

Parallel Session C **Cultural Arts & Design** **of Creative Communities**

**Towards a Festival of *Nongkrong*:
Questioning Models of Cultural Exchange**
Alexandra CROSBY C-003

**Outdoor Art-Vertising:
Phenomena of Aesthetic-Creative Outdoor Advertising
in Urban Space and its Development Process**
Agus S. EKOMADYO C-011

Forming a Fashion District in Bandung
Arghea D. HAPSARI, Dito I. HADIWIDJAJA & Yurina RAHMANISA C-020

Heritage Tourism and Local Creative Economy
Wiwik D. PRATIWI C-025

Innovation System in Balinese Woodcraft Industry
Setiawan SABANA & Mochamad Panji PUJASAKTI C-037

**Below the Radar Screen: Dynamic New
Artist Led Movements in Asia**
Margaret SHIU C-043

**Art Festival, Local Community and Urban Space:
The Yogyakarta Experience**
Arif B. SHOLIHAN C-049

**Vernacular Typography of Bandung as Source of Typography:
Visual Communication Design of ITB Student
Typography Assignment Case-study**
Riama M. SIHOMBING, Naomi HASWANTO & Alvanov ZPALANZANI C-055

**Art in a City Space as a Communicating Object
with its Observers. Case-study: Bali Blast Monument,
Legian- Kuta, Bali, Indonesia**
Laksmi G. SIREGAR C-060

ART MIAMI: Miami Design District and ArteCity
Dita TRISNAWAN C-068

Phenomenon of District Art in *Kala Godha* Festival Mumbai
Indah WIDIASTUTI & Rajiv BHATT C-075

**Graffiti: Between Vandalism and
Aesthetic Element of Urban Space**
WIDIYANI & Ajeng ANGGITA C-082

Creativity in Bandung Urban Alley
Fahdiana YUNIASIH & Mariam SOFRINA C-088

ART MIAMI: MIAMI DESIGN DISTRICT AND ARTECITY

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ABSTRACT

Miami has a very important regional role as the North American “main gateway” for the Caribbean Islands and for Southern American countries. The city serves as the hub for the fast growing regional and international businesses of trading, tourism and culture. It is a melting pot of many different nationalities and has become a strong magnet, increasing the number of immigrants and visitors that come and stay, live, work and express themselves in the city.

For the past decade, Downtown Miami has been (re)constructed to revitalize some of its declining blocks through major and fast face-lifting developments. Towers of various mixed-use properties have been constructed along Biscayne Boulevard embracing the fascinating views of the Atlantic Ocean. The City of North Miami adjacent to the Miami has taken advantage of this vast economic growth. One of the pioneers of the changes is the Miami Design District, a district that is campaigning its strong art and design community throughout its construction and development process.

The paper will bring up the issues and discussions related to restoring and managing urban space, especially within the Miami Design District from its initial concept up to its present condition; also its influence for the rest of South Florida Art and Design scenes will be explored. Experiencing the birth and growth of an Art and Design district will bring an understanding on how the place-making process has successfully and significantly shaped the surrounding environment, from emotionless urban space into a vibrant and energetic district. Ultimately, Miami Art scene (re)developments has shaped not only Miami's urban landscape and its surroundings, but also has shaped the future of the world's Art-and-Design related business and tourism structure.

Keywords: *city of art, Art Miami, Design Miami, place-making, art and design district, art exhibition, downtown (re)development, urban management*

INTRODUCTION

...Going to the Miami Design District is a journey not only of place but also of emotion; imagine the delight of discovering something around every corner a fascinating piece of art, an exotic dish or a chair you never knew you had to have ... [1]

Miami has changed into an International city filled with many nationalities. It is the melting pot of world's cultures. Miami is the place where these rich differences embraced and appreciated as jewels of the society. The art cultures have also flourished these last decades, bringing upscale stakeholders and business-players to the city. In

collaboration with Art Basel of Switzerland, Art Basel Miami has been going well every winter to accommodate the creative societies' needs in celebrating the art related festivities. Miami Design District took part of this successful journey in making Miami one of the Mecca of art and design worldwide.

