

ELECTRIC MIAMI

**THE 2017 FOCUS ELECTRIC EXPLORES
ONE OF MIAMI'S MOST HIGHLY CHARGED
NEIGHBORHOODS: THE WYNWOOD ARTS DISTRICT.**

BY ANA CONNERY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CRAIG CAMERON OLSEN



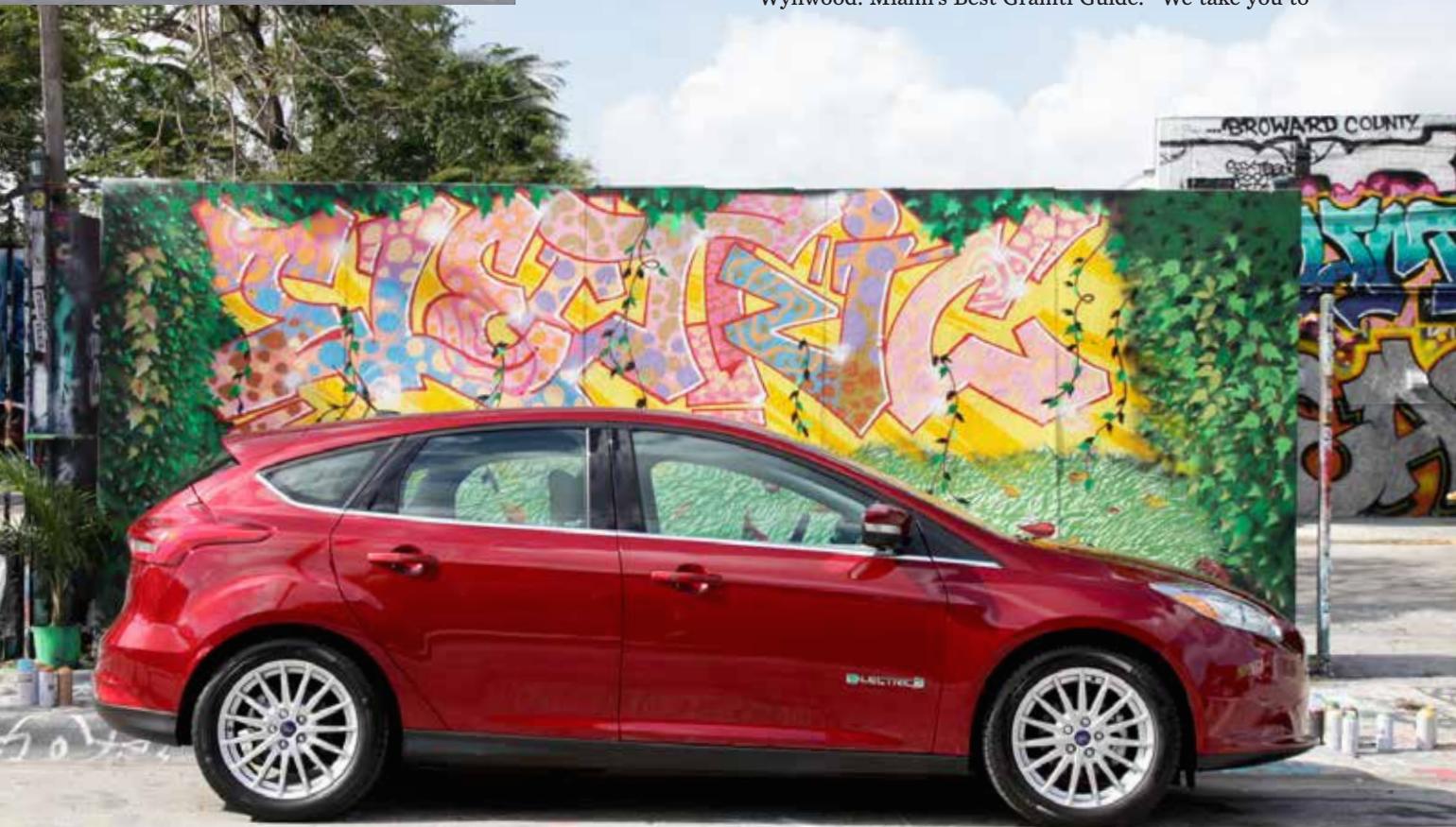
The stylish Focus Electric zips past a mural by Okuda San Miguel on the side of avant-garde furniture store Vondom.

