



MIAMI BY DESIGN AN AESTHETIC LOOK AT THE MAGIC CITY.

In Miami it's all about the fonts — Deco *Spy vs. Spy* lettering atop The Congress Hotel on Ocean Drive, swooping Art Nouveau curves adorning the now-run-down Palm Court apartment house. Since America's Gilded Age in the early 1900s, Miami has been an aesthetic Mecca with lavish and visually stunning buildings all along the coast. Many quintessential hotels still stand, restored to their original glory, but there are also several glossy examples of modern architecture housing trendy hotels, clubs and restaurants. And in Miami, when it's not all about the fonts, it's all about the hotels. After all, beach-loving design-buffs still have to eat, drink and sleep.

Two of the finest newer kids on the block (a.k.a. the fashionable ground zero of the scene, Collins Avenue in South Beach) bring both the clout and the style of successfully branded hotel groups. Occupying a sprawling spot right on the beach, The Gansevoort South makes a contemporary and colorful impression on the skyline with countless reflective glass balconies accented in tropical blue. Like its Manhattan flagship, modern, minimalist design pervades the lofty lobby and the sleek, well-appointed rooms. Unlike its sister property, this outpost is punctuated by a bit of *Miami Vice*, with a 50-foot shark tank in the lobby and bursts of magenta and yellow in the guest rooms. While the vast pool deck and restaurant overlooking

the beach on the main level is touted as the center of the action, those in the know opt for the roof where a long pool surrounded by Balinese beds, cabanas and overstuffed loungers is the ultimate enclave. The views are spectacular, and the adjacent Plunge bar serves up equally gorgeous signature cocktails (our favorite: the Fountain of Youth, with Veev Açai spirit, coconut water and passion fruit) and light snacks. Those seeking a bit of opulence and playful fanfare head to the onsite Louis Nightclub, where the extravagance of the belle époque (crystal, lacquer, leather, carved wood) is given a modern spin.

Just opened last summer, the W South Beach has claimed a spot atop the social register, and likewise has taken W Hotels' signature design traits to new heights. The Living Room lounge in the soaring, marble lobby is simply

stunning; its contemporary décor is rich with eclectic details, textures and earthen colors like carved bronze, pony skin, leather and horn. Art lovers delight in the large-scale works throughout, courtesy of noted collector Aby Rosen. The sumptuous design continues in Mediterranean restaurant Soleà, with glowing glass lanterns, warm woods and rough-hewn stone pillars. Decadence of design is matched by decadence of flavor at Mr. Chow, and is even surpassed by the restaurant's hallmark over-the-top nightlife scene. Mr. Chow's sleek white space is anchored by a massive electric blue rug, offsetting black lacquer furnishings, plush copper couches, and a custom-designed gold-leaf and Swarovski crystal chandelier that spans 125 feet. Signature dishes are paired with new recipes for a menu that is mouthwatering, flavorful, dynamic, and yet





The Raleigh's pool



The Gansevoort South's rooftop Plunge Pool

also light and healthy. Packed at night, the bar serves deliciously crafted cocktails, and, as we've come to expect from Mr. Chow, the celeb-spotting can't be overstated.

But back to font-spotting, because a couple of the best examples in Miami herald first the glamorous resort scene of the '40s, and '60s recreation-kitsch respectively. An Art Deco masterpiece, The Raleigh hotel is announced in exaggerated, somewhat top-heavy, aqua block letters at its entrance, and crowned with an elegant, elongated *R* at its curvilinear apex. In both décor and ambiance, The Raleigh embodies that tropical-Deco magic that defined the allure of the day. Restored original details like the mosaic-tile terrazzo floor and sinewy, Lladro-esque columns in the lobby, as well as charming original sinks and fixtures in the loo, evoke the romance (and scandal) of the Rat Pack. Breezy French doors lead out to the wood-plank verandah and lushly planted pool area — a prime spot for daytime drinks and people watching. And while taking a dip on the ground level is divine, book a room or sneak up to one for a bird's-eye glimpse of the lovely rococo-meets-fleur de lis silhouette of the pool.