MIAMI DESIGN DISTRICT AND WYNWOOD ARTS DISTRICT

Midtown Miami is a neighborhood in the City of Miami, Florida north of Downtown and south of the Design District. It is roughly divided by NE 20th Street to the south, I-195 to the north, I-95 to the west and Biscayne Bay to the east. The Miami Design District is located at north of Midtown Miami, within the southern extremity of Little Haiti neighborhood. It is divided by NE 36th Street to the south, NE 41st Street to the north, North Miami Avenue to the west and Biscayne Boulevard (US-1) to the east. It is home to more than fifteen art galleries and over forty showrooms & stores. Every 2nd Saturday of each month a community wide Art & Design Walk/Night is held from 7-11pm. A popular event, Art Galleries and Studios and Design Showrooms alike open their doors to the public for art, music and refreshments. [2]

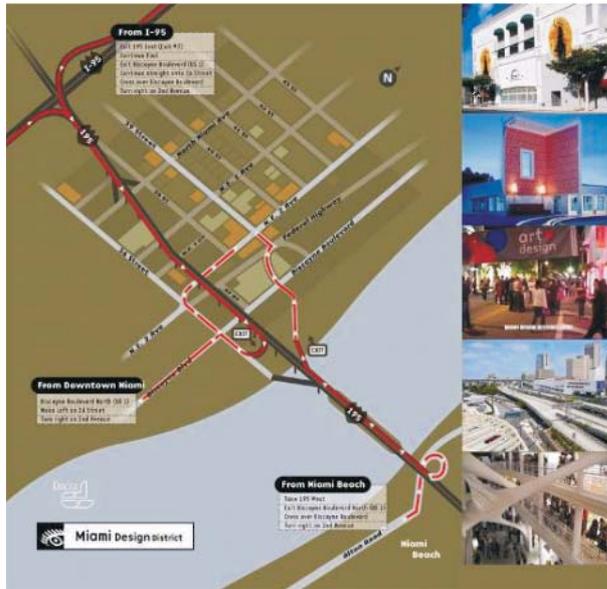


Figure 1. Miami Design District Map and images taken from the miamidesigndistrict.net website.

Adjacent to Miami Design District, Wynwood Arts District or simply Wynwood, and Edgewater are also sub-districts of Midtown Miami, still north of the downtown. It is roughly divided by NW/NE 20th Street to the south, I-195 to the north, I-95 to the west and Biscayne Boulevard (US-1) to the east. The same as other areas next or in between highways, Wynwood is one of the “victims” of passed through districts by freeway developments through downtown Miami. It is called an "arts district" due to its prevalence of artist studios and is also home to the Miami Fashion District on NW 5th Avenue from 23rd Street to 29th

Street. In contrary, Edgewater forms the eastern side of Midtown and is mostly residential with many high-rise residential towers. The northern side of Midtown is home to Shops at Midtown, an outdoor shopping area which is home to many national retail chains and is the headquarters for Ocean Drive Magazine.

The largest Puerto Rican enclaves in Miami are located at Wynwood. Also referred to as “Little San Juan”, and commonly known as “El Barrio”. Puerto Rican-owned restaurants, shops, markets and other businesses align the streets of Wynwood. Puerto Rican culture and social activity is centered in Wynwood. In recent years, many Puerto Ricans have been moving to more affluent areas of Miami such as Kendall and Coral Gables due to socio-economic success in the past years. Gentrification is also taking place in Wynwood and many expensive condominiums are being built, replacing the mom and pop shops, as well as homes. The Wynwood Puerto Rican population is dwindling and being replaced by Central Americans, especially people from Honduras. As of 2000, demographically, Wynwood had a population of 14,819 residents, with 6,221 households, and 2,987 families residing in the neighborhood. The median household income was \$11,293.93. The racial makeup of the neighborhood was 58.51% Hispanic or Latino of any race, 17.51% Black or African American, 21.55% White (non-Hispanic), and 2.42% Other races (non-Hispanic). [3]

The Wynwood Art District Association was founded in early 2003. The Association publishes an annual brochure with a map and a list of the Association's members. It is home to over fifty galleries, five museums, three collections, seven art complexes, twelve art studios and five art fairs.

ARTECITY

ArtecCity is an upscale residential enclave driven by the spirit of art and design- in the heart of the South Beach cultural district. Facing Collins Park and immersed in lush landscape, ArteCity is just a stroll from the water's edge. Former Governor Hotel inside is having a complete renovation of the 125-room (built in 1939 and designed by Henry Hohauser), which will bring this building back to its original splendor while adding the comforts and amenities of the 21st century. Rooms will be combined to create larger one-bedroom and suite offerings. The extraordinary mosaic fountain in the courtyard will be revived and will serve as the focal point for this central courtyard. The Park Apartment Complex is resigned and rebuilt as it will be comprised of villas and townhouses surrounded by fountains and tropical landscaping. In addition, two Six-Story Buildings with views of the park, the Atlantic Ocean and the Miami Beach Golf Course will be constructed, with penthouses and private terraces, townhouses and one to three bedroom flats with 11-foot ceilings heights, all with parking. [4]



Figure 2. ArtecCity promotional brochures.

