

The Miami Herald

Giant snails suffer from life in the fast lane

■ Several pink snails brought to South Beach by an Italian art collective have been attacked and vandalized, leaving organizers shellshocked.

BY DAVID SMILEY
dsmiley@MiamiHerald.com

The 45 giant pink snails visiting Miami Beach for Art Basel season were supposed to inspire reflection on the environment and the fast pace of South Florida life.

Instead, the recycled plastic gastropods have been treated like unwanted tourists — punched, tagged with graffiti, relocated by county order and, in one case, tossed into Biscayne Bay.

"Every morning I wake up with a disaster," said Gloria Porcella, co-owner of Galleria Ca' d'Oro, which has backed the Italian art collective behind the 45 snails' appearance.

The Cracking Art Group and Porcella's gallery brought the giant snails to Miami

• TURN TO SNAILS, 2A



C.W. GRIFFIN/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

DEFACED: Graffiti mars a plastic snail on Dade Boulevard in Miami Beach.

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THE ART SCENE

Giant snails take a beating on Beach

• SNAILS, FROM 1A

Beach on Nov. 15. Since then, at least eight of the snails have been treated poorly. Police are investigating.

"I'm disappointed because everybody really loved the snails. We've received thousands of e-mails from people who say, 'We want them permanently.' But there is somebody that is trying to destroy them every day."

ART BASEL

The snail-bashing began right around the Dec. 2 start of Art Basel,

when flocks of art lovers descended on Miami Beach and Miami for the world-renowned festival.

That day, Miami-Dade County told Porcella that a permit to place four snails on the Venetian Causeway had been revoked, and the quartet was moved to Alton Road and 41st Street.

RIGHT OF WAY

Delfin Molins, a spokesman for the county's public works department, said the permit was incorrectly issued because county law "does not allow the placement of

such items within the public" right of way.

Then on Sunday, somebody "punched" and damaged a snail, Porcella said.

Sometime over the weekend, several snails on Dade Boulevard were upended, and someone tagged two others with graffiti, she said.

The topper: A snail in Maurice Gibb Memorial Park was "launched in the water" of Biscayne Bay.

Miami Beach police say they have received reports about the vandalism and a detective from the department's property crimes bureau is investigating.

For Porcella, who just opened a gallery in Coral Gables, the experience is a first. She said the snails project, which has also been exhibited in Rome and Paris, has never been vandalized or disrespected the way it has been in Miami Beach.

NO MORE SURPRISES

"I hope tomorrow morning I won't wake up with more surprises," she said.

Porcella said the snails will stick around until Jan. 3. Don't be surprised if they hide in their shells until then.