Every December, the international art world — and the wealthy who buy art — descends on Miami, bringing an international spotlight with it. Innovate MIA, a loosely organized umbrella group for tech events, was organized to try to capitalize on all the publicity by drawing international attention to the city’s startup, technology and creative industries.

This year, Innovate MIA organized a series of events that took place Dec. 6-15, during and right after Art Basel Miami Beach.

Florida International University, for instance, moved its third annual America’s Venture Capital Conference, which convenes entrepreneurs and investors for living-room style presentations and pitches, to a post-Basel time slot. “Since a lot of investors are down here for Art Basel, and it’s a nice time of the year, they may want to stay an extra week, an extra couple of days,” says Jerry Haar, co-chair of the conference and associate dean of FIU’s College of Business and director of its Pino Global Entrepreneurship Center. Haar says 400 people attended the conference, up from 300 last year.

Other events showcased graduates of Incubate Miami’s “boot camp” and entrepreneurs from Latin America and Europe. An event called TekFight gathered successful and startup entrepreneurs, coders and professionals for discussions, networking and workshops.

Area startups and tech companies have become more visible during the past year as a variety of organizations across the county, including FIU, the UM Launch Pad and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, have tried to create an “entrepreneurial ecosystem.” But the most important player, says Haar, is the Knight Foundation. “They’re identifying, supporting — both in terms of financial support and moral support — a lot of different kinds of activities,” Haar says.

Players

MICHAEL WOLFE joined Brightstar as senior vice president, chief information officer and chief technology officer, replacing Rafael Sanchez, who left the company. Wolfe had been a senior vice president and CIO at Advanced Micro Devices. MARINE CORPS GEN. JOHN F. KELLY replaced Air Force Gen. Douglas M. Fraser as head of the U.S. Southern Command. Fraser retired from the service. Kelly had been senior military assistant to the U.S. secretary of defense.

The University of Miami hired RUDOLPH “Rudy” HAMILTON GREEN in the newly created position of vice president and chief compliance officer. He had been director of university compliance services at the University of Texas at Austin.

By Rochelle Broder-Singer
[miamiats@gmail.com]