

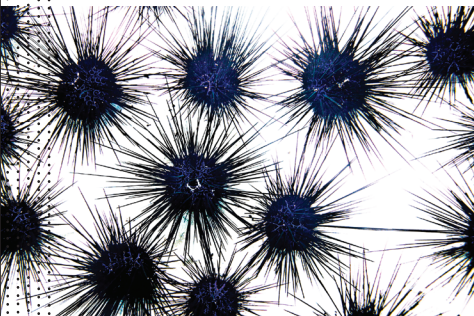
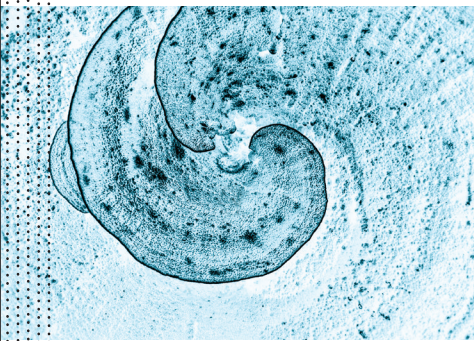
WADING IN: THE STUDIO

FLORIDA ARTIST PROFILES

By Christina Cush

CHASING *the* LIGHT

A PULITZER HEIR ELEVATES HIS **UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY**,
GLOBETROTTING TO SATISFY HIS PROCLIVITY TOWARD ABSTRACTION



Clockwise from top left: *Spiral 2*, *Sharks* and *Vana Floor* are all photos by underwater photographer Chris Leidy. Leidy uses techniques like double exposures and ambient lighting to capture Florida sea life. **Below:** Leidy, 37, is a part-time Palm Beach resident.

Christopher Pulitzer Leidy, 37, was born into Palm Beach royalty, as grandson to the legendary designer Lilly Pulitzer and her newspaper tycoon husband Peter Pulitzer. When it comes to creating his own visual expressions of paradise, Leidy departs from his famous family's signature preppy aesthetic. His eccentric nature and casual style—he has a tattoo that reads, “Never Stop Playing”—belie the serious intention behind his work creating abstract, underwater fine-art photography.

As part of his privileged upbringing, Leidy was raised on “the Island” until seventh grade, then moved to London with his mom and brother after his parents divorced. He attended a boarding school in the English countryside and eventually went to college at Full Sail’s film school in Orlando. After graduation in 2002 he

moved to Los Angeles for the first time, “ready for a motion picture career,” not as an actor but as a cameraman and crew member.

He started at “the bottom rung” of the film industry, as a production assistant, learning as much as he could about the camera. Next, he made a career-building move to New York City in 2006 that lasted for five years. “I climbed the ladder there. The grind of being a cameraman was tiring, as was the lack of creative control.”

His next adventure: an investment in underwater equipment.

“I spent my savings, self-made from work in the film industry, on underwater film and lights. I got freelance work from Fox Sports



CHRIS LEIDY, RUSH ZIMMERMAN



Above: *Icicle Reflection*, a photo by Chris Leidy

shooting a fishing show.” Though he enjoyed being on a boat, surrounded by water, Leidy hated relinquishing all rights to the film footage. He made a life-changing decision, inspired by the “beautiful stuff” there was to capture underwater.

“I went down on grandfather’s boat, *The Sea Hunter*, and from May to September, I shot my ass off. I came back, edited and had a big, sold-out gallery show in Palm Beach. I had a taste of living my dream. That was 11 years ago.”

Leidy was happy living in Palm Beach and owning a photography gallery that showcased his underwater-themed work until last October. He left Florida after the death of his grandfather, Peter Pulitzer, whom Leidy refers to as “Dear Old.” Pulitzer cultivated Leidy’s love of the outdoors and comfort in the depths of the ocean.

“We have an old boat,” Leidy explains, “a steel hull that we take down to [the] Bahamas every year. I was brought up free diving and fishing in the boat. I had knowledge of what beauty was under there.”

Contemplating his impactful grandparents, Leidy says, “Losing our top dogs was really sad. Granny is in my soul, and my grandfather is the one I credit with where I am in my career.”

He moved to Los Angeles again, hoping to ease his malaise, but he felt restless there and headed to Bali shortly after with plans to take photos below its crystal waters. Concentrating now on Bali’s natural splendor, Leidy’s work has evolved from Florida fare like manatees, hawksbills, green turtles, tarpon and snook.

“I’m going for more contained double exposures. I prefer shallow water, sand, ambient light,” he says.

Though he’s on a journeyman’s quest for clarity and subject matter, Palm Beach tugs at his heart. “It’s mostly family when I go home. My brother with his wife and kids. I’m a super fun uncle.” Since he’s still a Palm Beach homeowner, he sometimes contemplates returning to Florida. “I’d open up a gallery again. But there’s no rush.”

Purchase Leidy’s work at artsy.net or leidyimages.com.

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