

photography

BY DONNA SWEENEY

SEEING CUBA AS IT IS

Local photographer captures a country frozen in time



■ Miami Art Space in Wynwood is hosting an exhibit of works by local fine art photographer H. Allen Benowitz, who recently returned from a humanitarian mission to Cuba where he photographed “Life in Cuba 2008” or, as he likes to call it, “The 10th Anniversary of Castro’s Five-Year Plan.”

“I wanted to capture Cuba as it is and portray it through my eyes,” Benowitz explains. And what observant eyes they are. While for some the exhibit might elicit nostalgia for the Cuba that once was, “Life in Cuba 2008” is not sugarcoated. Benowitz ventured into the Old Havana barrios and off-the-beaten-path neighborhoods, rarely if ever seen by tourists, where he encountered extreme poverty and despair.

“Our slums in the U.S. are palaces compared to their way of living. I view this as a time warp; nothing has changed since the 1959 revolution. The architecture is frozen in time, beautiful, but badly deteriorated. I found the people to be kind, gentle, and clearly captive to the indoctrination of Fidel,” he says.

Benowitz visited three synagogues during his stay, and attended a Friday night service conducted by a cantor as there are no rabbis on the island. Due to the revolution, migration and intermarriage, there are only 1,400 Jews left in Cuba; for the High Holy Day services they bring in a rabbi from Argentina.

Although the Cuban government does not permit private enterprise, some people are permitted to run restaurants out of their residence with the government taking 50 percent of the proceeds. Benowitz ate at two of these paladares, one operated by Cuba’s most prolific artist, Jose Fuster, and the other where the movie “Strawberries and Chocolate” was filmed. He found the food surprisingly good and the people warm and welcoming. Also surprising were the relatively well-preserved automobiles from the late 1950s, and his exhibit has a special display on “Cars of Cuba.”

A self-taught photographer, Benowitz is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, and received national recognition at the Holland & Knight Charitable Foundation’s Holocaust Remembrance Project awards dinner in Washington, D.C., for his acclaimed photograph “Behind the Wall.”

The exhibit runs from Feb.12-Mar.27, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and during the Wynwood Gallery Walk; additional viewings by appointment. An opening reception, with lecture and slide show, will take place on Feb. 12th from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Miami Art Space is located at 244 NW 35th St. For more information, call 305-856-1402 or visit H-AllenArt.com.



Theatre, 1040 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach. 305-545-8546, tigertail.org.

MIAMI SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA 2/7-2/8

“Made in America,” a program of MacDowell’s “Piano Concerto No. 2;” Schwanerter’s “Chasing Light;” Ives’ “Variation of America;” and Bernstein’s “America,” from “West Side Story.” 2/7, Gusman Concert Hall, UM, 1314 Miller Dr., Coral Gables. 2/8, Lincoln Theatre, 541 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach. 305-275-5666, miamisymphony.org.

SEEDS OF SUN JAZZ CONCERT 2/8

Award-winning Seeds of Sun, a New York-based quintet, brings new perspectives on world jazz through Israeli and South American influences. Alper JCC, 11155 S.W. 112th Ave., Miami. 305-271-9000, ext. 268; alperjcc.org.

SERAPHIC FIRE 2/13, 2/15

Seraphic Fire chamber choir performs compositions in the Orthodox musical tradition. 2/13, First United Methodist Church of Coral Gables, 536 Coral Way, Miami. 2/15, Miami Beach Community Church, 1620 Drexel Ave., Miami Beach. 305-476-0260, seraphicfire.org.

MARVIN HAMLISCH 2/18

Hamlisch, the composer of more than forty motion picture scores, and recipient of three Oscars, four Grammys, and a Pulitzer Prize for his groundbreaking show, “A Chorus Line,” performs some of his greatest hits. Knight Concert Hall, Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, 1300 Biscayne Blvd., Miami. 305-949-6722, arshtcenter.org.

A TRIBUTE TO ELLA AND BASIE 2/20

The Count Basie Orchestra and Grammy Award-winning vocalist Patti Austin, known for her interpretations of Ella Fitzgerald’s repertory, perform timeless classic arrangements. Knight Concert Hall, Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, 1300 Biscayne Blvd., Miami. 305-949-6722, arshtcenter.org.

IVES AND THE AMERICAN VERNACULAR 2/21

New World Symphony with a program of American hymns, rags and folk tunes from which Ives drew inspiration, featuring the UM Frost Chorale and followed by a discussion and multi-conductor performance of Ives’