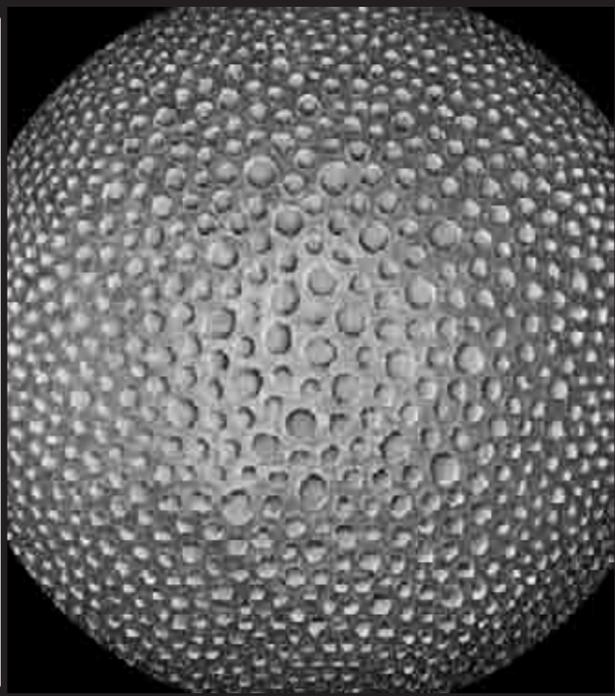


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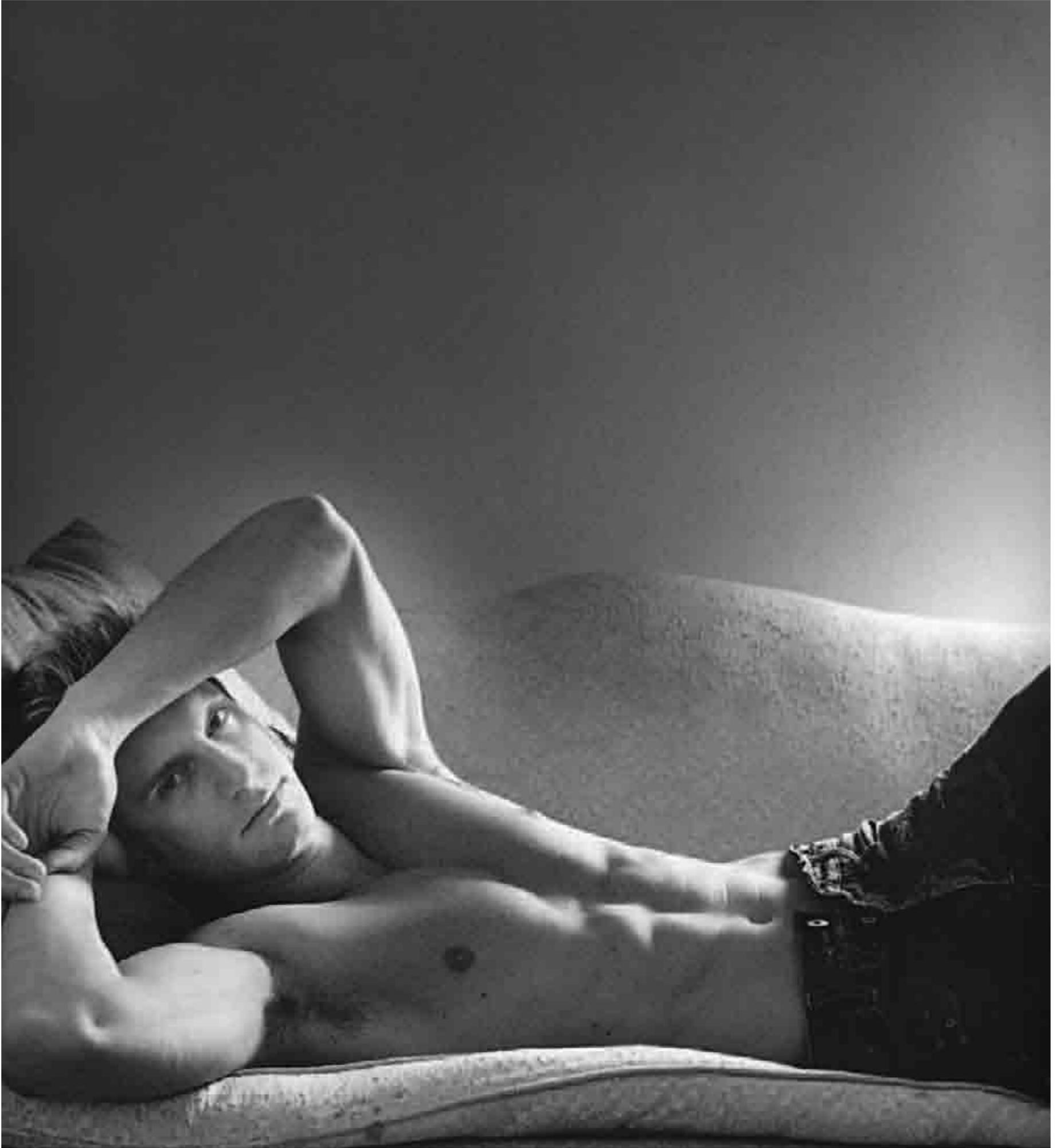