Spring mornings are gorgeous in Miami, and I'm happily coasting through Wynwood, a Florida neighborhood defined almost as much by what it doesn't have (palm trees and ocean breezes) as what it does have: eye-popping street art blanketed across storefronts, building facades, sidewalks and roofs.

Only a few miles west of the beach bodies and pulsing nightclubs of world-famous South Beach, Miami's Wynwood Arts District is awash in its own kind of buzz—and the people-watching is top-notch. Tie-clad professionals huddle over spreadsheets on the patio at Panther Coffee. Bspectacled designers duck into warehouse studios. Sunburned tourists fill street corners, craning their necks at street signs, only to find



Artist Daniel Osorno worked with Amos on the "Electric" mural, seen at left and, fully finished, below.



themselves distracted by vibrant murals. Paint-splattered artists spray graffiti out in the open.

Like the fun-to-drive Ford Focus Electric, the Miami sun seems to be quietly revving its engine, proving more dazzling by the minute. On a side street I pull up next to a Technicolor mural-in-progress, where I've planned to meet up with Pedro Amos, one of Wynwood's best-known graffiti artists. But first I glance down at the dashboard and, as if showing off its personality, the vehicle's SmartGauge® with EcoGuide fills with blue butterflies to indicate how efficiently I'm driving. This 100% gas-free car is thrillingly low-impact, boasting seats made from recycled materials and soy-based bio-foam—not to mention an estimated range of 115 city miles, perfect for Miami.

Amos, clad in a painted collared shirt, plaid shorts and a tan baseball cap, puts some finishing touches on the mural, with the help of a stepladder and a can of white spray paint. While I park, he looks up and gives me a friendly wave. Turns out, he's been working on the wall since the wee hours of the morning.

"It's not finished till it's finished, you know?" says Amos, giving his masterpiece a critical eye after we greet each other. Then he gets back to work, filling in minuscule nooks and crannies. "I always find something I could do to make it that much better."

Along with his partner, Ryan the Wheelbarrow, Amos runs the only artist-owned-and-operated tour company in Wynwood: Miami's Best Graffiti Guide. "We take you to

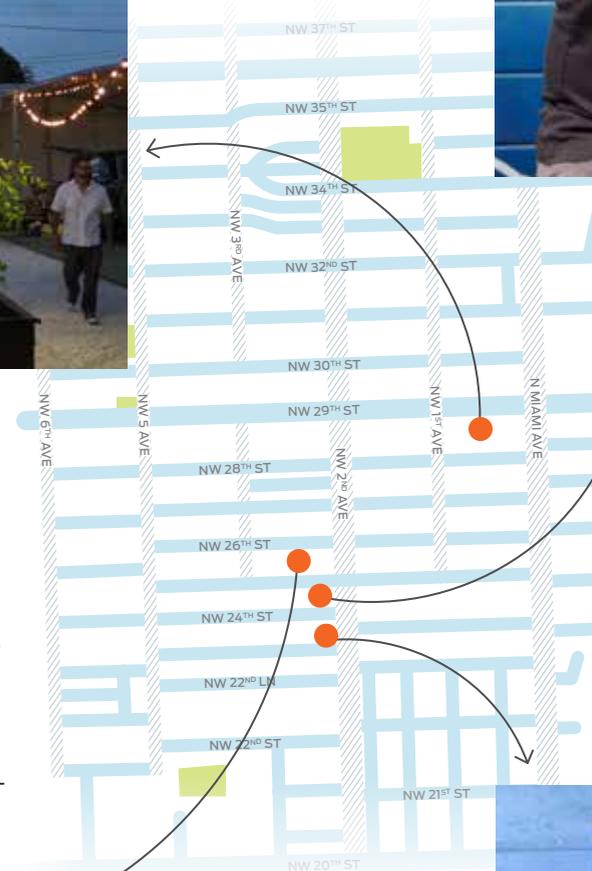
WYNWOOD'S GREATEST HITS

Some of the many faces and places of note in this prismatic neighborhood's 16 square blocks



▲ GK BISTRONOMIE

Chef Rafael Perez offers a tasty menu filled with Peruvian dishes, such as ceviche made with lime-infused escorlar, avocado and large corn kernels.



