



Raising the roof

Hosting art galleries, artists in residences, pioneering live activations and incubation projects, more than a roof over your head, Miami hotels are living art destinations

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previous page, The Faena Hotel Miami Beach's Baz Luhrmann-designed poolside and garden. Courtesy of Todd Eberle
facing page, An invigorating palette of colours of textures in the spa waiting area the Faena Hotel Miami Beach. Image by Nik Koenig

It's hard to not associate Miami's hotel scene with one property in particular: Faena. The flashy, design-led bolthole's brilliant blue swimming pool, fringed by red-and-white brollies and beds, has become an iconic emblem of Miami's hotel offering in recent years. Opened in 2015, Faena sits on the seductive shores of Miami Beach, the brainchild of Argentine hotelier and former fashion designer Alan Faena. From the exterior, it's typical of Miami Beach: an off-white mid-century tower block once known as The Saxony Hotel, but cross the threshold and you'll fall into a madcap Faena rabbit hole dug by film director Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin.

In some ways, Faena is an open-air gallery in itself, home to a large rotating number of exhibitions in and around the hotel, streaming out of the property and onto its grounds and the nearby sands themselves. Offshoot, the Faena Art Center Project Room, has hosted exhibitions and works like Tony Kelly's saturated depictions of Miami and the annual Art Basel provokes regular pop-ups on the beach. Upon entering, guests are met with towering murals depicting a fantastical, Wonderland-esque scene – the work of celebrated graphic designer and muralist Juan Gatti, whose eight striking pieces, have become synonymous with the Faena.

"I first came to Miami in the '80s, a time of excess, the time of Madonna and Gianni Versace," recalls Gatti, who met founder Alan Faena while working in their native Buenos Aires. Gatti's eight murals, known as *The Way to Futopia* have earned his nickname as the "Michelangelo



facing page, Art and interiors blend seamlessly at Four Seasons Hotel Miami
 above, **FERNANDO BOTERO**. *Seated Woman*. 2002. Bronze sculpture. 244x193x197cm. On display in the lobby of the Four Seasons Miami

of Faena”, commanding the entrance with their fantastical scenes: a saturated and colourful marriage of graphic design with the Baroque and the biological. “We wanted to immerse the visitor in our magic,” explains Gatti, who describes the concept as a take on *Paradise Lost*.

“The reaction from people towards the murals is incredible, especially on Instagram,” Gatti continues on visitors who are met with the arresting works for the first time. Everyone wants to take photos with the murals in the background. We’ve even had brides and grooms come in in their wedding attire to take photos with the murals,” he laughs. Faena’s displays have intentionally injected art straight into the hotel experience, giving no choice but to gaze in wonder as one enters the hotel. But in Miami, this is typical, explains Gatti. “The murals incorporate art into people’s daily lives,” he observes. “This has long been part of Miami, art has always been tangentially incorporated into people’s lives.”

The Faena’s guests certainly experience art and beauty tangentially. Sandwiched between the hotel and the sands of Miami Beach guests will find a rather incongruous piece by boundary-pushing British artist Damien Hirst.

Entitled *Gone But Not Forgotten*, a glass box surrounds a gilded sculpture of a woolly mammoth in its own Mammoth Garden – coming alive under the power of the Miami sun and creating a dazzling display.

South Beach has long been a centre for arts and culture, a theme emulated in its myriad of stylish boutique hotels. Just moments away from Faena at the crossroads of Lincoln and Collins Avenue lies The Sagamore Hotel South Beach, widely regarded as Miami’s art hotel and perhaps the best known to merge hospitality and art. Located in the heart of the Art Deco neighbourhood, The Sagamore is a property steeped in history, part of the skyline since 1948 and home to an enviable art programme for the past 20 years. The family-owned hotel hosts monthly art programming and collaborates with local, national and internationally renowned museums, its public spaces doubling as quirky spots for exhibitions. Past exhibits have included *Femme Fatale*, representations of women with works by artists including Gilles Berquet, Lita Cabellut, Vincent Corpet, Mel Ramos and Tom Wesselmann, and *Lingerie Française*, a risqué and playful 100-year retrospective of French lingerie curated by French fashion historian Catherine Örmén.

facing page, top, The penthouse at The Betsy Hotel designed by Diamante Pedersoli and Carmelina Santoro with exhibited art by Robert Zuckerman

facing page, below, Artist J. Steven Manolis, owner and curator of Manolis Projects Art Gallery, partnered with The Sagamore Hotel to debut the exhibition *Relishing Red* in March 2022

“The Sagamore is a unique exhibition space which is open 24/7 and all year round, and people love to be immersed in Miami’s art,” explains Ronit Neuman, owner and Artistic Director. “As the gateway to many ethnic groups and South American cultures, Miami offers the perfect fusion recipe for the creation and exhibiting of magnificent art.”