Developed by The Wave Group -one of South Florida's leading development company- ArtecCity wants to be the state of the art place, witnessing the growth of Miami Beach's north shores. The annual winter festivities like the Art Basel Miami,

Miami Art, Winter Music Conference and other exhibitions and events usually take place at the Miami Beach Convention Center. This place is one of the busiest venues in Miami during the winter and the spring seasons throughout the year. Following the golden years of tourism in Miami affected by the latest hip and in vogue art and cultural activities, the surroundings have to change to justify the needs.

Designed by architects from the firm Arquitectonica with New Urbanism twist, this re-development is trying to blend nicely with the surroundings, respecting the beach access, the local existing and the ever-changing and vibrant neighborhood. Its proximity to the convention center, Miami Beach and Miami Design District is a tremendous benefit of living in the complex.

ART AND DESIGN THEME DEVELOPMENTS

Miami Design District, Wynwood and its extensions started its conception as a re-born part of Miami midtown area in late 1980's. As of today, the Miami's remarkable renaissance, from crumbling beach community to world style leader, was largely engineered by Craig Robins. He is the person behind the success, a School of Law graduate from University of Miami with passion for design, art and architecture. Born in Miami Beach in 1963, the son of successful property developer Gerald Robins, Craig Robins grew to maturity with one eye on the undervalued potential of South Beach. In the late 1980s, he, Tony Goldman (another Miami celebrant and former chairman of the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau) and three additional partners Saul Gross, Dennis Scholl and Mel Schlessler began to invest in the area.

At 24 years old, Robins arrived to a project as a representative of his father, with \$20,000 in his pocket. As a recent law school graduate, where he had spent several years absorbing the lesson that practicing law was not for him. What he wanted to do was develop property, but in a completely different way than his father. Unlike Gerald, Craig was shot through with a passion for architecture and art Dalí and the Modernistas specifically after his happy times as a sketchbook-bearing student in Barcelona.

“My interest in art and architecture certainly grew during my college years in Barcelona,” says Robins. “I had wanted to become an art dealer, but that was too impractical. And becoming a real estate dealer would have been easy, but uninspiring. In South Beach, I began to process those earlier influences into a business, incorporating design, style, architecture and art. South Beach was a perfect combination. In a way, it was like collecting sculptures.” (Craig Robins) [5]

The project in South Beach, of course, was a roaring success. Among Robins' properties, the Marlin and Tides were soon decorated by the likes of U2 and supermodels Naomi Campbell, Kate Moss and Christie Brinkley.

Robins eventually sold a large part of his stake in five hotels on South Beach and formed his own company, Dacra. He soon set his sights on creating Miami's Design District, a 10-minute drive from the beach, in an area strangled several decades before by highway development. As the Miami Art Basel fair which has put the city on the map culturally, the Design District of which Robins owns a million square feet in 35 buildings is credited with creating Miami's reputation as a world capital of design.

Back then, he purchased many run-down buildings in the 18 square block area. Now the district attracts major interior designers from Knoll to Kartell, and 40 architecture and design firms including Oppenheim Architecture and Design, Luis Pons and Alison Spear, Holly Hunt and Peter Page offices. It is also home to the headquarters of the Latin Grammy Academy. Robins' commissioned street art and murals which include an enormous outdoor living room with flowery wallpaper, two towering lamps and a pink sofa now decorate the district. Once the exclusive domain of interior designers and decorators many stores in the area now welcome the public: restaurants, sidewalk cafes, residential lofts. In addition to being the location of choice for furniture and design showrooms, the Miami Design District has also attracted a number of art galleries, design and architecture firms.

Craig Robins' company Dacra, a forward-thinking and influential real estate development company, has played a pivotal role in the transformation and economic revitalization of neighborhoods in Miami and Miami Beach. Dacra has a reputation as a creative force, combining urban design, architecture, art, and innovation. Dacra's commercial and residential projects spread out in South Beach, the Miami Design District and AQUA Allison Island. These projects will continue to transform and enrich South Florida.

Along with girlfriend Ambra Medda, Robins also put together the Design Miami fair, which debuted to rave reviews in 2005. His involvement in the growth of Miami's art and design community recently garnered him the Design Patron Award from the Smithsonian Institution's Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum.

