

The rock-star rise of gallerist Jeremiah Jenner

These days, you'd need rock star cred to keep an art gallery in business for more than a year in art starved South Florida. Art photographer Jeremiah Jenner is no Jimi Hendrix, but, given the tenacity of Galerie Jenner amid the revolving door of art galleries snuffed out far too soon and with alarming frequency, there's no mistaking his near-miraculous staying power. It doesn't hurt that Jenner himself boasts a head of golden glam-rock curls sculpted as if he shared Dee Snider's personal hairstylist.

Naturally, he has a different analogy. I'm like the David Lee Roth of the art world," said Jenner inside his third-floor live/work loft in Fort Lauderdale's Sailboat Bend Artist Lofts, speaking with a rapid-fire thought process, "On reception nights, it feels like a rock concert in my art gallery because I make my shows over the top. You have to make yourself stand out, literally and figuratively."

Galerie Jenner welcomed its first patrons in June 2010 after spending what he calls a "long" two years on Sailboat Bend's waiting list. After co-curating a show at The Painted Easel in Weston, Jenner got the call to move in and giddily greeted his new digs in downtown Fort Lauderdale. "When I turned the key in the door, I thought, 'This is the place I've always wanted,'" he said.

"Leap of Faith," the first of four massive tentpole shows to grace the studio since its christening, ended up drawing 150 art-philes and a lot of press coverage, along with a filmed segment on PBS television, he said.

Isaac Allen Sandy, Robert McKown and Jody Leshinsky, three

trusted friends he discovered while teaching photography classes at Broward Community Schools (and who noticed his knack for curating shows) agreed to join the inaugural exhibit, Jenner said.

His loft is far from a vanity gallery mounted with wall-to-wall Jenner originals. The 40-something curator prefers to scour the increasingly barren tri-county art scene for complete unknowns, those struggling, dark horse talents who've yet to grace a major gallery.

He keeps an eye out for photographers and painters at the galleries dotting Wynwood Art District, the North Beach Art Walk, F.A.T. Village and Miami's Art Basel, and has slowly harvested a talent roster of about 25 local and international artists.

"I've always wanted to showcase the unknowns, the people who deserve to be seen by the public," Jenner said, spreading out a pile of magazines like a proud parent boasting of their child's report card – *ArtForum*, *Art-News* and *Miami Design* – some of which featured his artists. "I'm always scouting for talent, fresh art, to rotate around in my gallery. All the art students, the local artists, they get effervescent, – the crowd's rocking, the music's rocking – they get so excited to see their works on the walls."

After "Leap," he mounted a tongue-in cheek showcase of retro pinup girls in last February's "Cheesecake!!" which culled submissions from pro artists and students from the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale. That and "Destination Unknown," a first-anniversary exhibit of travel-based photography and art

that took place this June, courted 200 patrons on their respective opening nights.

Jenner, who shoots vibrantly crisp close-up photography with his Nikon SLR camera, hand-picks artworks using the same free wheeling, rock star method that he deploys to pump out his increasingly daring displays. "I get most of my insight by focusing at the artists' works on a computer screen.

I like to take the images and look for parallels in lines and linearity. I'm extremely particular. It all has to fit into my context."

Galerie Jenner is getting set to premiere "Out of Context: Juried Art Contest," sponsored by Pearl Art Supply; a lighthearted display in which artists morph ordinary paint-by numbers kits into unique installations using clay, watercolors, charcoal – or anything, really – so long as

they color outside the lines. And lest anyone think the pretentious-sounding "Galerie Jenner" clashes with his peculiar method of artwork selection, the name is actually a tongue in cheek. "It's meant to sound stuffy and pretentious, but it's the opposite."

But all the hard work paid off, "I'm still stunned by the success of it all." Call 954-609-7009, or visit GalerieJenner.com.

- Phillip Valys / Forum Publications



ART TALK

A group of patrons discuss artwork from Galerie Jenner's previous exhibit, "Destination Unknown." His next exhibit, "Out of Context: Juried Art Contest," opens Oct. 15 in conjunction with Art Fallout 2011.

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