▲ WYNWOOD YARD

Like an urban oasis, this huge gravel lot features green space for classes and events, 15 food trucks on the perimeter and a big bar in the center.

▲ WYNWOOD ARTWALK

On the second Saturday of every month, galleries and shops stay open late, and many debut new artists and exhibitions.



◀ WYNWOOD WALLS

At this open-air graffiti museum, you'll see the work of some of the world's top street artists, gracing the walls of a series of warehouses.

▶ COYO TACO

Late at night Coyo Taco is the spot, featuring delicacies such as *pulpo* tacos with charred octopus. Follow the Spanish tile to find a secret bar in back.



places only an artist would know about,” Amos says. “We don’t just show you the art, we give you the history and context that makes the neighborhood come alive.”

By now the sun is so bright it’s hard for me to see the details of the wall, ablaze in its own color and light, without squinting. I step backwards off the curb for a more holistic view of the mural, which captures the spirit of Miami in what could easily be considered the city’s signature shade: the lime green of mojitos and tropical trees. Framed in tropical foliage, it’s a symphony of bright, happy colors and ocean wave-like forms that radiates energy—the consummate Miami mural.

Taking it all in, I smile with awe. As a native Miamian who remembers this neighborhood as little more than a blighted warehouse district during the ’80s and ’90s, I’m in love with the mosaic of color, sound and sun-drenched light that is today’s Wynwood. It’s a living museum of street art.

Amos, who was also born and raised in Miami, has been painting graffiti in Wynwood since before it was cool—or in any way legal—to do so. “I am a product of my environment, and my environment happens to be a fun, eclectic, exciting and colorful place,” he says. Unlike in other towns, graffiti

Pedro Amos and Daniel Osorno are fixtures in the Wynwood graffiti scene.



in Miami looks and feels different. The brightness, the multitude of cultures and languages seen and heard throughout the city, the constant heat—all of it influences the street art. “My work embodies my part of the world,” says Amos, with one last spray of paint.

I use the MyFord Mobile app on my phone to remotely start up the air conditioning in the car, then a few minutes later Amos and I get in and drive around Wynwood to check out some more of the 300+ murals scattered around.

“Graffiti art paved the way for outdoor mural art,” Amos explains. In 2002, the contemporary art fair Art Basel arrived in Miami Beach—and satellite events sprouted in the Wynwood Arts District, attracting an influx of people to the neighborhood. That helped raise awareness about this creative, cultural hub. Nestled right smack in the heart of the city just north of downtown, Wynwood was the perfect spot for what Amos calls “an experiment in urban art.”

Whereas some see graffiti as a sign of urban decline, a group of Miami developers and city planners in the mid-2000s chose to see it as a window into the city’s artistic soul. Instead of covering up the street art, they embraced it, going so far as to commission local artists to create more murals on a rotating basis. The result is a dynamic, vibrant neighborhood that’s constantly transforming itself. “Wynwood has actually been used as a case study on how to develop cities,” Amos says.

Artsy types instantly loved the neighborhood, which stood out in stark contrast to the mass marketing seen all over Miami Beach and even parts of downtown, where national and international chains dot the landscape. Soon it wasn’t just art galleries moving in; design studios, restaurants, bars and shops also popped up. “The majority of property owners in Wynwood are independent, local business owners,” Amos says. He points out a mural of a smiling, swimsuit-clad woman on a swing painted by Claudia LaBianca on the side of Vintage Boutique, a favorite local shop. “They commission street art as a way of embracing both the culture and the community.”

The result is a rare and harmonious co-existence between art and business. “It’s all intertwined,” Amos says, then flashes a big smile. “But truly, nothing blossoms without the creatives.” **MF**



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GO FURTHER See more of Wynwood’s murals at myfordmag.com/art or on the My Ford app for iPad



FAST FACTS

The 2017 Focus Electric is fun, sporty and efficient

The 160 hp Focus Electric boasts a 107kW electric motor, a 35 kWh battery and a port capable of charging on 120V, 240V and Direct Current. (DC Fast Charge gets you to 100% in 32 minutes!)

The exclusive regenerative braking system recovers energy lost through braking and stores it in your battery.

SYNC® 3 allows seamless integration with your smartphone, even reciting your texts, to reduce distraction.

Okuda San Miguel’s flamingos can’t get enough of the Focus Electric.