

# Wire

THE LONGEST RUNNING WEEKLY ON SOUTH BEACH  
and THE DESIGN DISTRICT with the only comprehensive weekly calendar

FEBRUARY 17, 1994 NO. 7

Cover Art:  
Self photograph by  
Alain Despert



**ALAIN DESPERT:**  
Famed Absolut artist  
opens the new LeMar  
Gallery Friday;

**TY SMITH DIES:**  
Supermodel succumbs at

38, leaving behind  
countless friends and  
good memories; notes by  
LOUIS CANALES &  
WENDY DOHERTY;

**ROBERT  
RICCIARDELLI:**  
With an adaptation of a  
medieval Italian fable;

**"SEX IS..."**  
Documentary depicting  
gay sex life -- as it really  
is -- opens at the  
Alliance Friday;

**JIM TOMMANEY:**  
With his poem, "The  
River Washington"

**THE WEEKLY NEWS:**  
South Beach property  
still hot;  
Coors donates to  
S.A.V.E.;  
Lincoln Road merchants  
face tax increase;  
CocoWalk developer  
takes over beachfront at  
15th street;  
Ballet Nacional De  
España @ Gleason  
Wednesday;

**COLUMNS &  
PICTURES.**

## FROM BORA BORA TO SOUTH BEACH

Artist Alain Despert went on from managing an exclusive resort in Bora Bora to painting Art Deco hotels, and he'll soon have the good luck to have a new gallery -- the LeMar -- to feature his work as he continues his travels; we met with Alain and Alexis Ogurik in the lobby of the Lafayette for a brief chat  
by Andrew Delaplaine

**Andrew:** What first brought you to Miami Beach, Alain? And what was your connection with Alexis [Ogurik] of Bash?

Alain: I met Alexis here, actually.

Alexis: We have common friends.

**Andrew:** Mutual acquaintances.

Alain: Yes.

Alexis: It was a party with some friends, with Rachel Hirshfeld, and Rachel knew Alain and Gerard, who's a friend of mine, and Didier, a friend of mine in Paris, said that Alain Despert was here in South Beach, and to check him out.

**Andrew:** Now, in addition to your ownership position in Bash, you have this new gallery that's opening.

Alexis: Yes, the corner of 9th and Washington Avenue, the LeMar Building.

**Andrew:** How long have you wanted to do a gallery there?

Alexis: Forever. It's under construction now. We're putting the finishing touches on it to open February 18 for a private reception for Alain's work, the initial exhibition, and then to the public it opens on the 19th.

**Andrew:** How long will Alain's exhibit run?

Alain: We hope to have a continuing relationship with the gallery.

Alexis: As Alain travels around the world -- to Moscow, Bora Bora, wherever -- he can assemble a series of paintings based on a central theme from each journey -- and these will make up the basis for a new exhibit, so we want to have his new work always showing in the LeMar, maybe several times year.

**Andrew:** Alain, how long have you been painting?

Alain: Only three years.

**Andrew:** And prior to becoming a painter, you were a hotelier in Bora Bora, is that right?

Alain: Yes, in Bora Bora for five years.

**Andrew:** And prior to that?

Alain: In the States, in California and Texas.

**Andrew:** So you were out there in Bora Bora running a hotel. What made you start painting?

Alain: I had been painting for some time, but only as a hobby. And then Town & Country were out on the island, their people saw the paintings and took some pictures, which appeared in the magazine in 1990. So from then on there was this demand and I decided to devote my full time to it. And they all said I should move to New York. And six months later I moved.

**Andrew:** In reviewing your work, it looks like you've painted most of the buildings here.

Alain: Exactly. That is why I like to work in themes. I can't do the same things over and over, and that is why I must travel. I will ship the paintings back and we will have a different exhibit when I am finished.

**Andrew:** And which places do you dream of visiting to paint?

Alain: Madrid, Venice, Bali, North Africa, Moscow, and bring back stories in a series of paintings.

**Andrew:** You're also noted for being one of the select artists to paint an Absolut ad. How did you get that commission? The story ought to inspire a lot of artists.

Alain: I noticed that they listed the address where you apply on the ad. I painted my own version of this bottle. I called Teaneck, New Jersey, where Carillon Importers keep their offices and where they decide which paintings to buy. I had an appointment the following day. I brought my portfolio and the man went through it, and he started pointing: "I'm going to buy this one, and this one, and this one, and this one." Four paintings. He doesn't ask me anything else, and just gives me a check. I was very lucky because the day I was there they were closing that campaign -- that very day -- and the man in charge called the printer and said, "We have one more we have to add."

**Andrew:** Absolut Despert!

Alain: Exactement!

Andrew Delaplaine is Editor of Wire

