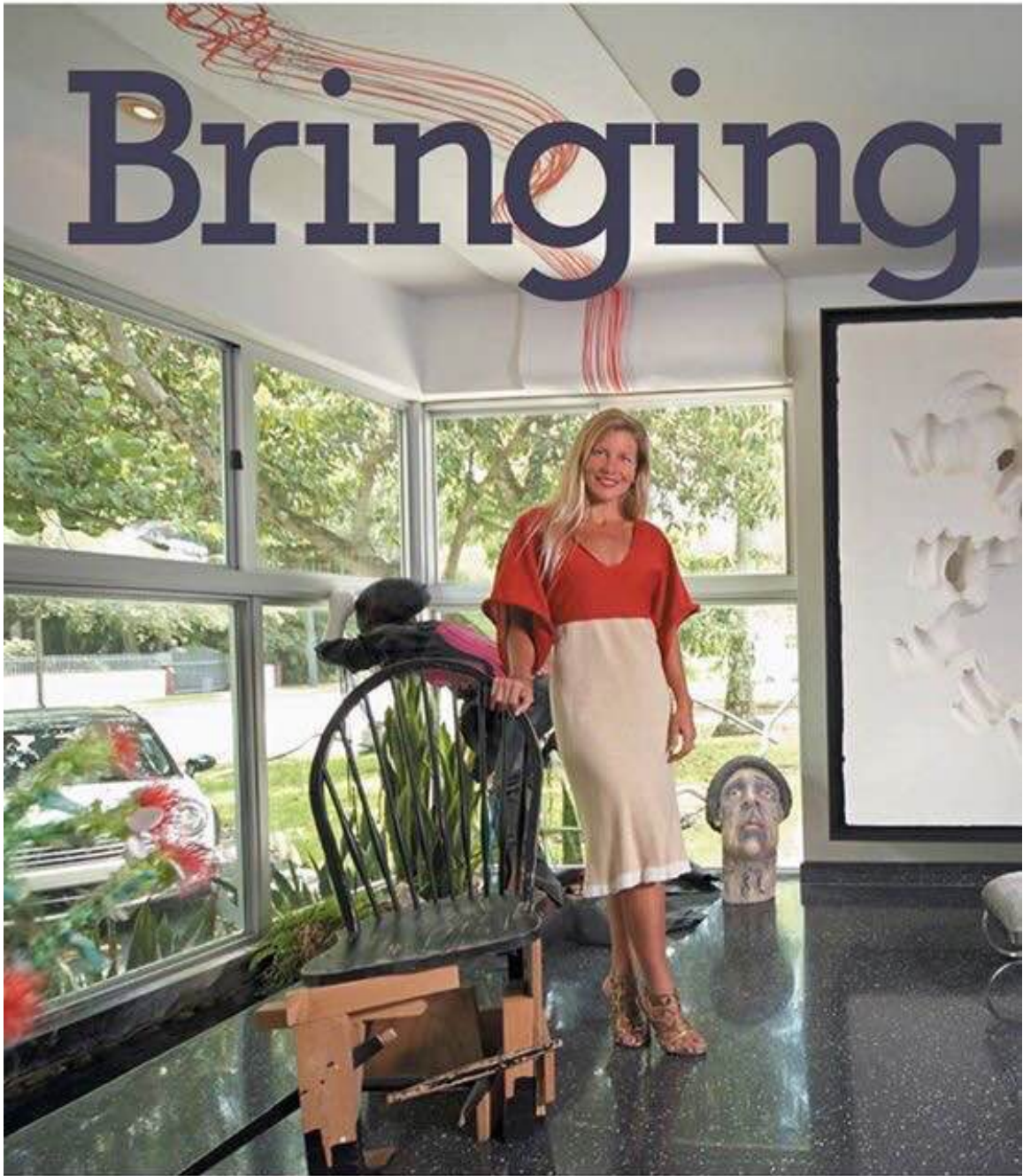


Bringing





IT

Home

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Kathryn Mikesell at home among her art; Pigeon by Valerie Hegarty; *Begging to Sink into Repose* by Derek Weisberg (silhouette).

