

# Speaking with Miami-Based Visual and Performance Artist David Rohn

March 19, 2018





*Best-known for his interactive performance art and visual art that have been featured in a range of galleries, art fairs and museums, Miami-based artist [David Rohn](#) has recently taken his vision to the streets. In his new series, *Street Peeps*, he focuses on raising awareness of the issue of homelessness. While in Miami, I had the opportunity to speak to him:*

**When did you begin this project– with its focus on wheatpasting images of yourself in various disguises representing *street peeps*?**

I started three months ago.





**Had you ever gotten up on the streets before you began working on this project?**

Back in the 90's, I did a series of boys' heads based on an image that I had seen. I got them up in Miami – mostly on lampposts – Downtown and on the beach. One even made it into the bathroom of the Perez Art Museum, back when it was the Miami Art Museum. I painted the heads in different colors mixing guache paint with wallpaper paste.

**What inspired you to do so back then?**

I'd seen graffiti and wheatpastes up in NY, and I wanted to be out there.



**What spurred you to hit the streets this time around?**

Between 2008 and 2014, I was represented by a gallery in Miami. After that ended, I wanted a way to share my vision — and concerns — with others. Things had tapered off. Getting up in the public sphere seemed like the most sensible way to accomplish this.

**And why this particular project?**

I feel very strongly about homelessness. I've seen it explode in recent years. It is appalling! And the income disparity is continually increasing. I've been interested in these two issues for awhile.





**Each of your portraits is another rendition of you as someone who is homeless!**

Yes! I've been doing portraits of myself since 2008 as part of my performance art.

**Who exactly are these characters you are portraying?**

They are inspired by homeless folks and street people I see when I'm out on the streets. The ones who are the casualties of gentrification. This city is changing so rapidly.



## **And what about the characters with the masks? Who are they?**

They represent the power structure. The elite – those who control our economic assets. The developers who can easily evolve into monsters.

## **What about your relationship with the homeless?**

For a while, I was bringing them sleeping bags and cots. But these days, I bring loaves of day-old bread and bottles of water. And socks – white socks and gray socks. They choose which ones they want. These items are what they seem to need and want the most.





**And how has this project – getting your portraits out there in public space – impacted you?**

It's been very liberating! It's fun! And I like the idea of short circuiting the gallery system.

**What's ahead?**

Creating and getting up more images suggestive of the homelessness crisis.

*Interview conducted and edited by **Lois Stavsky** with photos by **Lois Stavsky**.*

*Special thanks to [Andrew Ringler](#) for introducing me to [David](#).*

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Danilo de la Torre [March 19, 2018 at 9:07 pm](#)

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