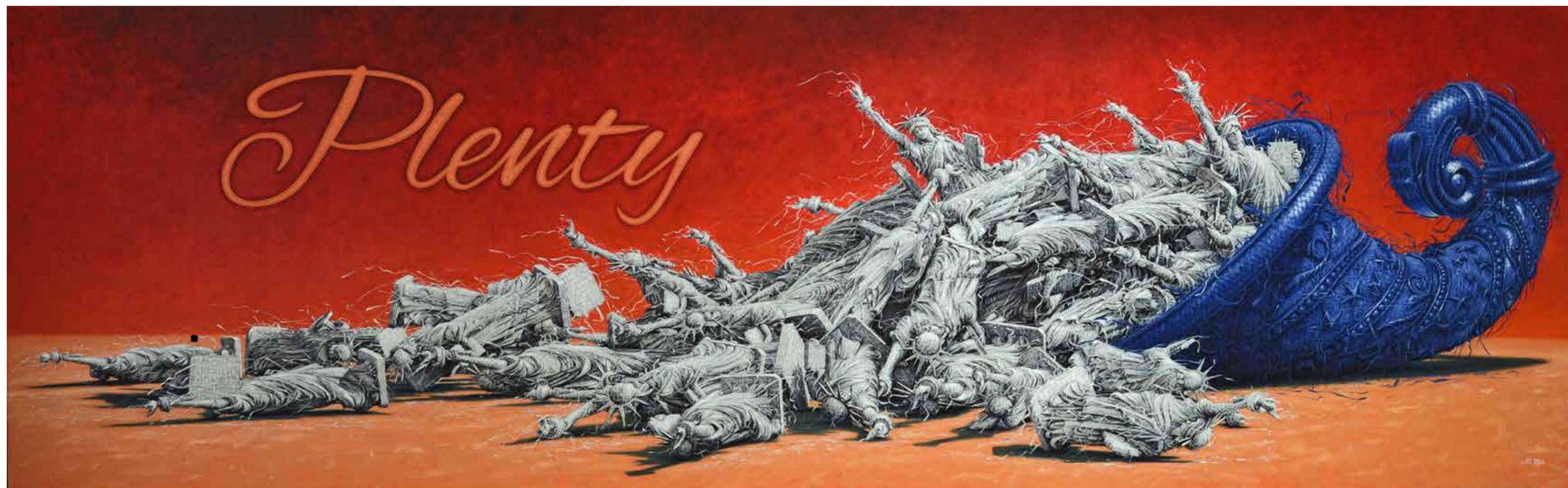
More recently, The Sagamore partnered with contemporary, Palm Beach and Cleveland-based Contessa Gallery, seeing one-of-a-kind art works displayed throughout the lobby. Among the pieces is work by Cuban artist Alexi Torres, known for his oil paintings of organic objects that appear as if knotted or woven. Just last month, guests experienced a five-day Miami Art Week takeover by Jonathan Cowan Productions and Electric Ibiza entitled *Into the Wild (Future)* – featuring hotel-wide displays, immersive audiovisual experiences, and mural artists such as Sebastien “Mr. D 1987” Boileau.

This drive to blend art and hospitality is not a boutique phenomenon, but also the mission of some of the city’s most mass-market establishments. W South Beach, Marriott’s playful lifestyle brand, is the place to see and be seen at Art Basel Miami Beach, home to a contemporary art collection with pieces from artists like Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Julian Schnabel. Elsewhere, the luxury Canadian Four Seasons Hotel Miami was recognised by the Pérez Art Museum Miami for its multi-million-dollar collection, which features works by local and Latin American artists. Works include three oversized Fernando Botero statues in the lobbies and new pieces by Spanish artist Antonio Domínguez de Haro.

