

ART IS EVERYWHERE AT FAENA HOTEL, FROM THE POOL TO THE IMPERIAL SUITE (BELOW LEFT) TO PAO (INSET) WITH DISHES LIKE THE UNICORN (BELOW RIGHT) MADE WITH SEA URCHIN. THE CULTURE CONTINUES AT FAENA THEATER AND FAENA FORUM (BOTTOM RIGHT).



EYE ON CULTURE



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To walk into the Faena Hotel Miami Beach is to step inside a dream. Every inch of this avant-garde property, which opened in late 2015 at the site of the historic

Saxony Hotel, is perplexing—in a good way. Argentine businessman-cum-cultural bon vivant Alan Faena imbued the space with flamboyant flourishes, with help from filmmaker Baz Luhrmann and his wife, designer Catherine Martin. The 169 rooms boast rich reds and otherworldly blues layered with patterns that evoke a sophisticated jungle. Art Deco curves and hallways give way to gold-leaf ceilings and seashell-strewn bars. Damien Hirst's *Gone but not Forgotten*, a gilded woolly mammoth skeleton, frames the private ocean access.

Faena is Mid-Beach at its most thrilling, and the art starts immediately. The entry, known as the Cathedral, is more museum than lobby. Murals by Juan Gatti depict virtues valuable to Alan Faena and feature motifs from Faena's personal story, like roses that represent his passion for gardening.

Even food is edible art at Pao restaurant, where chef Paul Qui creates Japanese-inspired, supremely inventive cuisine. Begin with *The Myth*, a tropical twist on a Moscow Mule presented in a copper unicorn head and named for of the Hirst sculpture that anchors the dining room. This drink was made for Instagram, as were Pao's most popular dishes: sea urchin that eats like clam chowder, served in the shell and mixed with corn pudding; short rib asado, made with wagyu beef so tender no knife is required; and the *Dirt Cup* dessert, an elevated take on a childhood favorite. The best part? It all tastes as good as it looks. And, through September 30, Pao is offering a \$39 prix-fixe menu as part of Miami Spice. It will be popular, so reserve now.

Entertainment is intricate to the Faena experience. Attend nightly concerts at the Living Room lounge or opt for something grander at the Faena Theater, which is pure Luhrmann glam à la *Moulin Rouge*. The theater often hosts musical acts, cabaret-style shows, and a monthly karaoke evening with live accompaniment.

The Faena Forum is a compelling recent addition to the larger Faena District. At this event space, chromatic murals by Graciela Hasper appear through 400 unique windows. Inside, the amphitheater has hosted hip parties, philosophy discussions, and cello performances. The exhibit hall can accommodate an array of exhibitions, events, and concerts; it's also the home of Second Sundays. Visitors to these free happenings (the next is September 10) can skate through an interactive installation that reimagines a roller disco for the new millennium. (faena.com, faenaart.org) ◀◀



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