wynwood because of its cred with skate culture and street art. Bischof ran with artists from Objects Art Space, a gallery that focused on street art, and others. They often painted in the area.

Bischof's random acts of graffiti became somewhat organized when in 2007 he and local

“WYNWOOD,
that’s where the
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is bubbling up.”

—SHEPARD FAIREY

artist Tytoe Gran created Primary Flight. He gathered artists from across America, contacted landlords, promised to buff the wall clean if they didn’t like the results, and managed to put up lots of legal graffiti, all timed to Art Basel. A street art turning point came in 2008. Bischof had set Fairey up with a wall on the Dorissa Building on 29th Street and North Miami Avenue (where Suviche Wynwood now sits). As Shepard painted into dusk, a crowd gathered. “It was like a rock concert,” says Bischof. “The sun was going down, and we didn’t have enough money [for lights] for him to paint in the night. And so the cops pull up and put their headlights on the wall so that Shepard could continue to work. I think the crowd was so intense they decided to help out. That was a moment we knew we had something.” Despite that zeitgeist-cop moment, Primary Flight tapered off in 2011.

“I think in a lot of ways, Books was a pioneer and Tony Goldman was able to build off of some of the momentum that Books had established,” says Fairey. “The Goldmans helped it achieve a critical mass.” In the end, Goldman gathered enough talent and had enough walls to create a tipping point.

With the rise of the murals, and thus the property values (some artists are already being priced out of studios), there’s no telling exactly what will happen in Wynwood. Will the painted warehouses be replaced by endless condos? Will Wynwood eat itself? Goldman Properties wants to see a sort of rich urban ecosystem akin to Williamsburg or the West Village. “You have smaller buildings that each have their own identity and create an exciting scale,” says Joseph Furst, Goldman Properties’ Wynwood director. “That’s where we want to go here.”



Mural collaboration
between Fintah Magee
and Hoxton.

But think of fiber-cool low-rise Venice, in Los Angeles; thousands of people live within three blocks of the main drag. About three people live within three blocks of Wynwood's main drag. "The reality is that retail is soft, still, in this neighborhood," Furst says. "We really need some residential here to make the retail pop. That's the missing link." The issue is zoning. Most of the area is limited to 36 residential units an acre, which makes for big, expensive units. It's untenable if you want an interesting "creative class" as tenants. He and others in the Wynwood Business Improvement District are vying for 150 units per acre and a voluntary eight-story height limit. The consensus among the players is that no one wants to re-create Brickell—this isn't about luring pre-construction South American money.

And so it begins. David Polinsky is breaking ground behind Panther Coffee on 250 Wynwood, with 11 live/work spaces averaging 1,600 square feet and street art curated by local gallerist/It boy Anthony Spinello. Another building is going up with 70 units and 50,000 square feet of

ground-floor retail across the street. Goldman just received an upzoning to 150 units per acre for one of its projects. Perhaps the biggest wildcard in the game is Moishe Mana, the New Yorker who got in early on Manhattan's Meatpacking District and now owns the 22-acre lot where Kendrick Lamar performed at Mana Wynwood during Art Basel. His plot is big enough for a custom-zoned Special Area Plan. Who knows where that might lead? And how do you keep it cool? "It's not just curating art, it's curating tenants," says Goldman Properties' CEO (and Tony's daughter) Jessica Goldman Srebnick, who sees the value of Target in Midtown but not in Wynwood. "I don't want a cookie-cutter product because I'm not that kind of client," she says with a bit more emotion than expected.

Historically, Miami's land development habits have shown little restraint. But maybe, just maybe, we've learned from our hangovers and would rather savor a glass of small-batch bourbon than do generic shots in rapid succession. In the



meantime, the art is beautiful, stunning, changing. "When people see it in person, it's powerful—the way a great mural changes the landscape," says Fairley. String several hundred murals together and you have a gift, a sense that anything could happen. There is something cultivated yet feral, dynamically unfinished. "It looks like complete madness," says Bischof. "You know it's alive, because the artwork is shifting so quickly." Let's hope we can keep it that way. **OD**