



## **Neighborhood Profile: 17 Frost Space**

Oct 08, 2009 by Michael Cesarczyk

For a shining oasis of independent art and music in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, 17 Frost Street Space looks rather unassuming. Originally a garage for a trucking company, most of the building's front entrance is taken up by a large steel roll-up gate. A normal door with a blue light bulb stands next to it, almost an afterthought. The inside of the space is divided into two parts: The first is an art gallery, consisting of enormous white walls and a gray floor, while the second half is painted in black and is equipped with a platform facing a few chairs. A small recording studio hides behind the platform.

The simplicity of 17 Frost can be almost jarring after the experience of an increasingly commercialized Williamsburg. It can also be quite refreshing, especially now, as sleek New York venues and bars are becoming indistinguishable from the condos erupting next to them. Events at 17 Frost are free and range from art exhibits to multi-media rock concerts. The masterminds of the space, Steve Pacia (of the world-famous Bose-Pacia Gallery) and musician/producer Javier Hernandez-Miyares, have focused on a wide variety of emerging artists, as well as their own projects.

The first artist to be given a solo exhibition at 17 Frost was noted street artist Aakash Nihalani. Nihalani's style is representative of the atmosphere of community cultivated by Pacia and Miyares. Although skilled in various media, he is mostly known for taping

fluorescent geometric shapes throughout the city. By highlighting the contours of a subway station or sidewalk, he gives New Yorkers a chance to see the underlying beauty of their neighborhoods and a brief respite from routine. His shapes and paintings have done likewise for the quaint details of the space. Nihalani continued this theme of collaboration with Neo Con, a mischievous joint exhibit with fellow street artists LSG and Poster Boy. 17 Frost, however, does not just specialize in street art. Another artist who has often exhibited at the space is the impressively versatile Alex Itin. Currently an artist-in-residence at the Institute of the Future of the Book, Itin is a prolific craftsman in literally any material he can get his hands on. Among his most popular works are his videos, especially "Orson Whales", a montage of scenes from Citizen Kane and surreal animation drawn on the pages of Moby-Dick played against a soundtrack of Led Zeppelin's "Moby-Dick". On October 3, 17 Frost presented "100% Hand Made", a highly anticipated exhibition by Cuban artist Alejandro Lopez featuring mixed media work with Cuban cigar boxes. The show included both a multimedia performance by Lopez and a live set of Latin jazz.

The musical performances at 17 Frost have been incredible. Pacia and Miyares are members of the house band, Sineparade. The group is loaded with amazing musicians, including singer-songwriter Efreem Wilder, guitarist/producer J. Armen and jazz virtuosos Alex Garcia (drums) and Ariel de la Portilla (bass). Miyares plays electric guitar while Pacia, who writes most of the songs, provides main vocals. Sineparade's songs are both gorgeously melodic and ambitious, covering subjects from 9/11 to the global financial meltdown. It recently performed "Zipperhead", a multimedia rock concert about the life and death of a Wall Street trader at Williamsburg restaurant/venue Monkeytown. Alex Itin provided videos and narration. The concert proved to be so popular that preparations are being made to perform "Zipperhead" at 17 Frost. Other groups that have performed at the space are the mega-energetic hard rock band the Royal Wilds and highly acclaimed progressive Latin Jazz ensemble Afromantra (of which Garcia and de la Portilla are also members). 17 Frost's manager and multi-talented musician/engineer, Dave Scarborough, who deserves much of the credit for the space's rapid development, has also been organizing free weekend concerts at the space featuring a large number of superb bands such as Devious Semantics, Lost Soul Drifters and Alonzo & the Arms, and organizes open-mic events on Sundays as well. With the recent installation of J. Armen Studios Inc. in the back of the space, it appears that many bands and artists will soon be recording at 17 Frost as well.

Encouraged by the growth of the space and the overwhelmingly positive responses to its shows, Pacia and Miyares are eager to expand the activities at 17 Frost to readings and even theatrical productions. Although they certainly want more artists to work at the space, they are committed to the idea of developing it as a community art center first and foremost. Anyone interested in becoming involved can write to [17frost@gmail.com](mailto:17frost@gmail.com) or just stop by and enjoy a free evening of music and art.