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Downtown Arts District Welcomes New Gallery

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HOLLYWOOD, FL – For nearly 30 years, painter José Perez honed his artistic talent and dreamed of the day he could open his own gallery. When that day finally came, he chose Downtown Hollywood for its location.

Maffu Arts Gallery, which opened November 17th at 115 S. 19th Avenue, joins an established local art community of several galleries that recognize the unique appeal of the Downtown Hollywood.

Perez's own creative journey began in his native Cuba, where he took up painting at age 15. After emigrating from Santiago de Cuba to South Florida in 1991, he worked a variety of jobs, including laying pipes in the streets of Miami, to support his artistic passion. "I used to paint all the time, in my spare time," Perez said.

About six years ago, he was selling enough of his paintings to be able to quit his day job and become a fulltime artist. Perez, who specializes in surrealistic oil paintings on canvas, counts among his clients private collectors, corporations and interior designers who are drawn to his vibrant and powerful colors.

Currently on display at Maffu Arts Gallery are more than 70 paintings by Perez and three other artists, as well as a few ceramic pieces. Beginning at noon, visitors can watch the resident artist at work in his studio, which is open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily except Tuesday.

In choosing his gallery location, Perez said he was drawn to the "nice neighborhood" and dynamic arts climate of Downtown Hollywood, which is home to the Art and Culture Center of Hollywood, Hollywood Central Performing Arts Center, Arts Academy of Hollywood, South Florida Ballet Theater, ArtsPark at Young Circle and a variety of art galleries.

Perez also credits the monthly ArtWalk event with drawing art-lovers to Downtown Hollywood. Held from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. every third Saturday, ArtWalk features art displays and complimentary wine and hors d'oeuvres at all galleries and other participating businesses, a variety of live music and free guided maps for visitors.

"The ArtWalk is the best thing happening in Downtown Hollywood," Perez said. "I love it."

In addition to its many arts offerings, Hollywood's Historic Downtown District includes a wide variety of restaurants, pubs and clubs, unique boutiques and specialty shops.

The Hollywood Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) was created under the authority of Florida's Community Redevelopment Act of 1969. The CRA's mission is to encourage economic development through the use of tax increment financing by funding development, special projects and enhanced services that address areas of community concern. The Downtown District was established in 1979 to promote Hollywood's central business district including Historic Hollywood Boulevard, Young Circle and nearby residential neighborhoods. The Downtown District is approximately 580 acres and extends from 22nd Avenue on the west to generally 17th Avenue on the east, Johnson Street on the north and Washington Street on the south.

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