

NEIGHBORS

SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 2008 | EDITOR: GAIL EPSTEIN | 305-376-2036 | MiamiHerald.com/Neighbors

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ON A MISSION

CHANTAL LAWRIE/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

Shari Pordes was among 100 photographers who scoured South Beach for photo opportunities last weekend in the fourth annual **South Beach** Photomathon. **PAGE 3**

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MIAMI BEACH

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SNAPSHOT HUNTERS

AMATEUR AND PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHERS RECENTLY SCoured SOUTH BEACH IN SEARCH OF THE MOST ORIGINAL SHOTS FOR THE FOURTH ANNUAL PHOTOMARATHON

BY JULIANA ACCIOLY
U/Miami News Service

While Ricardo Aguiar walked around Lincoln Road last weekend, something in a store window caught his eye: a hand-woven frog with a paper tongue sticking out.

Camera in hand, Aguiar quickly snapped a picture of what he later said "was something I would never have thought of photographing."

Aguiar, 43, a banker and aspiring photographer from Aventura, had been searching for the perfect shot to submit for the "green" category in the South Beach Photomathon, a contest held Sunday that drew 104 amateur and professional photographers to Miami Beach.

In the course of five hours, the amateur and professional photographers searched South Beach for 24 images suitable for six assigned themes — Green, Wild, Refreshing, Hot, Style and "Only in South Beach."

The themes were kept secret until the actual assignments were handed out at three stations in South Beach. Participants were required to photograph entries for each of the six themes in proper sequence, and given close to a couple of hours to shoot each set of themes. Pictures were downloaded into computers set up at the Miami Beach Botanical Garden at the end of the day.

Carlos Miller, 39, a photojournalist from Miami, was one of the entrants in a high competitive mode. His submissions included the head of an actual snake and shots he took at the Exxotica convention taking place at the Miami Beach Convention Center that day.

"The biggest obstacles are the heat and the time constraint," Miller said. "Working against time really challenges your creativity."

South Beach resident Rol-



PHOTO HUNTERS:

Shelly Guberer and her dog Maui walk down Lincoln Road in search of photo subjects during the fourth annual South Beach Photomathon on April 20. The contestants searched South Beach for 24 images suitable for six assigned themes — Green, Wild, Refreshing, Hot, Style and 'Only in South Beach.'

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FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

CHECK IT OUT

- **What:** Winning entries for the South Beach Photomathon on display.
- **Where:** Tropicolor, 1442 Alton Rd.
- **When:** Exhibition runs May 2-31; hours are 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays.
- **Exhibit info:** Call 305-672-3720.
- **Fotomission info:** Call Chendo Perez at 305-302-8239 or visit www.fotomission.org.

Contestants were allowed to use only a digital or 35mm film camera, flash and a tripod. And while some carried around sophisticated gear, others relied on simple, compact cameras.

"A light-weight camera is so much better on the streets," said Mayling Gomez from Kendall, 19, a journalism student at Miami Dade College.

Charlotte Libov, 50, a freelance journalist from South Beach, was enthusiastic about shooting images of her neighborhood. A tattoo of the devil on a muscular man was among her submissions for the wild theme.

The best photos from each topic will be announced Friday, and cash and prizes will be awarded to the first winner and two runners-up. The top 25 entries will be on display at Tropicolor through the month of May.

Reggie Givens, a Realtor from Fort Lauderdale, said after years of photographing friends and family, he was stricken with how simple it was to find human subjects for his shots.

"People in South Beach love to be photographed," Givens said. "They are true exhibitionists."

land Valavicius, 27, traded a day lying on the beach to participate in the "photographic scavenger hunt," which ran from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

"I am always photographing the area, but having an actual theme to pursue gave me an extra dose of motivation," said Valavicius, who rode his bike to Parrot Jungle to shoot for the wild and green topics.

The fourth annual event was organized as a fundraiser for Fotomission, a local non-

profit promoter of photographic-related activities. Contestants paid \$50 and student photographers paid \$25 to participate. Founded in 2005 by Cuban photographer Chendo Perez and Spanish-born wife Pavlova Grever, Fotomission fosters photography in the community through workshops and photographic expeditions.

"Photography is the language of light," Perez said. "As such, it can create understanding and shed light on

many complexities of human activity; how it affects us not only as individuals, but also our world as a whole."

Tropicolor, a photo lab and gallery at 1442 Alton Rd., collaborated in sponsoring the event. The Photomathon, said owner Tom Chien, is an encouragement to look at one's community with a different perspective. The event has become increasingly more competitive, with the number of entrants doubling since last year, he said.