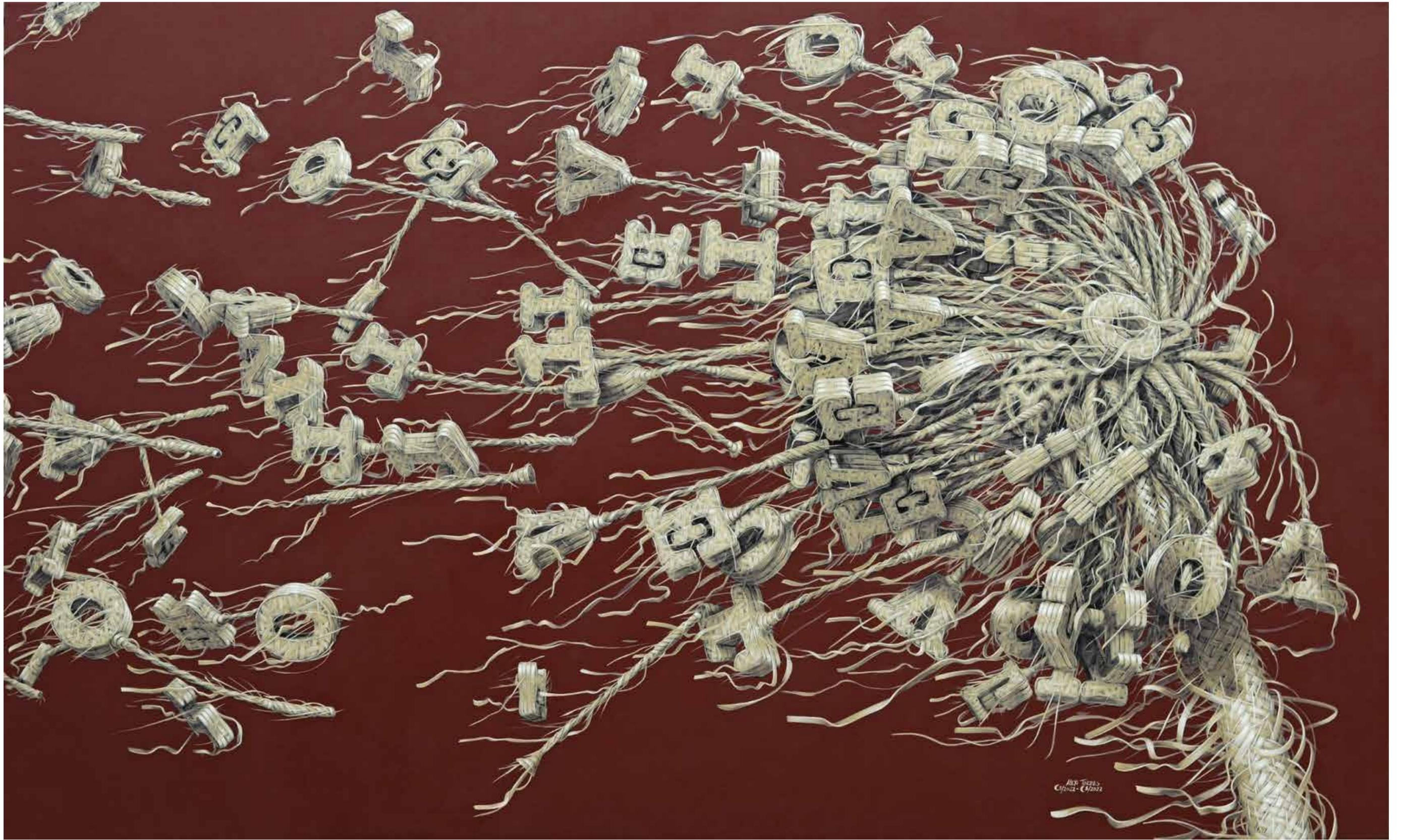
Across the water in Brickell, a cluster of shiny modern high rises and luxury condos, Kimpton Epic Miami has fostered a relationship with the Wynwood galleries, acting as a continuation of its famed neighbour. The hotel launched its Artist in Residence programme in 2021, showcasing live activations and the work of local artists on its 16th-floor corridors and currently hosting mixed media artist Sophia Wong. Nearby is The Boulan, which too has a close relationship with Wynwood. The chic Art Deco haunt having invited Wynwood Gallery WYN 317 to curate artwork for its lobby and public spaces. The Boulan now has an ongoing partnership with the gallery and rotates new artists every few weeks. Recent installations include works from Miami street artist Noah Scalin and Canadian artist DENIAL.

Fostering and growing the arts, too, is not confined to the traditional gallery and education space. In Miami, hotels have carved their role in growing the city’s effervescent art scene, protecting Miami’s future as a global art destination. At the northernmost end of Ocean Drive, a white, colonial Florida-Georgia masterpiece sticks out against the fading Art-Deco façades. There’s a distinct southern charm to The Betsy South Beach – the crowd more erudite than its hedonistic neighbour hotels, perhaps. The Betsy is largely regarded as one of the world’s great literary arts hotels, founded by the son of three-time Pulitzer Prize finalist Hyam Plutzik and not only displaying art but fostering talent through its working studio space for visiting writers and artists to create and share their work. That, regular art exhibitions and an impressive collection around the property have cemented the hotel as a spot for art lovers. ■





above, ALEX TORRES. *Plenty*. 2022. Oil on Canvas. 216x66cm. On display at The Sagamore Hotel South Beach



above. **ALEXI TORRES.** *Wish Series: Free.* 2022. Oil on canvas. 54x90cm. On display at The Sagamore Hotel South Beach