BISCAYNE BOULEVARD

Biscayne Boulevard is the central spine of most of the neighborhoods we have discussed, especially Miami Design District. The neighborhoods like the rest of Miami are quickly becoming composed mostly of artistic and bright colored homes and condos. A beautification and landscape project was recently completed on Biscayne Boulevard and Legion Park and Eaton Park. Construction on new Little River Canal and efforts to fight crime are currently being worked on. Under pressure from residents to keep undesirably large buildings out, The Miami City Commission considered new building codes and a 180 moratorium on February 26th of 2007. With many homes built in the late 1920s, the Upper Eastside encompasses some of Miami's oldest neighborhoods and residents desire to keep it that way. The proposed codes were looser on distance to low-density areas but stricter on building height.

Downtown Miami is the central business district of South Florida, Miami-Dade County and Miami, Florida. Brickell Avenue/Biscayne Boulevard is the main north-south road in downtown, and Flagler Street is the main east-west road in the Central Business District. Downtown, or

sometimes referred to as the "Central Business District", is the area north of Broadway, east of I-95, and south of 17th Terrace. Inside of this area includes Park West, the area due west of Bicentennial Park and northern Brickell. Other areas that are many times adjoined with Downtown are the area to the north: Midtown, which is north of 17th Terrace and Brickell to the south.

Public Transportation in the downtown area is used more than in any other part of Miami and is a vital part of downtown life. The Metromover train system runs 3 lines through downtown (the downtown loop, the Omni loop, and the Brickell loop), and the Metrorail, Miami-Dade County's heavy rail system, makes 3 stops in the downtown area at the Historic Overtown/Lyric Theatre Station, Government Center Station, and the Brickell Station. The Metrorail has stops throughout Miami as well as Miami-Dade County with connections to Miami International Airport, all Miami-Dade County bus lines, Tri-Rail and Amtrak. The main bus station in downtown is located in Midtown at Omni Station. As of 2000, Downtown Miami had a population of 13,932 residents, with 6,397 households, and 2,633 families residing in the city. The median household income was \$38,702.66. The racial makeup of the neighborhood was 64.27% Hispanic or Latino of any race, 9.17% Black or African American, 23.08% White (non-Hispanic), and 3.49% Other races (non-Hispanic). 2006 Census estimate, show over 31,881 residents, with 189,164 residents in the immediate Downtown/Brickell area. [3]

These past years, the high-rise mixed-use developments have reshaped the downtown Biscayne Boulevard's skyline. Rows of upscale office-condo-apartment skyscrapers are under construction along the boulevard in revitalization efforts rebuilding the once abandoned area.

MIMO ARCHITECTURE

When discussing Miami Design District, it is necessary to get a glimpse about Miami Modernist Architecture or better known as MiMo. It is a style of architecture from the 1950s and 1960s that originated in Miami, Florida as a resort vernacular uniqueness to Miami and Miami Beach. It was a popular response to the various modernist and post world war architectural movements that were taking place in other parts of the world, adding glamour, fun, and material excess to otherwise stark, minimalist, and efficient styles. Miami Modernism was heavily concentrated in Middle and Upper Miami Beach along Collins Avenue, as well as, along the Biscayne Boulevard corridor starting from around Midtown, through the Design District and into the Upper Eastside.

Today, the area along Biscayne Boulevard is the designated MiMo Biscayne Boulevard Historic District or also known as "MiMo on BiBo", for "Miami Modern on Biscayne Boulevard". It MiMo Historic District runs roughly from 50th Street to 77th Street along Biscayne Boulevard, although MiMo can be found heavily in the Design District and Midtown. Many annual festivals are held to promote MiMo architecture, such as "Cinco de MiMo" a play on "Cinco de Mayo" in early May. [6] The term umbrella term "Miami Modernism", or "MiMo" for short has only recently been coined to recognize this particular style native to Miami. The term was coined by Miami Beach resident Randall C. Robinson and interior designer Teri D'Amico. Prime examples of "MiMo" architecture include the Fontainebleau Hotel, Eden Roc Hotel, Seacoast Towers, Deauville, and Di Lido hotels by famed architect Morris Lapidus and Norman Giller's Carillon Hotel, which was voted Miami Beach's "Hotel of the Year" in 1959, and the original Diplomat Hotel in Hollywood, Florida. The Upper Eastside (alternatively spelled East Side and commonly referred to as the Northeast neighborhood of the City of Miami, is north of Midtown, east of Little Haiti, south of the village of Miami Shores, and sits on Biscayne Bay. It contains the neighborhoods of Bay Point and Morningside and due to the Miami Design District and the MIMO District within its borders, it is home to a large population of fashion and design oriented people. There is a lot of artistic expression in the area among its residents. As of 2000, The Upper Eastside had a population of 15,056 residents of different ethnicities and races that includes high, middle and low income residents. It comprises 6,263 households, and 3,167 families residing in the neighborhood. The median household income was \$35,196.16. The racial makeup of the neighborhood was 28.60% Hispanic or Latino of any race, 40.10% Black or African American, 25.09% White (non-Hispanic), and 6.21% Other races (non-Hispanic).[3]

RESTORING AND MANAGING URBAN SPACE: MIAMI DESIGN DISTRICT

The key issues of many failing urban spaces are the same: declining blocks and streets caused by highways development, urban sprawls and decaying property values caused by criminal and security problems. It needs a whole lot of investments to restore and to re-develop these conditions.

