facing, Frank Gehry's aquatic sculptures loom across the dining room at Sexy Fish Miami

FEAST FOR THE EYES

Miami's restaurants are as much a treat for the eyes as they are for the tastebuds, masterfully marrying the city's famed cuisine with world-renowned visual arts

words **ISABELLA SULLIVAN**

It's no secret that dining and Miami go hand-in-hand. The city's pulsating culinary scene is the stuff of legends, where locals and tourists flock for the tastes of Latin America, the Caribbean and the South. But while Miami serves up iconic dishes – Cuban sandwiches, stone crab and ceviche – it also serves up a hefty portion of art, paired with a satisfying side of conviviality.

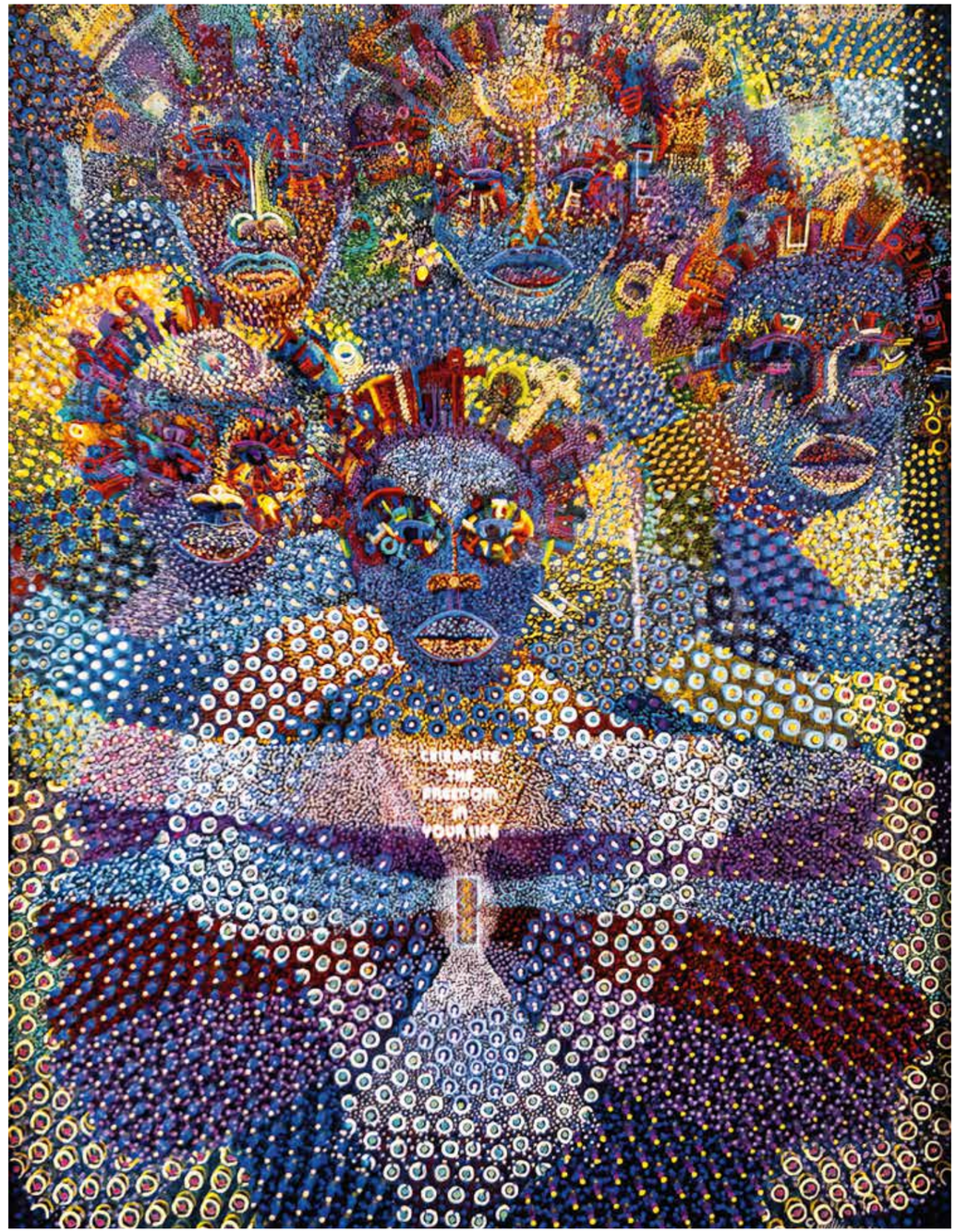
On Miami Avenue in the trendy Brickell Area, Sexy Fish Miami burst onto the dining scene in early 2022 with its headline-grabbing $20 million art collection. In the true spirit of hedonism and excess, owner Richard Caring commissioned the head-spinning sum of work for the Martin Brudnizki Studio-designed restaurant, calling on the help of British artist Damien Hirst and 93-year-old architect Frank Gehry. In a sea of pastels and bright pinks, swirling purple and blues, Hirst's 23-ft octopus takes centre stage, along with a giant 88-ft wall relief called *Sea Life*. Gehry's fish sculptures seem to float from the gold ceiling and 26 fish lamps illuminate the sultry space, which is spread across 10,000 sq ft and 300 covers.

