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BRETT HEYMAN'S

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*The Creativity Issue*

ESCAPE *to*  
NICARAGUA  
GIRLS AND THEIR  
GALLERIES



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## The **CREATIVITY** *ISSUE*

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European slope-side fashion takes you from a snowy peak to an après ski rendezvous.

During the 1980s, civic leaders in Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties realized that investing in arts and cultural venues would remake their seasonal resort destinations into year-round, world-class metropolitan areas. And, they saw the value of building them in rundown neighborhoods that needed redevelopment and revitalization.

Local governments and residents saw the wisdom in that kind of thinking: Tourism is Florida's number one industry; decomposing (and dangerous) downtowns were unsightly; and many local residents were transplants from the north and south and missed the cultural venues they enjoyed back home.

With the communities' blessings, public and private funding was secured and construction commenced. "Our region was known as a sleepy tourist destination," says Mike Spring, director of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs. "We were a young community without traditions. I grew up here; I had to hunt for cultural opportunities. But that changed as the ideas and aspirations changed, and we are quickly establishing ourselves as the newest dynamic cultural hub in the United States and in the world." He has reason to be proud. ▶





# Florida's Creative Coast

*By Christine Davis*



*Margulies Collection at the Warehouse by Jeanie Giebel*



Consider the New World Center in South Beach, home to the New World Symphony, a full-time orchestral academy. Designed by renowned architect Frank Gehry, the building features an 80-foot-high glass façade that lights and displays the interior spaces.

Its theater can be reconfigured to suit a variety of needs, with additional stages that can be embedded within the audience and yards of sails that are beautiful, acoustically top-notch and great for projecting images. Its bells and whistles are impressive, and it's not just for the highbrow crowd. Part of its façade is a 7,000-square-foot projection wall that broadcasts live events for free in an adjacent public park.

"People sit in the green space in the middle of the sound system, and they [watch] the visual image of the performance. It's really fun. It's a great date night, or people come with their kids who get up and dance," says Victoria Rogers, the center's executive vice president. "These 'wallcasts' we show in our SoundScape are free. It's a way of eliminating barriers to access classical music. It's family, multigenerational and a beautiful ethnic mix."

The \$472 million Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Miami is a huge

570,000-square-foot complex. Designed by architect Cesar Pelli, with a Manhattan-Lincoln-Center-esque feel, it includes two halls—one for opera and ballet, and the other for concerts—as well as a black-box theater, outdoor plaza, gardens and public art installations.

The Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), which opened December 2013, functions as Miami's front porch, says Leann Standish, PAMM's deputy director for external affairs. "We have a veranda with Adirondack chairs; it's MOMA with a better view, a truly special institution."

"PAMM is a modern and contemporary art museum. Our mission is education and our niche is to be deeply international. Because we are building our collection, we invite artists to come here and make art for our museum," she says. "Having artists come here to speak about their process, that's transforming. It's a place where you can open your mind to what art really means."

Broward and Palm Beach counties both have state-of-the-art performance facilities, too: Broward Center for the Performing Arts opened in 1991, and the Raymond F. Kravis Center for the Performing Arts opened in 1992. West Palm Beach's 73-year-old, 122,500-square-foot Norton

Museum of Art is just about to undergo its third expansion, doubling its gallery space. Arts and culture are growing, and they have strong roots. Consider this: the 83,000-square-foot Nova Southeastern University's Museum of Art as well as the 120,000-square-foot Fort Lauderdale Museum of Discovery and Science began as small operations organized by the Junior League: the Fort Lauderdale Art Center in 1958 and the Discovery Center in 1977.

But there's more to do, notes Elayne Mordes, a collector who owns and operates Whitespace, a private exhibition space and home in West Palm Beach, Florida. Yes, every December, the premier international art show Art Basel's sister act comes to Miami Beach, attracting an audience of 60,000 plus a whole host of satellite shows. "It's art on steroids that week," Mordes says, but it will take time to add the rich layering necessary to make South Florida a world-class, year-round art center. You need international galleries to open branches, she points out, and those galleries need a steady supply of collectors to buy their art.

