

# Art

## Who Does Botero, Deridla, and Carbonell Have In Common? ...

By Susana Baker

### ... Lazaro Valdes, "The Emperor of Bronze and Patina"

Once you step into ASUBRONZE, a foundry founded in Hialeah in 2002 by Lazaro Valdes, your jaw immediately drops, a sense of warmth begins to set in and your emotions jump onto a rollercoaster that just continues to go higher and higher much to your delight. Welcome to the Land of Oz of the Arts! As you walk through ASUBRONZE foundry, you stumble on to a foot, but not just any foot. This foot belongs to Idan Zareski Bigfoot, created by a renowned Master Sculptor from Israel. Walk further in to be wowed by the 8 foot sculpture of Holland's Master Sculptor, Cornelius Zitman, where his beautiful "the Woman of Gana" towers over her neighbors, the majestic Carbonell figures that are sitting next to the great Columbian Master Botero!

Just when you think it couldn't get any better than this, I personally became overwhelmed seeing one of my favorite sculptors, Enrique Martinez Celaya. As a "Tourator" (tour Guide educated in History / Curator educated in Arts) for Miami's Art Experience, my job is to bring visitors to discover some of the best art in Miami. One of the sculptures I love to curate can be found at the crosswalk to the Museum of the Art and Design of Miami Dade College (Freedom Tower, downtown Miami, formally Ellis Island for Cuban Refugees). The "Tower of Snow" by Celaya honors the 50th anniversary of Operation Peter Pan that brought 14,000 children to be fostered in the United States in pursuit of freedom and stability. Many of these children never saw their parents again. A powerful piece, it serves as a poignant remembrance for the very united Cuban community in Miami. It also serves as a monument for the many who left their homelands

tunities. This brings us to Cuban artist Lazaro Valdes and his life changing turning point.

Lazaro decided to change his life and follow his dream after being awarded a two-month arts residency program in Venezuela. When Artes Venezuela ended, with a return ticket to Cuba, Lazaro Valdes decided to change his destiny and follow not only his dreams but listen to his soul. Lazaro's final destination was Miami. The year was 2000 and the celebration of the new millennium symbolized a new era for Lazaro Valdes. Within a week of situating himself in Miami, he sought out to meet artists to offer his craft and talent. In less than one month, he met and was commissioned by Damian Gonzalez. Damian Gonzalez had an idea and wanted to

see if Lazaro Valdes would be able to make it a reality. Lazaro had the reputation of being an incredible detail sculptor working with wood in Cuba and also working with casting and molds. Lazaro offered to do the fiberglass casting of 75 sculptures that stand 5 feet in height, the iconic colorful Roosters that graced the streets of the famous Little Havana in Calle Ocho (8th Street), Miami. It proved to be a great start for newcomer Lazaro as his first commission! The rest is history! A most memorable moment was when renowned Costa Rican Sculptor Jimenez Deridla walked into the foundry seeking to commission Lazaro. Being a huge fan of Deridla and seeing him walk into his foundry represented a historic moment for Lazaro for this commis-







Above, Lazaro works on Monumental sculpture of Vigas. Below, ASUBronze member work on new masterpiece.

sion represented the rewards for the fruits of his labor and the achievement of his dreams. (The latest masterwork of Lazaro's making is scheduled for delivery during the month of Love, in February, when Lazaro will celebrate the birth of his 2nd child with his life partner Esmelin Candelo.)

Lazaro began his dream in 2000 by landing in Miami in pursuit of opportunity. By 2002, he rented 300 square foot warehouse to begin his foundry. In 2014 the foundry has outgrown their current 11,000 square foot facility. Lazaro continues to raise the bar at ASUBRONZE and works with his talented family – his father the master rubber caster, his mother, brother, sister, cousins and his partner Esmerlin. With their combined efforts, they create the mold, cast, welding, sandblasting and administer the final finishing magic touch of Lazaro Valdes' patinas, which have catapulted ASUBRONZE into the limelight as one of the best foundry's in the world. □

*For more information on ASUBRONZE go to [www.asubronze.com](http://www.asubronze.com) and for private tour or art tour to foundry and other great art districts in Miami go to [www.theartexperiences.com](http://www.theartexperiences.com).*



Photo by Michard Guillaume