

# Miami New Times

## Calle Ocho art walk features work not found in Cuban nostalgia shops

By Carlos Suarez De Jesus  
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Not all the fighting cocks peppering Little Havana's folksy gallery scene are wretch-inducing boils on the landscape. Beyond the lurid fiberglass monstrosities masquerading as public art in front of restaurants and cigar shops on Calle Ocho — some of the fowls garishly clad in chef toques and rainbow-bright aprons, others pimping spats and straw boaters — there exists an occasional interesting study of the ubiquitous subject that, for baffling reasons, remains the rage with tourists and collectors.

A fine example is Bruno Venier's *Gallo Urbano (Urban Cock)*, on view at the Cremata Gallery's "Summer Exhibition," featuring 40 works from the space's Latin American roster. The work will be on display during this Friday's edition of Viernes Culturales, the popular Little Havana cultural block party that takes place on SW Eighth Street between 17th and 13th avenues every last Friday of the month.

Venier's rooster, rendered in a slashing expressionistic style, boasts a prickly pink crest and chalk-white, brick-red, and flesh-toned feathers as it stands amid a roughly executed waterfront scene that recalls the gritty docks ringing Argentina's Mar del Plata. The turgid cock rears up from the center of the seedy landscape, leveling an ominous gaze at the spectator.

Venier, who was influenced by his friend Picasso and is known for his bold use of color, is one of Argentina's most acclaimed modernists, and his works are rarely exhibited in South Florida.

More than just your typical summer fire sale, the Cremata Gallery's group show has some compelling works on display mixed in with the seaside landscapes and sundry offerings hung to pay the bills.

That's a tribute to owners and art collectors Raúl Cremata, a former bean counter, and his wife Lourdes, late of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools system, who both shucked their careers to pursue their dream of running an art space.

Compared to the dozen or so artist studios and galleries that share the four-block strip, the couple's operation is among the most polished, and business appears to be booming.

That's because Cremata's eye seems more refined than those of his competitors and because, in large part, he eschews the local tourist trade that snatches up nostalgic scenes of guajiros cutting sugar cane or mulattas balancing fruit baskets on their heads, or the

smarmy Cuban landscapes choking many of his neighbors' windows.

Fine examples are two Humberto Castro works rendered in ink and oil on paper. The first, *El Juego Peligroso (The Dangerous Game)*, depicts a supine man anchored in space by boats and houses tethered to his flesh. The figure's spine bristles like a network of small blinking lights as a disembodied hand is poised to rip at his backbone with a torture device shaped like a claw.

Equally compelling is Castro's *El Cazador (The Hunter)*, which portrays a shadowy chap decked out in S&M gear and cradling a 9mm handgun. The malevolent rogue is getting his jollies taking target practice at seminude trapeze artists dangling arms and legs akimbo from a merry-go-round-like contraption. Castro's drawings employ smoky shading that ratchets up the gloom on his already sinister subject matter.

Likewise, Erman Gonzalez evokes notions of pain and suffering with *No Hay Corona Sin Espinas (There Is No Crown Without Thorns)*, a nifty painted and cut-paper wall installation of tangled thorns created in deep pomegranate hues that bring to mind Christ's torment during the Crucifixion.

On a much lighter note, check out Enrique Toledo's untitled Renaissance-style oil-on-canvas of a nude Venus lounging in a piece of succulent tropical fruit in the marble courtyard of an Italian coastal village.

Much like his neighbors, Cremata — who has worked himself into the position of vice president of Viernes Culturales since he first hung his shingle in Little Havana only five years ago — has proven even he can't resist displaying a painting of a juicy papaya.



Enrique Toledo's untitled Renaissance-style oil-on-canvas at Cremata Gallery.

## Details

**"Summer Exhibition":** Through August 1. Cremata Gallery, 1646 SW Eighth St., Miami; 305-6443315; [www.crematagallery.com](http://www.crematagallery.com). Tuesday through Saturday noon to 7 p.m. .