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NEW DIGS FOR SNAILS



ALLISON DIAZ/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

Luiz Menezes installs a giant pink snail near the CNL Bank building in Coral Gables on Friday. A contingent of the snails, which debuted last month in Miami Beach, will spend two months in the Gables. **Story, 3B.**

Pink snails move on — to Gables

■ After getting vandalized, the hot pink snails that have been gracing public places in Miami Beach have found a new home in Coral Gables, where they will stay for the next two months.

BY TANIA VALDEMORO
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Coral Gables has become the new habitat for a contingent of hot pink snails.

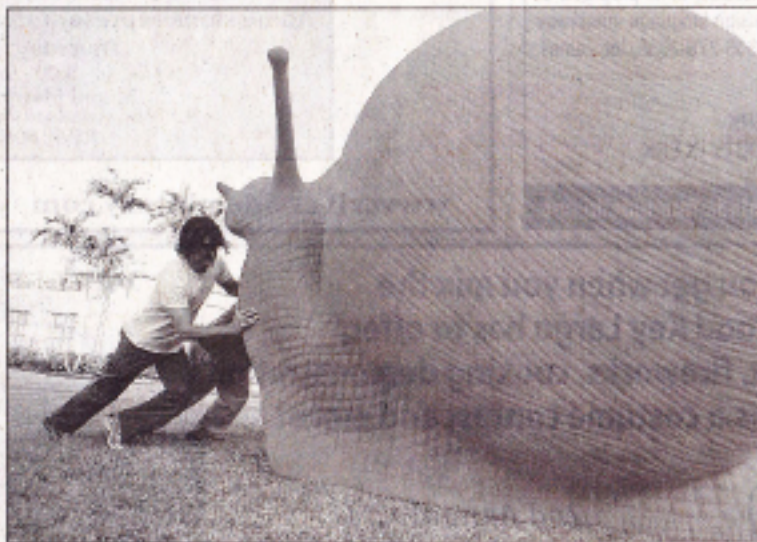
Their owner is betting they'll have a more hospitable stay than when they were on Miami Beach, where a few of them were tagged with graffiti and one was tossed into Biscayne Bay.

"It has been a bad thing and we don't want people to think about doing it again. In general, people have been good to the snails," said Gloria Porcella, co-owner of Galleria Ca d'Oro, a new gallery in the Gables that sponsored the snails.

The eight-foot tall gastropods, made from recycled plastic to promote sustainability, made their debut last month on Miami Beach as part of Art Basel. On Friday, they began moving to the Gables.

"I'm very happy to have the snails come to Coral Gables," said Porcella, who worked with the Italian art collective Crackling Art Group to produce the exhibit of the 25 snails.

The snails — 11-foot-long and



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A NEW HOME: Luiz Menezes works Friday to set up one of the pink snails that will be scattered throughout Coral Gables.

and painted in a hue of hot pink — will be installed throughout the city. Among their habitats: two in Merrick Park near City Hall, four near the youth center and library and two in Ponce Circle Park. They will be there for two months.

Another eight smaller gastropods will be on display at Ca d'Oro Gallery, 135 San Lorenzo Ave., between Douglas and Le Jeune roads, just north of the Village of Merrick Park.

The snails are no mere flash in the pan. The goal of the public

art display is to spur conversations about recycling and the environment.

"If we don't take care of our world, our children won't grow up in the world we grew up in," Porcella has said.

The snails can relate. Shortly after their arrival, at least eight were either relocated because of permit problems, defaced by graffiti and in one case, tossed into Biscayne Bay. Workers fished the snail out of the bay and cleaned it, said Veronica Villegas, who is helping Porcella

publicize the exhibit.

Porcella believes the snails will be treated better in Coral Gables.

She points to the snails' two "angels" — two Gables city workers who went to Miami Beach last month after work to clean them and remove graffiti.

"They told me they would check to see that all the snails were OK," said Porcella, who downplayed some of the recent problems. "We want people to interact with the snails. The kids have been their biggest fans," she said. To that end, the gallery donated a large snail to the Miami Children's Museum on Watson Island.

After their Gables tour, the large gastropods are headed to an undisclosed location in the United States.

An anonymous collector outside Florida — Porcella would not say where — has purchased 22 of them. Another two snails are being auctioned off for charity, with another going to the children's museum.

But that doesn't mean South Florida will stay a snail-free zone. Fort Lauderdale has expressed interest in displaying the snails, and Porcella is considering manufacturing another set of them. This time in beige.

For information, visit www.pinksnails.com or www.cadodoro.com