Perhaps New York's most exclusive Italian hotspot, Carbone's Miami outpost opened in early 2021, bringing NYC's iconic Italian-American glamour to social South Beach in a setting harking back to the era of Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack. As the fourth outpost of the slick hotspot, the group enlisted the help of maximalist interior designer Ken Fulk who decked out the space in jewel-toned velvet and leather with Murano glass chandeliers and Venetian mirrors. Amidst the excess is an art collection curated by gallerist Vito Schnabel and a delightful ode to maximalists, with artists including Robert Nava, Julian Schnabel, Gus Van Sant and Harmony Korine, adding a Miami twist to the famed and much-loved hangout.

East of the city centre, the culturally rich neighbourhood of Overtown is the epicentre of the city's African-American community, home to the historic Lyric Theatre and Knight Beat Club where luminaries such as Ella Fitzgerald, Aretha Franklin and Sam Cooke performed. It's also the home of chef Marcus Samuelsson's Red Rooster, which serves not only comforting Southern soul food, but an eclectic art collection as tantalising as his menu. The collection is curated by Derek Fleming and Michael Simkins, with works from artists like Rashid Johnson, Mickalene Thomas, Kara Walker, Pope L., Gerald Williams, Jamea Richmond-Edwards, and Hank Willis Thomas – seeking to spark and inspire conversation about African-American influence on the arts.

Such art collaborations are sure to stand the test of time, like Casa Tua's decade-long relationship with British photographer and visual artist Miles Aldridge, a testament to the city's enduring love for the arts. The partnership first debuted in 2011: Aldridge's brilliantly lit, cinematic-style portraits of protagonists in saturated colours plastered across the walls of Casa Tua, one of the city's most in-demand haute spots. Housed in a historic villa on Miami Beach and designed to evoke the feeling of visiting a good friend's home, Casa Tua is a dining destination, private members' club and boutique hotel, spread over various floors and twinkly lit garden spaces. It's the homely feel that first drew Aldridge to become a creative co-conspirator of the establishment more than 10 years ago – an arrangement which has allowed guests have been able to dine and unwind in the villa while enjoying Aldridge's Pop Art-esque work. This style of viewing, relaxed and informal, is almost preferred by Aldridge, described by the photographer as a more comfortable and real way to view art.

above, Sexy Fish Miami boasts a $20 million collection by Frank Gehry and Damien Hirst
facing page, Overtown is home to Red Rooster, chef Marcus Samuelsson's celebration of Southern comfort food and African-American creativity



facing page, **JAMEA RICHMOND-EDWARDS.** *I Wear The Crown.* 2021. Marker, coloured pencil, acrylic, oil stick, rhinestones, glitter, jewellery, fabric, and mixed-media collage on canvas. 91.44x76.2cm. Part of the Red Rooster Overtown Legacy Art Collection
above, **GERALD WILLIAMS.** *Watchnight 150.* 2013. Acrylic on plexiglass. 50.8x50.8x7.6cm. Part of the Red Rooster Overtown Legacy Art Collection

above, Carbone Miami's considered art offering is curated by gallerist Vito Schnabel
facing page, **GUS VAN SANT.** *Untitled (Hollywood 10)*. 2019. 213.4x157.5 cm. © Gus Van Sant. Image by Argenis Apolinario.
Courtesy of the artist and Vito Schnabel Projects