

## HOMESTEAD

# Four artists keep city's art scene buzzing

■ **Economic hard times bring out the art — and a second exhibit at a new gallery in Homestead.**

BY ANNIKA NORD  
Special to The Miami Herald

The recession is unexpectedly giving a boost to Homestead artists. This summer, artist and curator Steve Beck turned empty space at the Antique Mall in downtown Homestead into an art gallery.

Now Beck's The Gallery Space opens Saturday with a second exhibit, *Four In Contrast*, featuring paintings and sculptures by Sandra Garcia Pardo, Joe Parker, Connie Hillyer and himself.

Garcia Pardo turns masses of steel into delicate sculptures of grace and wit. She has maintained a studio at ArtSouth in Homestead since 2004. She is working part-time teaching at Arts for Learning in Miami.

Her art is now in private collections in the United States, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Argentina.

Garcia Pardo recycles abandoned pieces of steel from junkyards. She gives them a new life with her hands — armed with passion and a flaming torch. Several of her sculptures are vertical, as though they are reaching for the sky. Although made of metal, they are as gracious as ballet dancers.

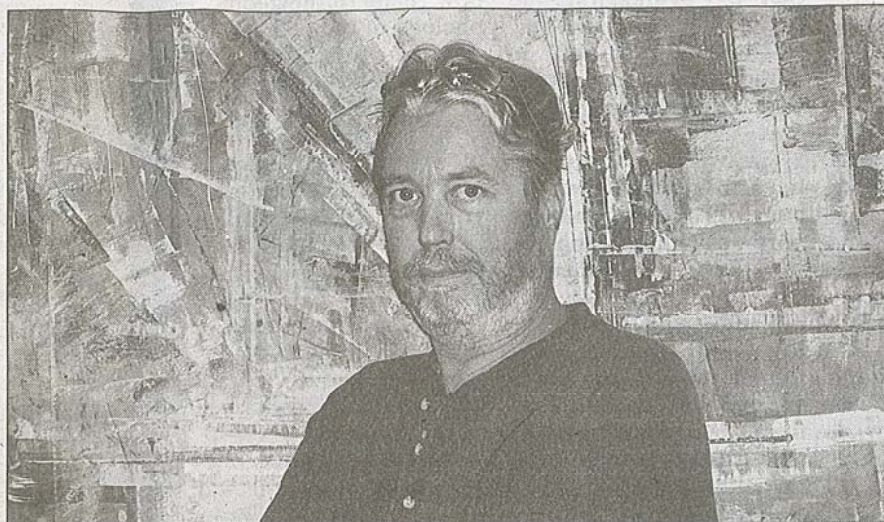
"I want my art to reflect plenty of simplicity, no ornaments, just honest," she says.

Parker is another sculptor who maintains a studio at ArtSouth. Now retired, he found his calling early in ceramics.

While working to support his art, Parker has held a lot of odd jobs, working as a diesel mechanic, a cook and even as a dishwasher in Stockholm.

"I'm inspired by the versatility of ceramics which is providing me with infinite possibilities," he said.

Collectors of his work are spread out from Miami and Massachusetts, from Italy and France. He is currently working on a series of chess boards. "I think life is much like a chess



**ARTIST:** Steve Beck stands in front of one of his paintings. Beck, an abstract painter and sculptor, is the owner of The Gallery Space in Homestead.

game," he says.

Hillyer had always drawn. She started to focus on painting after moving to Florida, where she was inspired by the sun, the flowers and the Everglades.

She has received awards for her oil, acrylic, pastel, pen and ink and watercolor creations.

Her paintings can be found in Canada, England, France, Italy, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Germany

and across the United States.

Now retired from teaching at the University of Florida, Hillyer has been commissioned to design a mural for Losner Park in downtown Homestead.

Abstract painter, sculptor and gallery owner, Beck is showing soft, subtle works in dreamy hues that draw people in.

Other paintings are darker, edgy and explosive.

"I've got a need to communicate what and how I see things, especially those things that are overlooked," Beck says. "And hopefully my take will encourage others to develop their own, richer perceptions."

*The Gallery Space exhibition "Four In Contrast" opens at 5 p.m. Saturday and runs through Oct. 31 at 115 N. Krome Ave. For more information, call 305-479-7569.*