THE LONGEST RUNNING WEEKLY ON SOUTH BEACH

#47

11/20/03

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BY CARL ZABLOTNY

Once again Wire has come across an incredible member of the arts community of Miami Beach who is doing some fabulous work, but almost hidden from the masses. And we're here this week to make sure everyone will now know about Richard Boprae, a wonderful, incredibly attractive, highly gifted artist who is making waves in the art world today.

Spending time with Richard discussing his art career, modeling career, and life on the Beach was a very exciting experience. His enthusiasm, energy, and sense of self are remarkable. There is a wonderful depth to his character – beyond his amazing handsome looks – that makes you want to instantly bond with him. He's not your ordinary artist – or your ordinary person. And that's from many different perspectives, beginning with the reason he came to South Beach in the first place.

He was a blossoming, highly successful model when he found out his best friend was seriously ill and living in South Beach.

Richard decided to spend some time with him. At first it was six months and then two years before his friend eventually died of AIDS complications. During that time Richard pretty much gave up his modeling career during what were probably his peak years in the industry. But what began to blossom in Richard during that time with his friend was an art career that has now put him at the forefront of the art scene in South Florida.

All you have to do is check out his work at Las Olas Fine Art Gallery, 701 E. Las Olas Blvd., Fort Lauderdale or at his studio in Wynwood and you will be amazed at the beauty he has created. There's also a chance to view his new exhibit, "Healing" at the Murano Grande tomorrow night, Friday, Nov. 21 from 7-11 p.m. R.S.V.P. is mandatory (305.490.6906). Richard will also be having an open studio exhibit of a few select pieces during Art Basel, Dec. 4 at his Wynwood Studio (2534 North Miami Ave.). Read Wire for details next week.

Richard has done numerous solo exhibitions, group exhibitions, and commissions throughout his young art career, including a commission from the City of Miami Beach recently displayed in the Botanical Garden for the "Beach Ball" exhibit sponsored by Jeff Morr from Majestic



*Mutation 12" x 12"*



*Totem 12" x 12"*



*Totem 12" x 12"*



*Fullfillment 36" x 24"*

Properties. He and his work are truly incredible!

So here's a look at another great guy in the gay community who is in love with his work as well as the people and location he calls home, Miami Beach. Once you meet Richard, you will never forget him. He's really that intriguing!

***Let's talk about your background – when and how you arrived in Miami Beach.***

I arrived five years ago, in December, 1998, to take care of a friend of mine who was sick. I stayed with him for six months, but had to move out of the house since it was very strenuous. He got better and I started concentrating on building my life here. But then, once again, he got worse. And it was strange, because the worse he became, the more energy I had. I was planning a show for December, 2001 and he could hardly get out of bed. I could get out of bed, I could walk, or whatever. He gave me the strength to build my whole collection for that show. My show took place, Dec. 15, 2001. He had been in the hospital since Nov. 25 and in the days before the show it was crazy – going to the hospital to see him, back to work, going to the hospital, back to work. The show was very successful and Daniel passed away Dec. 24, right before Christmas.

***Then you had another show shortly thereafter, in January, 2002.***

That was incredible, too. I completely sold out my first show! Not even one month had passed since I sold out my whole collection. I felt I really had some help there! Daniel knew how



*Richard Borprae, Photo: Carl Zablotny*

much I wanted this to work. We were really great friends. Daniel was the first gay guy I met. I was 16 and he was 21. I was straight until that time! Not really, I knew I was gay since I was four or five.