MIAMI'S FAIRY GODMOTHER OF ARTISTS KATHRYN MIKESELL SUPPORTS ARTISTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD LIKE NO ONE ELSE, THROUGH THE FOUNTAINHEAD TRINITY OF RESIDENCY, STUDIOS AND GUIDANCE PROGRAM, YOUR FOUNTAINHEAD.

By Michelle Payer

Tall, blonde, surfer-girl natural Kathryn Mikesell recalls the time at a recent event when a woman exclaimed, "Oh, I know you! I've been in your bedroom!" While such a statement would raise eyebrows in most social settings, for Kathryn and husband, it's a flattering recognition of their personal mission: to unite community and nourish global artists in their home and through Fountainhead Residency, Fountainhead Studios and Your Fountainhead, three interconnected and original endeavors they created together nearly 10 years ago. The three ventures sprang from a love of art and community, and a prevailing passion to connect the two in an organic and profound way that supports artists and indelibly connects them to Miami residents.

Kathryn estimates in the past eight years, thousands of people have wandered through her one-story home as guests of intimate dinner parties, large gatherings, and collaborations with philanthropic and arts organizations, all meandering through the modern, art-filled nest she shares with children Skye and Galt and husband and Fountainhead partner Dan, a former CIA agent and natural contender for the next James Bond (note to Hollywood: scout Morningside). The name "Fountainhead" was inspired by the classic Ayn Rand novel the couple admires, and keeps creative inspiration and individualism at the forefront of their endeavors. (True Rand fans, a large *Who is John Galt?* painting hangs

Photo: Carlos Hidalgo



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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *Blocked Scenary #3* by Gao Rong; this room contains work by more than a dozen artists, including Nicholas Hlobo, Daniel Arsham, Moira Holohan and Nathan Carter; *I Love U I Hate U* by Trong Gia Nguyen.



just inside their front door.)

There is no delineation between art and furnishings in Kathryn and Dan's house, set on a leafy street in Miami's elegantly understated Morningside community. Fifteen-year-old Galt and his friends take their hammocks everywhere, and thus have created their own perches on a mango tree in the front yard, building wood steps and seats that look down upon concrete

and fence-post installations by Los Angeles artists Ruben Ochoa (work of the same body is on view at PAMM). The imposing art installations and hammocks blend together in a most comfortable way. In fact, there are so many pieces of art in every available space within the Mikesell house—on the walls, floors, ceilings, tabletops, countertops, bookcase, doors, door jambs, stovetop, laundry room, bathrooms, poolside, front yard, back yard and any space in between (we counted 260 works by 206 artists, 51 of those from Miami)—that two bicycles against the wall or Galt's sketchbook propped perfectly on the sofa could both be mistaken for modern art. An ancient wall air-conditioning unit and the burner below with well-worn saucepan is a piece by Mika Rottenberg (who will have a show at the Bass Museum December 1 through May 15). The edge of the living room has a foot-wide, wall-to-wall fish pond that practically begs tipsy partygoers to stumble into it. Some, like Cristina Lay Rodriguez's sculpture, have had to be repaired after a guest toppled onto it. Outside a bedroom, what looks like a blue container door is in reality a cloth installation by a young

Chinese artist who is a third-generation embroiderer. As with life, every piece of art has a story.

But this is much more than an art-filled home (so much art that excess pieces have been loaned out to an estimated 25 homes of friends). This is a calling for Mikesell, a culmination and continuation of one of life's great passions, to unite community and feed artists' souls, all the while creating spaces for them to work, live, discover, grow, spread their wings and find opportunities they would otherwise scarcely have.

Think of Kathryn Mikesell as a fairy godmother of artists, who, through the familial nature of their residency and studio, become part of the Mikesell family. One artist currently stays in the couple's guestroom while finishing a project; a few years back, artist Typoe would pick up Galt and Skye from school when it wasn't considered "cool" to have (perfectly acceptable) parents collect them. The "handsome, tattooed Typoe" fit the bill much better.