Building creative communities is one of the strongest strategies of re-development. Restoring urban spaces are no difference. Building the communities or locating university buildings or educational entities are also considered as an effective plan on bringing the development up into place. Commercial and residential entities are also preferable in some cases. In Miami Design District, the basic strategy of Dacra's successful development is simply worked on gathering the best talents and focus on getting these job done: nurturing and facilitating creative people. Building the communities can be done by initiating activities through mural arts program, art sculptures, creating significant landmarks and programmed festivities along the years. Branding the district was done by focusing on the basics of cleaning up the streets and blocks, creating a friendly atmosphere of the surroundings, and also promoting and marketing the district as a new chic destination for art and design industry.



Figure 3. Downtown and Midtown Miami skyline and lines of highways through the city

Progressive expansion will have to be shown as positive changes that will attract investors to come. At Miami Design District, the development theme of art, design and architecture reflected on commissioning well-known architects to get involve in the development. Signature designs throughout will give positive image for branding the district. In Miami Design District case, modern vibrant art deco style and new green generation architecture influenced by international style are very preferable. Creating specific character of the place is a sensitive matter and needs to be taken seriously.

Detailing on the project will come eventually, after all the basics needs towards better neighborhood are fulfilled. The importance of connecting the district to broader scopes/networks or more established venue/events are very significant to reach the objectives in a successful real estate program. The program has to be sensitive to demands, markets, and also the seasons. Building great streets and communities are the main goal which drives the re-development process ahead.

In the process, it is important to concentrate on the initial core blocks to make the very strong center. Attractive center for activities can be completed by also building several "entrance gates" with murals, landmark sculptures, objects or buildings in order to create necessary artsy atmosphere. In building the networks and paths towards the district, it is recommended to pay attention on the city's locus and places. By connecting all city nodes to the blocks will help building an easy and simple access to and from the district. The power of designing the place with signature designs using groups of famous architects will also give somehow an assurance of its conception. Collaborations with institutions and schools to support the program are

necessary to socialize and communicate the information of events which at the end will maintain the activities put into place every time. These steps will upgrade the property values throughout the city, especially the district. It will also force the needs of expanding the re-development areas and maybe extending the development area overall. In many cases, a successful project will eventually spread the Art Community based developments to another areas of the city or region, bringing back the Hip to the place. These can be projects with governmental supports connecting new spots within the district and the city region, that will enhanced the environments.

Miami Design District successful re-development impacts Miami's regional influence for art and design industry and trading. It puts Miami significantly on the worldwide map of creative industry. Vibrant tropical atmosphere of the city has impacted on the growth of Miami's tourism industry, while strengthen its multi cultural activities. In addition, Miami has become an important hub city for creative arts for the Carribbean, Latin American, and North American countries to the world. Its position has brought the Art Basel into an Art Fair sisters program, conjunction of Art Basel Switzerland and Miami Art Basel United States has given Miami the International benefit as an essential city for arts among other big cities in the world.

CONCLUSION

Successful creative communities are built based on how solid the members collaborate within. That is why nurturing and facilitating creative people the best ones taking a very important role in building the district inside the re-development area. The two examples: Miami Design District and ArteCity provide us lessons on how the Place-Making process has been done and how their achievements have influenced the creative industry markets. Prepared well from the beginning of its conception, the project passed through its branding developments, its construction stages, its marketing stage, and its ultimate success creating true creative communities, in a broader scope and meaning, in which drives more development on its surroundings.

Notes

[1] Source from www.miamidesigndistrict.net website

[2] Source from www.wikipedia.org and google earth map link, keyword: Miami Design District

[3] Sections of backgrounds and history of subdivision of City of Miami are mainly taken from www.wikipedia.org, keyword: Miami Design District

[4] Source from ArteCity of South Beach website

[5] Craig Robins stories are mainly taken from Dacra Development's website. Additional source spreads on yahoo.com search engine result on Miami Design District.

[6] Source for MiMO Architecture history is taken mainly from www.wikipedia.org, keyword: Miami Modern Architecture

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