***Tell me about your early life a little bit.***

It was very difficult in school in Montreal. I was very individualistic and not into team sports. Montreal is all about team sports. Hockey in winter, baseball in summer. My parents didn't exactly know what to do with me either. It was a tough growing-up period until I studied martial arts, which is a very individual sport. It was very spiritual for me and I totally excelled in karate. But I never followed through. All of my friends were into skiing at the time and wanted me to join them for trips during the winter. And my parents made me chose between the two and I quit karate. I regrettably chose the ski trips with my friends.

***But it was more of a social thing, wasn't it?***

Yes, it gave me chance to belong to a group which I never belonged to before. I knew I would never excel in that sport like I did in karate. So that was a painful choice. So there were some painful moments in my life and we carry those through – getting through them helps make us the persons we are.

***So does your history tie in with your new exhibit, "Healing," that we'll see Nov. 21?***

Yes. I'm in a phase right now in my life where I'm trying to overcome these fears from the past. It's like a journey I'm

going through, but it's not yet complete. Part of my life has been a repetition of the same kinds of things happening to me. I'm close to success very often, but never really complete it. Like karate. I was so close to it and I had a choice. But for fear of not belonging, I decided to take up skiing. Then I was into modeling. I was successful and made a good living out of it. But then I moved to Miami Beach to take care of my friend and gave it up because my friendship was more important than my own career. There are other examples in my life too. It's like, why do I do that when I'm so close to success?

***So is it a time now to "heal" the past and move into the future?***

This collection is about healing all the past – a way of working it all out. I wanted to heal what was missing from the past and make peace with my past. And in some sense, I might have tried to recreate what I thought was missing. My parents divorced when I was 18-years-old and I lived with my mother. For 12 years I didn't talk to my father! It was for absolutely no reason. He didn't keep in touch and I didn't keep in touch. So I called him last summer as part of my healing process. It was a weight on my shoulder. I picked up the phone on Father's Day and said "Hello, this is Richard." And he said "Richard who?" And I said, "Richard Boprae, your son!" I was so ready to talk to him, but he wasn't. But he is a cool guy since we have been back in touch.

***Were you already thinking about healing when you were doing this collection? Was the concept already in your mind?***

Actually no. Not until I realized what happened over the summer while I was painting. And all these things were happening at the same time. I figured, this is what I'm going to call this collection because I went through such a healing process over the past six months. I gave all my pieces a name, too, that would portray the part of my life that I tried to heal.

***How many pieces are in this collection?***

About 25 or 30, including some small pieces. There are names like "Wholeness," "Faith," "Prosperity," or "Harmony." I'm also showing some sculptures for the first time which I am calling "The Series of Strength." They're all straight up and strong. They're all about trust and faith.

***How were you able to organize this exhibit?***

It's not really public, it's a private show presented by the Continental Concierge Group. It's all the groups involved with developer George Perez buildings – The Murano, The Continuum, The Murano Grande. The curator, Carol Jazzar, was approached by them and then she approached me to do it because she thought my work would be best to show there. It's a market that I really want to reach and a market that can really appreciate my work. These works are more for private use, but there are other projects I have in mind that could go well with architecture or in lobbies, for example. There are examples where the art becomes architecture and architecture becomes art.



"Fidelity"  
48" x 72"