Mike Spring agrees. "These are first-generation cultural communities, and it will take time for them to establish themselves before they become stable institutions," he says. ▸



*The New World Center in Miami was designed by renowned architect **Frank Gehry** and features an 80-foot-high glass façade that lights and displays the interior spaces. It is also home to the New World Symphony; a full-time orchestral academy:*



New World Symphony, photo by Rui Dias-Aldos





Left to right, clockwise: The vertical gardens at Pérez Art Museum Miami; the central garden at the Norton Museum of Art; a dance performance during Martin Luther King Jr. Festival, Broward Cultural Council; Cultural Council of Palm Beach County; Arts Ballet Theatre of Florida; Raymond F. Kravis Center for the Performing Arts and Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts.



*“We have classical music, opera and ballet but also have programs for children, jazz, country western, comedians, Broadway shows and musical theater. There’s a lot more activity that has a broad appeal, and that’s been a conscious effort.”*

— Kravis Center CEO Judith Mitchell

One solution is to present existing art institutions as a cohesive arts and entertainment district, rather than letting them stand alone and fight for attention. For instance, West Palm Beach’s Downtown Development Authority recently created an arts and entertainment district that envelopes all performance venues, literature outlets, museums, art galleries, performing companies and art education institutions under the same platform. Together their economic power and reach will dramatically strengthen.

Along those lines, the Broward Cultural Division is also enhancing their community’s cultural environment. “We asked residents if they wanted an arts park and to send us a proposal,” says Jody Horne-Leshinsky, the division’s assistant director. “They did, gave money, and we matched it. That’s how our art parks came to be. Instead of just one shining jewel, we have four satellite locations where people can participate in art.”

To bring in larger audiences, the thinkers behind these venues are savvy. They know they compete with hand-held high-tech devices that deliver entertainment. “Opera is a living art form, not an object, and opera has evolved; clever, resourceful, inventive people take advantage of new technology that comes along to reinforce the artistic quality and experience of the performance,” says Justin Moss, Florida Grand Opera’s director of Broward Operation & Outreach. “Last season, we opened with *Mourning Becomes Electra*, and we used exciting technology—projections and moving scenery—that made it a thrilling experience that people loved.”

Opera becomes accessible when the translations are flashed across a screen during a performance, and it becomes interesting when someone explains what’s going on beforehand, he explains. “It’s not uncommon for a thousand people to show up for my pre-opera talks. That’s half the audience, and no one is more astonished than I.”

While the Norton Museum of Art works to play a more significant role in the international art world, it also aims to serve as a community center, says Scott Benarde, the museum’s director of communications. “These are changing times and we have to change with them. Our Art After Dark program has dramatically increased. From a one-month event in 2010 attracting 400 to 600 people, we now offer it weekly, and it still attracts 400 to 600 people each week.”

The Kravis recognizes that its audience has both grown and changed, and as a result, it offers a wide range of programming. “Our audience went from older and retired to a much more diverse, broader segment. Now people are living here year-round, and we see that reflected,” says Kravis Center CEO Judith Mitchell. “We have classical music, opera and ballet but also have programs for children, jazz, country western, comedians, Broadway shows and musical theater. There’s a lot more activity that has a broad appeal, and that’s been a conscious effort.”

And what about the artists? The tri-county area offers programs to support them, including classes to improve their marketing efforts, education about available grant monies that give them

more time to devote to their work, and even information about housing opportunities.

Take the concept behind the New World Symphony, founded by Michael Tilson Thomas. “It’s not a professional orchestra; it’s an academy,” says Victoria Rogers. “It’s meant to be a fellowship. We serve as a research and development arm for the world of classical music. These young musicians come to us from conservatories and music schools. They were trained and are talented, but they come here to hone. They audition during the time they are here, and we have 1,000 graduates who are employed all over the world.”

The public has access to a variety of private art collections. Katherine Hinds, curator of the Margulies Collection at the Warehouse, a 45,000-square-foot exhibition space in Miami’s Wynwood Arts District, says collectors like Martin Margulies are passionate about sharing their collections. “Miami’s collector community has become a model. It’s exciting for others to see how to take their collections to new levels, and say ‘I will buy this even though I can’t fit it into my space, because I like it and I enjoy it.’ The commitment for the collector to underwrite a 45-foot sculpture that takes up 15,000 square feet, that’s significant and very 21st century.”

The artistic layers are piling up. South Florida has reinvented itself and changed local and national perspective. While the tri-county will always be known for its sunshine, it has planted the seed for an arts and culture community, and residents and tourists are responding. It’s time to visit. ■