A generous and benevolent undertaking the Mikesells have sustained for nearly a decade, Fountainhead Residency began when the couple purchased the home across the street and transformed it into a space for artists to live and work in short stints, first in collaboration with Locust Project, then all Miami museums, and finally artists who come recommended and referred by the former Residency visitors; each may stay up to two months, rent-free, to live, work, be inspired and meet fellow artists, curators, gallery owners and collectors. "It's about giving them an environment that is hopefully loving, caring and supportive, that provides an opportunity to interact with colleagues and learn from them and create opportunities, perhaps with the body of work that was inspired by the Residency," explains Kathryn, who glows like a proud mama duck when describing her ever-changing ducklings. "There's

nothing like learning about art from the artists, and the Residency enables artists to experiment, respond to the space, work something out, talk to other artists and do more ambitious exhibitions," she says. At the same time, it gives back by giving the community an opportunity to spend time with them.

It provides a cross-pollination between visiting and Miami artists."





Photo: Carlos Hidalgo



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The place where the Fountainhead Residency began, across the street from the Mikesells' home; another room filled with sculpture and prints by more than two dozen artists, along with a bicycle by Shinola (far right, in front of the window); *Who is John Galt*, a reference to author Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, hangs inside the Mikesells' front door.

As Kathryn explains, "Everything we do is to support artists, support Miami and the community, and create more appreciators of art. And also to develop and foster a community that only starts with the Residency. With the artists themselves, sometimes they are coming because they have been producing commercially for so long, they need to take a step back and evaluate where they are and not have something to prepare for. Or they're here to create a show; or they've had an idea they've never had the time to explore; or they look to Miami for inspiration—to its diversity of culture, light, foliage, people; or, in most cases, it's a little bit of everything."

More than 360 artists have stayed so far, three artists at a time, from 36 countries and every continent except Antarctica. The current group is from Kenya, Croatia, New York and Colombia, the last in partnership with Ministry of Culture of Colombia, who is working on a book inspired by Craigslist "Missed Opportunities."

The same year Kathryn and Dan created Fountainhead Residency, they established Fountainhead Studios, a warehouse in the (then-unknown) Little River area that provides more than 30 Miami-based artists with affordable, flexible studio space. "We asked Miami artists what they needed, and we created the warehouse from those conversations: to work without being on view, to have community, and to collaborate with a diverse group of people to gain perspective and a different viewpoint." Twice a year, Kathryn opens the doors of Fountainhead Studios and invites the public to walk the warehouse with a glass of wine, talk to the artists and discover a glimpse of what they are creating.

Out of these two endeavors was born Your Fountainhead, whereby Kathryn creates guidance, introductions and entrée to Miami newcomers, professionals considering a relocation, or residents wanting to become connected with like-minded people. From chefs to tech entrepreneurs, developers and chief brand officers, all have been clients and Kathryn has introduced them to Miami's cultural movers and shakers to make connections through one-on-one introductions. "I love Miami. Everything I do is about people. It always comes back to people," says Kathryn. "So I said, there are people coming to Miami,

moving here, investing here...what if I could be that conduit that shows someone Miami, helps them find their people and make Miami home?" From the conductor of the Miami Symphony Orchestra to a renowned chef and a top developer, they are all friends who make time for introductions, and thus the chasm that can be wide when moving to a new city is greatly diminished. "Artists feed every sense we have," enthuses Mikesell. "Chefs, musicians, architects, advertising copywriters, landscape architects, clothing designers...everything is created by an artist, yet artists are so often forgotten."

Never one to rest on her laurels, Mikesell has several upcoming projects for the fall: a non-profit sponsorship, a new monthly gathering of artists called "MEET," and a collaboration with Miami Symphony Orchestra Music Director and Conductor Eduardo Marturet, who, with Mikesell, will select works from Miami art collections. Marturet will then write original symphonic works inspired by those collections, which will be performed in November, with artwork video superimposed in the auditorium during the performance.

Back to thousands of people walking through Mikesell's bedroom, a visual that takes a while to digest. "I think of this house as part of the city," she says. "We don't own this work because we feel the need to own something; it's about building community, building appreciation. For the artist, having so many people through our home introduces the work to a much broader audience and exposes the art beyond the home's residents." The fairy godmother of artists pauses to answer a call. Could the Mikesells host an artist in their home? Kathryn's smile lights up the room. "Of course. We'd love to have him." **M**