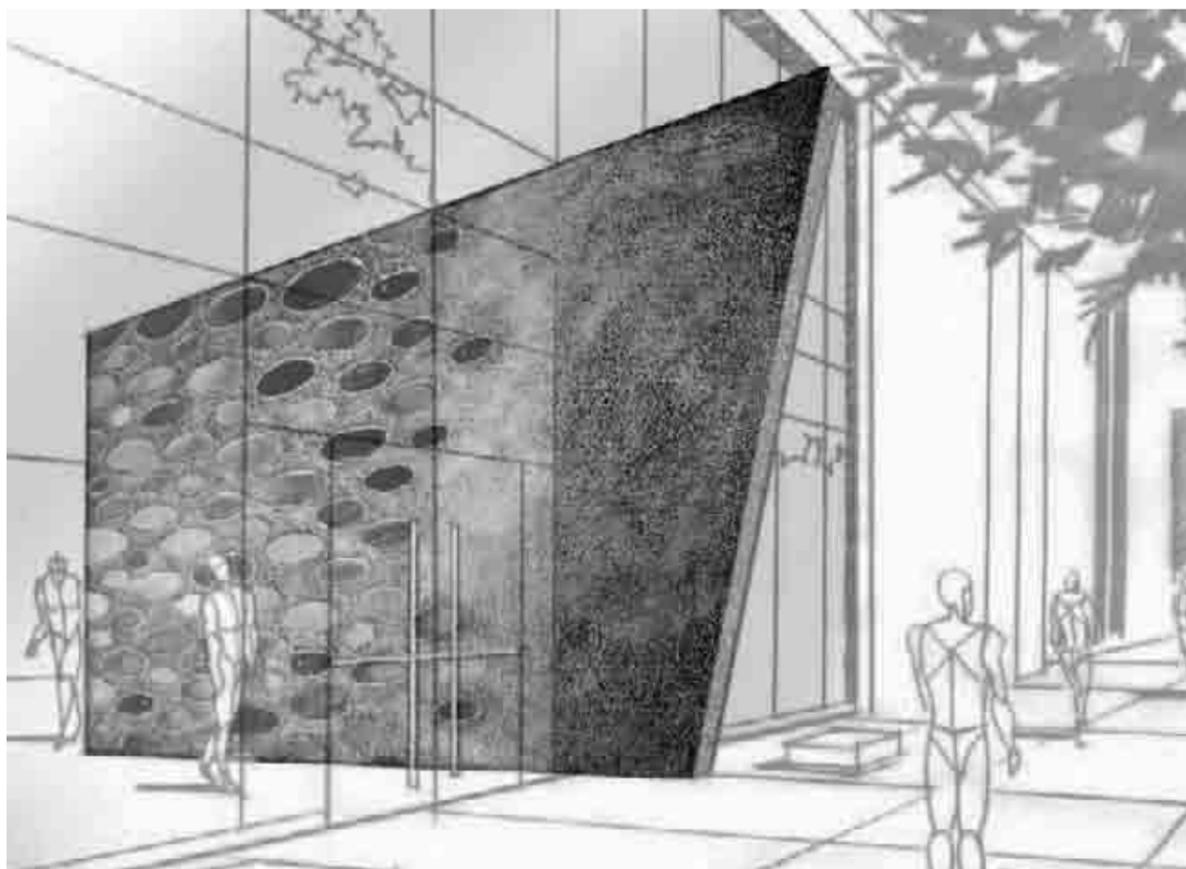
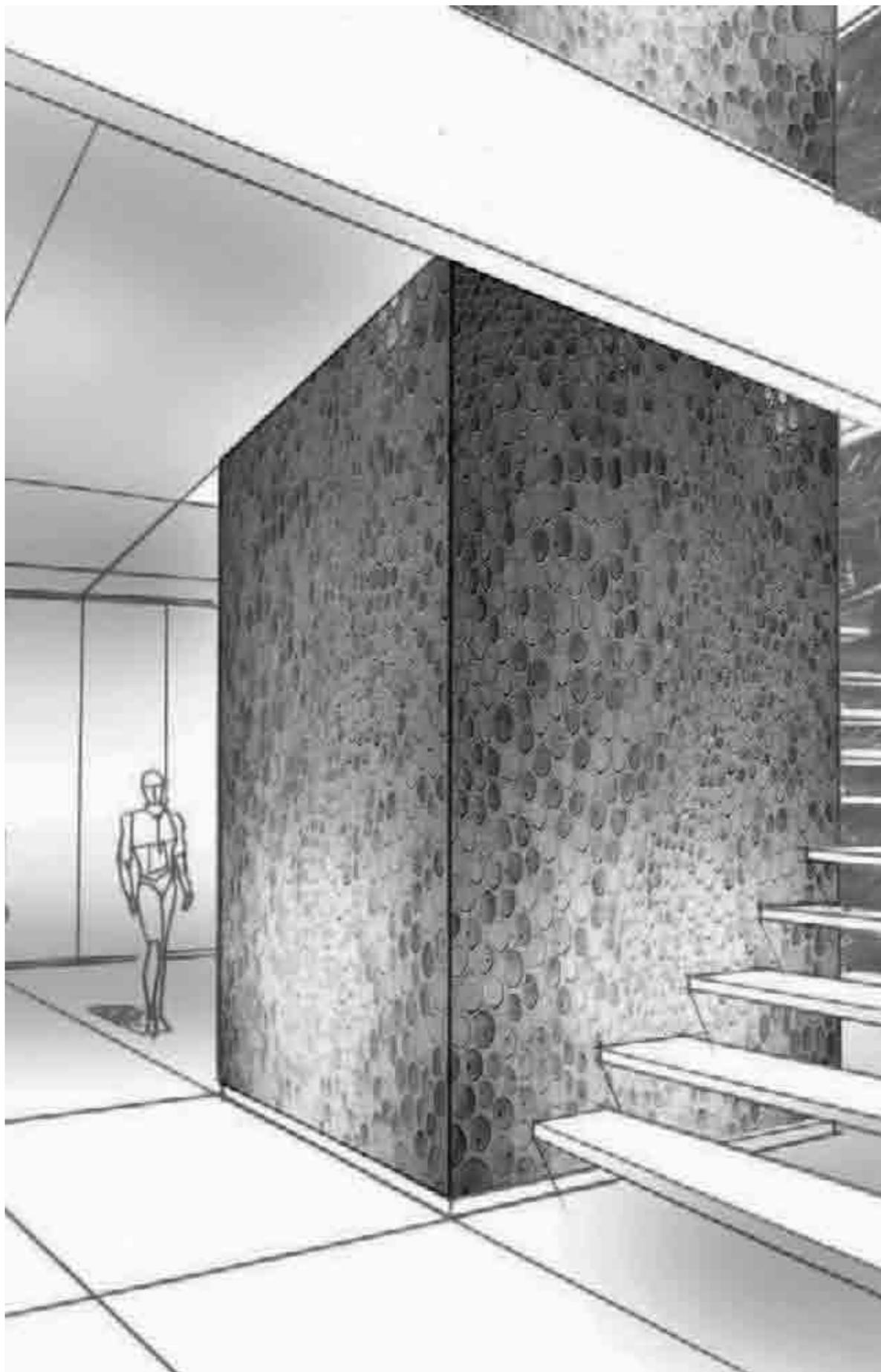
That's where I want to go with my art work. And I have to have people who have the same vision that I do, to want to do these things. And Jeff Morr from Majestic Properties had this same vision and is commissioning me for the lobby of his new office on Jefferson and Lincoln, which will be done about January, 2004.