Fast forward a few years and head over a little bridge to Belle Isle for a pristinely preserved example of post-modern resort architecture, today infused with the pure pop-and-hipster irony of Andre Balazs. Housed in the former Lido Spa Hotel, The

Standard Miami is a tranquil haven off the South Beach strip that boasts one of the most picturesque and popular pool decks and al fresco restaurants in town, despite (or maybe because of?) its motel-chic backdrop. True to the roots of the location, relaxation and health are the only orders of business, though thankfully not in the group hula-hoop classes or aquarobics of the hotel's '60s heyday. Drawing on ancient bathing rituals, The Standard Spa's offerings have a social approach, with a large hammam and wet spa including sauna (hot), steam room (hotter), rain showers (utterly necessary) and DIY hydrotherapy menu that also utilizes outdoor facilities such as the sound pool and mud lounge. The aptly named Spa & Wellbeing program emphasizes mind/body wellness with group or individual yoga and meditation classes and a menu of whole, unprocessed, organic and nutritionally robust dishes served at the Lido Restaurant. For all its contemporary amenities, the structure of the place has been declared a protected landmark. Visitors today will pass beneath the same aquamarine mosaic façade with its faux-beaux gold grille accents and iconic Lido Spa Hotel marquis.

A bit further yet brings aesthetes face to face with one of the most ambitious architectural projects of late, the Viceroy Miami. A collection of residential and hotel

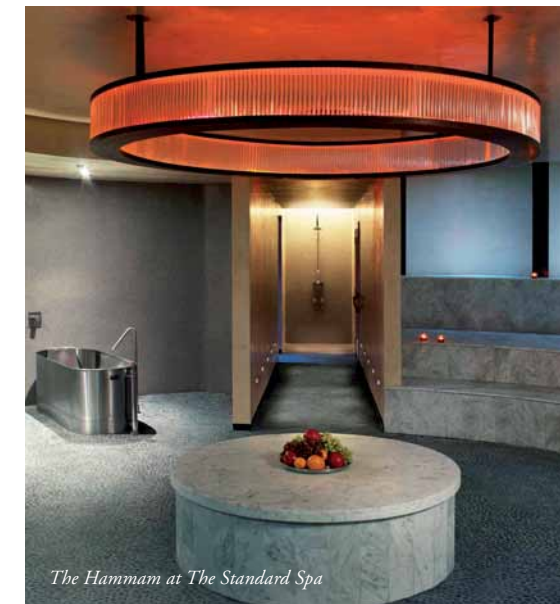
towers cluster around vast social spaces like a two-acre spa deck and a massive infinity pool within the central courtyard on Biscayne Bay. The resort is a feast for the eyes; eschewing modern minimalism, the interiors nevertheless achieve an utterly contemporary take on the Orientalism movement of the 18th and 19th centuries. Luxurious materials like hand-painted silk, lacquered woods, and grained marble in nearly every color of the rainbow set the stage for Asian-inspired wall murals, European busts, antique mirrors, intricate metal accessories and jaw-dropping lighting features. Lavish, yes. Abundant, yes. Whimsical, absolutely. Slapdash, hell no. For all its flirtatious opulence, the décor at the Viceroy is meticulously executed.

Two of the best examples of this are Eos restaurant and Club 50, each maintaining the design trends of the hotel, while also adding distinctive components. With repeating patterns that adorn the marble inlay floors, blocky columns, honeycombed dividing walls and lighting fixtures, Eos seems a geometric playground awash in bold red and canary yellow. Michelin-starred Chef Michael Psilakis has crafted a menu inspired by his native Greece, pleasingly accented with flavors from Spain, Portugal and Morocco, which is thoughtfully and efficiently presented by easily the best service staff in Miami. And towering over Brickell Ave. is the popular lounge Club 50, which maintains a precisely patterned,

whimsical, sumptuous interior, and boasts dramatic views of the city and surrounding harbors from the sleek pool deck. It is from here, 50 stories up, that you might start to understand the scale and achievement of Miami's art and architecture over the years. And who knows? You may see all the way to the old Breakwater Hotel, its illuminated block letters heralding like a Hollywood marquis. **ERIKA MEHIEL**



Mr. Chow at the W South Beach



The Hammam at The Standard Spa