

### THE BIG STORY: UNITED STATES

# MIAMI'S CULTURAL MAKEOVER

**N**EW Yorkers used to joke that you couldn't stay in Miami for longer than a weekend or you would give yourself brain damage because there was nothing, culturally, to do. Now, if all you manage on your Miami holiday is to loll on the beach, shop and party, the locals will probably think you are a rube.

Miami is fast becoming one of the most exciting cultural cities in the US. Among the many projects in development, the most dazzling will surely be the Herzog & de Meuron-designed Miami Art Museum, which will be situated in the middle of a new 11.7ha museum park.

Also hotly anticipated is Frank Gehry's building for the New World Symphony, opening next year, and the Gwathmey Siegel expansion of Moca (the Museum of Contemporary Art), one of the most exciting museums in the US, which anchors the NoMi (North Miami) arts district.

The refrain around town is that "Wynwood is the new Chelsea" (a comparison to New York's gallery district). When I walked around Wynwood recently the streets looked deserted and, except for lots of interesting murals, I didn't see much worth visiting.

Then I popped into Joeys, a new restaurant, and met owner Thea Goldman, who took me on a tour of eight galleries — on the very same streets I had been walking before.

The lack of windows and often haphazard signage make it hard to navigate Wynwood without a list of addresses. But it's well worth the effort, and at night the streets are abuzz with edgy clubs and parties.

Five minutes' drive from Wynwood

is the Design District, an area of glamorously refurbished buildings and glossy stores such as Marni, Moooi and Driade. Savvy locals and visiting New Yorkers like to dine here at restaurants run by chefs such as Michael Schwartz (Michael's Genuine Food and Drink) and Michelle Bernstein (Sra Martinez) because, as Gerald Posner, author of *Miami Babylon* (a hair-raising new book about Miami's wild past), puts it, beach prices can feel like extortion.

The other vibrant area, NoMi, is around Moca, which shares a large part of its collection with the Tate in London. In recent years, Moca has acted like a magnet, attracting design and antiques stores to the same street. Now all that remains is for some upmarket cafés and restaurants to move in.

Why the sudden cultural activity? Tony Goldman, who is one of America's premier real-estate investors and is known for his ability to predict the next hot spot (he was one

of the first to believe in the renaissance of SoHo, New York, and is now heavily invested in Wynwood) says: "Miami is at the crossroads of three fabulous cultures — North America, Central/South America and the Caribbean and Europe — so it is ideally located to bring together the best of those cultures.

"This geographical advantage is why the international festival Art Basel chose South Beach, Miami, as its satellite venue in 2002."

For the past seven years, more than 250 international galleries and 30 000 art buyers have descended on the city every December for the Art Basel Miami event. But long before the fair came to town, artists were flocking to the city for its low rents, wealthy collectors and light. — © *The Telegraph, London*

This sun-drenched city has become one of America's most exciting cultural hot spots, writes **Lucie Young**

## IF YOU GO . . .

### WHERE TO STAY: TOP-END

● **The Betsy** — It looks like a mini Raffles and has an idyllic location at the quiet end of Ocean Drive. Décor by Ralph Lauren's interior designer, Diamante Pedersoli, and Carmelina Santoro, who designs the Bulgari stores. High season (December to mid-April) from \$325 to \$4 000. 1440 Ocean Dr, South Beach, ([www.thebetsyhotel.com](http://www.thebetsyhotel.com)).

Picture: THE BETSY