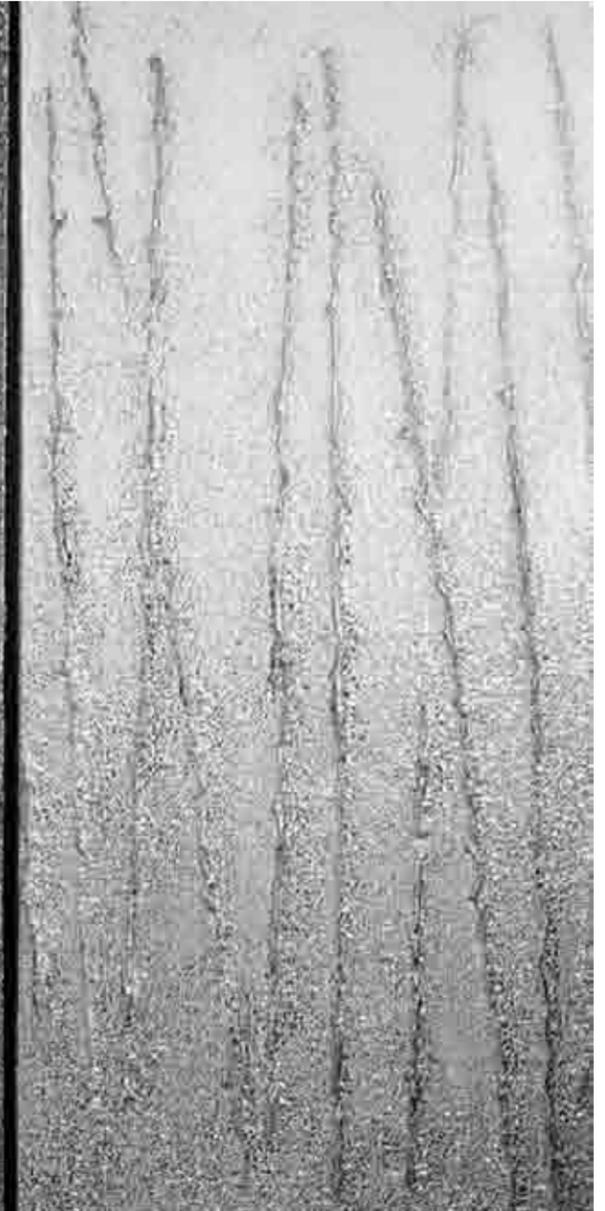
***Before you became interested in art, you said you were a model. Tell me about that period of time in your life.***

I started when I was 18 – as soon as I took my braces off! It was obvious that if you had a better smile it would be better for a modeling career. So I did local modeling for two years in Montreal. Then I went back-packing in Europe for a summer – with my modeling book in my backpack! I went to Spain and worked there and then I went to Munich and worked there, like three times a week.

