



DIGITAL DIMENSION

Photographer enhances his work with color and light

BY SAXON HENRY
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Fernando Diez makes manipulating photographic images look like just another day at the beach.

First he uses his honed photographic eye to capture a beautifully composed image, then he takes his mouse or drawing pad and digitally "paints" the image into a composition that seems drenched with Hopperesque light.

"I have found a way to take my photography beyond the realism that is characteristic of the medium and add a new dimension to it," says the native of Spain, who has lived in Miami for 20 years. "I take it to a different place where the limits of photography and painting or illustration converge."

Many of Diez's painterly images are ripe with nature's beauty, but he also creates portraits, many of them extreme close-ups with whispery sweeps of fleshy color. "I have so much fun doing this," he says. "I can change or saturate colors, create composite images that didn't exist before and then paint over them."

After 15 years as a commercial photographer, working mostly in advertising, Diez revels in his newfound freedom.

"Most of the time, a layout has to be approved by the client when you are shooting commercially and you can't deviate from their structure," he says. "With my art, I can use a variety of digital tools to allow my own technique, and my eye for color and shapes to shine."

Diez says the digital approach "allows me to be liberated from film and lab, and to have more control over my images."

With today's large printers, Diez can create enormous images. One beachscape he created for the Loews Miami Beach Hotel is 16 feet long by 7 feet tall. The parade of colorful life-

guard stations that dot the composition seem sculptural with their softened lines. The piece holds a commanding presence on the east wall of Preston's restaurant and as you approach, it's difficult to tell whether it's actually a photograph or a painting.

Since the photography sets the tone, he can achieve everything from traditional to modern compositions by the way he shoots the photograph and manipulates it, and he can show mockups of each step.

"If someone wants to have a beautiful portrait of their home, for instance; or they want to have something that will help them to remember an anniversary or a daughter's 16th birthday, I can shoot photos and turn them into photo paintings," he says.

Clients include RTKL, the design company that commissioned him to do the piece for Loews; Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, and private collectors. Prices for commissioned artwork printed on a 36-inch by 48-inch canvas ranges from \$1,500 to \$5,000.

"This work has given me the wings to fly away from reality and has taken me to a world where the limits of different art disciplines are blurred," says Diez. "I don't feel that it is a question of whether this is photography or painting; I think art is a manifestation of the human spirit and a way to show others your visions."

TO SEE HIS WORK

Fernando Diez Studio by appointment only: 6899 SW 62nd Ter., South Miami; 305-661-9909 or www.fdiezphoto.com/corporatephotoart.com. His beachscape at Loews (1601 Collins Ave., Miami Beach), commands the east-facing wall at the restaurant Preston's.

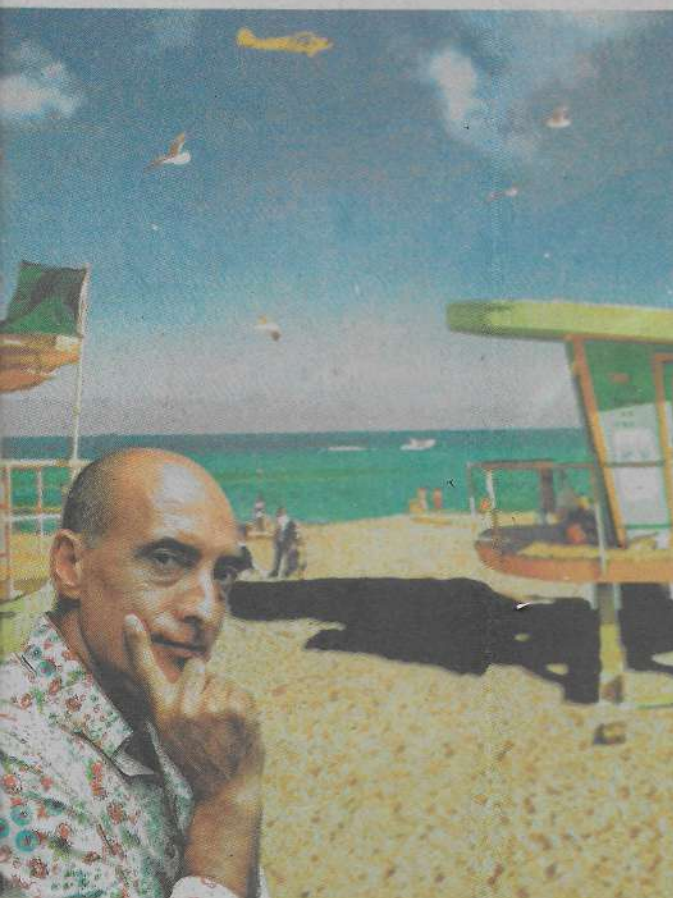


PHOTO ABOVE BY CARL JUSTE/MIAMI HERALD STAFF; OTHERS COURTESY OF FERNANDO DIEZ

digital paintings out of photos, has an installation at a large beach scene he created. Top photos, a house in Coral Gables. Bottom photos, Lake Atitlan in Guatemala and Miami Beach.

