



# Artist Miguel Paredes Brings New York to Miami

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By [CRISTINA MERRILL](#): [Subscribe to Cristina's RSS feed](#)  
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Miami-based [artist Miguel Paredes](#) grew up in [New York's](#) Upper West Side neighborhood, and still remembers the days -- and places -- he tagged.

"I did do some graffiti, but I really was not one of the biggest graffiti players," he said.



The move from urban settings to sunny beaches when he was barely legal wasn't a shock. He'd been going to southern [Florida](#) on family vacations for as long as he could remember.

"We've always been in [Florida](#)," he said. "It was a familiar place for me."



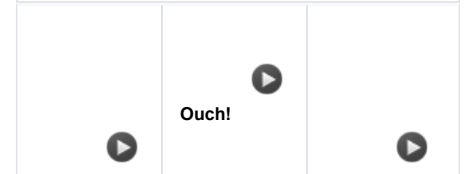
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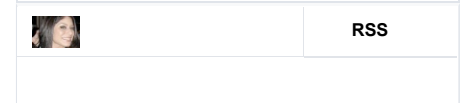


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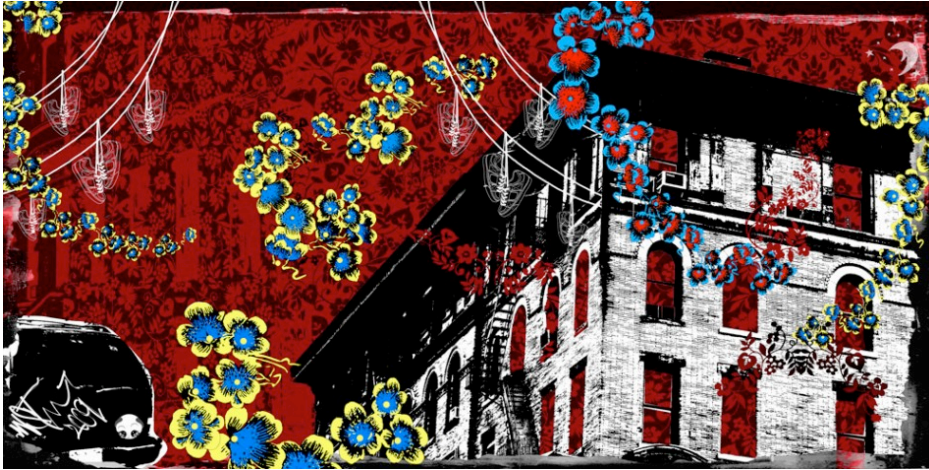
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The move was also a chance to escape the nasty scene in [New York](#).

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"It was the 80s, and New York was just tough," he said, citing the city's drug problems. "My friends were getting into all kinds of sh\*t."



He lived for a time with his godfather and took up various jobs.

"I liked the weather, I liked the people," he said of Miami. "It was different, like a movie for me."

Paredes eventually got his own studio, took classes, and became an apprentice to the artist Paul Kus. He was even mentored by artist Ronnie Cutrone, who was an assistant to Andy Warhol.



Paredes has certainly come a long way since his tagging days. His work is shown internationally and has been viewed in Asia and Europe. He was selected as the [official artist](#) for the 2011 Latin Grammy Awards and created the art that appeared on posters, tickets, and programs.

One of Paredes' favorite creations is [Pulgha](#), a Japanese anime-type character he's developed over the past 10 years to become what she is today. Her name is a play on "pulga," the Spanish word for "flea." Paredes was inspired by the anime and comics he enjoyed when he was young. He was also inspired by the birth of his first child, a daughter. He recalled having to learn about girl toys.

"Everything kind of became pink," he said.

The character is currently being pitched as a cartoon and for merchandise.

"She's become one of my main icons," he said.



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His New York influence is clear throughout much of his work. He's painted brownstones, subway stops, and even an iconic Upper West Side eatery: Gray's Papaya. His "Urban Dreams" series features several black-and-white buildings contrasted with brightly colored flowers. His father was an architect, and the younger Paredes has always been passionate about buildings and structures.

"I have an urban pop art style," he said. "I kind of combine my styles throughout the years [into] one unique style. Everything I paint, it's almost like storytelling."

Paredes' work is exhibited on Second Saturday Art Walks at his gallery, located at 173 NW 23 St. in Miami. The next Second Saturday Art Walk is on Feb. 11.



(Photos courtesy of the artist)

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