***And you had a real breakthrough when you traveled to Japan, right?***

When I was 21 I went to Japan with my first contract and that changed my life. I just loved it so much! I was very successful





there and nowhere did I work so much. So I decided to stay there and it turned into six years there. That was from 1991-1997. I got along very well with the culture and the people. They are very respectful people and I was very respectful toward them.

**Do you still continue to do some modeling here?**

Yes, I'm with Michelle Pommier. I'm presently doing some Italian catalogue work.

**But your interest in art actually started in those important years in Japan?**

I always wanted to paint when I was younger, but it was not something that was appreciated or a value in my family. I always asked for art stuff at Christmas, but never got it! Creativity was not valued. But my first boyfriend was very much into art in Montreal. I met him on my 19th birthday! Thanks to him I got a glimpse of what the art world was – he was a collector. He was going to shows, galleries, buying art and introducing me to French art. I had a lot of time for myself in Japan and rediscovered who I was. That's when it all started – when I began to put paint on a brush on a canvas! I started with water colors, but needed something more structural. So I did some collages. But that wasn't enough either. So I evolved really quickly. A lot of my first work was very iconic, very religious.

**But what about the materials – you use cement today – how did that happen?**

Icons or frescoes are made with cement and then you paint the plaster when it's still drying. So those techniques evolved in me and I started working more with cement as the religious aspect of my work disappeared, but I kept the spiritual part of it. That was the origin of my style. My paintings are all cement on canvas with a coating over them to maintain their flexibility and durability. My sculptures are cement on wood.

**But you basically taught yourself, you've had no courses or previous art experience.**

I have no rules or no boundaries. Which is maybe a good thing. It made me evolve so much quicker and made me experienced with so many things that people already know you shouldn't experience! When you go to school, it's "this works, this doesn't work." I probably did a lot more of what "doesn't work" to accomplish what I'm doing right now – it works!

**Do you like it because of the textures in your art?**

I like it because it touches my masculine side when I work. Since it's cement construction to begin, I find that it keeps my balance between my feminine energy and my masculine energy. Cement construction is where I really feel masculine. Then I rebalance my art – they are very much a reflection of me – with an esthetic touch. What you see at the end is a fusion of my two sides. My colors are very rich, they're always very earthy.



**What distinguishes you in your art career?**

I'm so dedicated to my work, it's not funny. I really, truly believe that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life! It's something you always are thinking of. Like when I was modeling I knew I wouldn't be able to model for the rest of my life. So what else would I be doing that I would love to get up in the morning and go to work! This is it! This is what I want to do – I'm really excited to come to my studio, all the time.

**What is your motivation and inspiration for your work?**

What really drives me is to actually see my visions come alive. I'm very creative and have a lot of ideas. Having a whole project finished gives me such an energy. And it comes from my life experiences and the motivation to put those experiences on canvas. Like this exhibit, "Healing," it's like what I went through this summer. But I didn't say "Hey, I'm going to make a collection about healing." That's too prepared.

**One last question: The name Boprae is unique. How did you decide on this variation on your real name, Beaupré?**

Back when I was in Japan, those were very, very important years in my life and when I started my art career. They translated the "Beau" part of my name as "Bo" so I thought I would change that part of my name to "Bo." And at the time I had a really great friend, my soul mate who was Danish. The "ae" in my name is a Danish letter that happens to be pronounced as the French "é." So I always wanted to be reminded of my soul mate, who became very successful in opening his own modeling agency. So that's why officially I'm Richard Boprae!

Richard Boprae's Studio  
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email: rboprae@aol.com • 305.573.1849



**Healing**

New Paintings & Sculpture  
by Richard Boprae  
Friday, November 21  
Murano Grande  
400 Alton Road  
Presented by Carol Jazzar

**RSVP**

Mandatory  
305.489.6906