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Miami: Mediterranean Splendor And Deco Dreams



Synopsis

Miami is a world-renowned, cosmopolitan city with an architectural history to match. Its many treasures include not only Miami Beach's Art Deco buildings and Coral Gables, but also the houses and commercial buildings of the immediate postwar era, tropical vernacular architecture, mid-century modernism, and avant-garde high-rise buildings on the waterfront. What all these creations have in common is the intention to allure, delight, and engage the imagination and senses. Indeed, many of Miami's architects have conceived of the city in theatrical terms—a city as stage set. This book covers both well-known masterpieces and the overlooked ones, featuring spectacular color photography as well as archival imagery. With a text that is superbly informed, Miami is at once a definitive scholarly work and a seductive compendium of the area's fabled architecture.

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Customer Reviews

Beth Dunlop is the author of numerous books, including *Arquitectonica*. She is architecture critic for the Miami Herald. Robert A. M. Stern is one of America's most prominent and respected architects and Dean of the Yale School of Architecture. His work is featured in numerous monographs. Steven Brooke is a Fellow of the American Academy in Rome and winner of the AIA National Institute Honor Award for photography. He is the author and photographer of *Rizzoli's Sonoma Valley Style* and *Historic Houses of Virginia*.

Chapter One
The Beginnings Start with the land, as one always does. In Miami it has always been about the land, the way it meets the sea and the sky. Even now, in a city that is very much

man-made, the land and the landscape, the sea and the sky hold their power. For many years, the sky was Miami's skyline, more so than the few tall buildings that rose into it. But that is no more. The Miami of the new millennium is a much different place, a city with a flashy skyline of Manhattan-tall buildings, most of them eked out in steel and glass, or less often, the more traditional local building materials of stucco and stone. It is a fast-paced city, one that sometimes appears to have been designed to be seen at sixty-five miles per hour, or perhaps even from an airplane as it descends for landing. For the finer details, one has to slow down and come to earth, of course. The story of this place unfolds in its architecture, in its landscape. And the story continues, changing decade by decade, from the original pioneer cabins on. And though one can find a rare Tudor-style or Colonial Revival building and more than a handful of bungalows, so much of the architecture of Miami is actually notable in its homogeneity--drawing from just four traditions and limited in materials. Wood came first but did not last, and then stone, but the dramatically beautiful local oolitic limestone was not abundant enough to build more than the occasional house in a fast-growing city. By the early twentieth century, wood had begun to yield to concrete, to stucco over block, and until at least the mid-1950s when the first curtain wall buildings were constructed, that is how it remained. It still largely is a stucco city, more in the tradition of the Mediterranean countries that so inspired the architecture that took hold in Florida in the early twentieth century. This was not ordinary land but rather something strange and exotic, unlike most other places known to those who settled it. In the beginning, there was little more than scrub and jungle--the muck and the mangroves--and the huge blue sky with its almost palpable clouds forming an empty tableau. Now we can see it as land simply waiting for picturesque buildings, and eventually the pioneers and the builders came to turn the swampland into paradise and sell it.

This beautiful cocktail table book chronicles the storied architectural history of the Magic City. It features wonderful archival photos of the Miami in the early 20th century when "Spanish" style reigned, a history of the brilliant Art Deco era in South Beach, and glossy depictions of ultra-contemporary structures built in the 21st century by some of America's most renowned architects. Dunlop's prose is both lively and informative, consonant with the power and scope of the book's photographic history. Miami's architecture "at once lulls and stimulates residents and visitors alike," says A.M. Stern, in the book's thought-provoking introduction. To understand this apparent duality is to understand one reason for Miami's enduring allure. [...]

I was offered to keep the book and get a 50% refund because when the book arrived it was used,

not new, and the spine was separated from the pages. This book is huge and weighs like 5 lbs. I did enjoy the hundreds of pictures that show the evolution of architecture in Miami. You could easily see that the 1920s through 1950s was the height of architecture there. In the 1960s and 70s the buildings were lifeless and bland. In the 80s architects of Latino descent hit the scene and their offerings looked like welfare projects from a third world country - horrible. Today, buildings have climaxed again with very modern structures. The book shows period commercial structures as well as private homes with the politics behind the construction so it is a very unique and worthy book, worthy of 5 stars. I only gave 3 because of the condition of the book I received.

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