

FOUR

A PLACE LIKE NO OTHER

Antioco Piras steps inside South Beach's premier hotel, Faena Miami Beach to find out more about why the creative venue not just a place to stay, but a platform for the extraordinary.

Alan Faena, the businessman and artist behind the Faena Group hotel chain, clearly had a vision for Faena Miami Beach. The new opening has the involvement of some of the world's best architects, interior designers and creatives: Norman Foster, Philippe Starck, Baz Luhrmann, Catherine Martin and Damien Hirst; quite the all-star cast. The £426m restoration of the Saxony Hotel, originally built in 1947 by George Sax and designed by Roy F France, was in its heyday known as the Queen of Collins Avenue; the hotel reigned in the 1950s and 60s, with regulars Frank Sinatra, Marilyn Monroe and Dean Martin hanging out, performing and dazzling the crowds here.

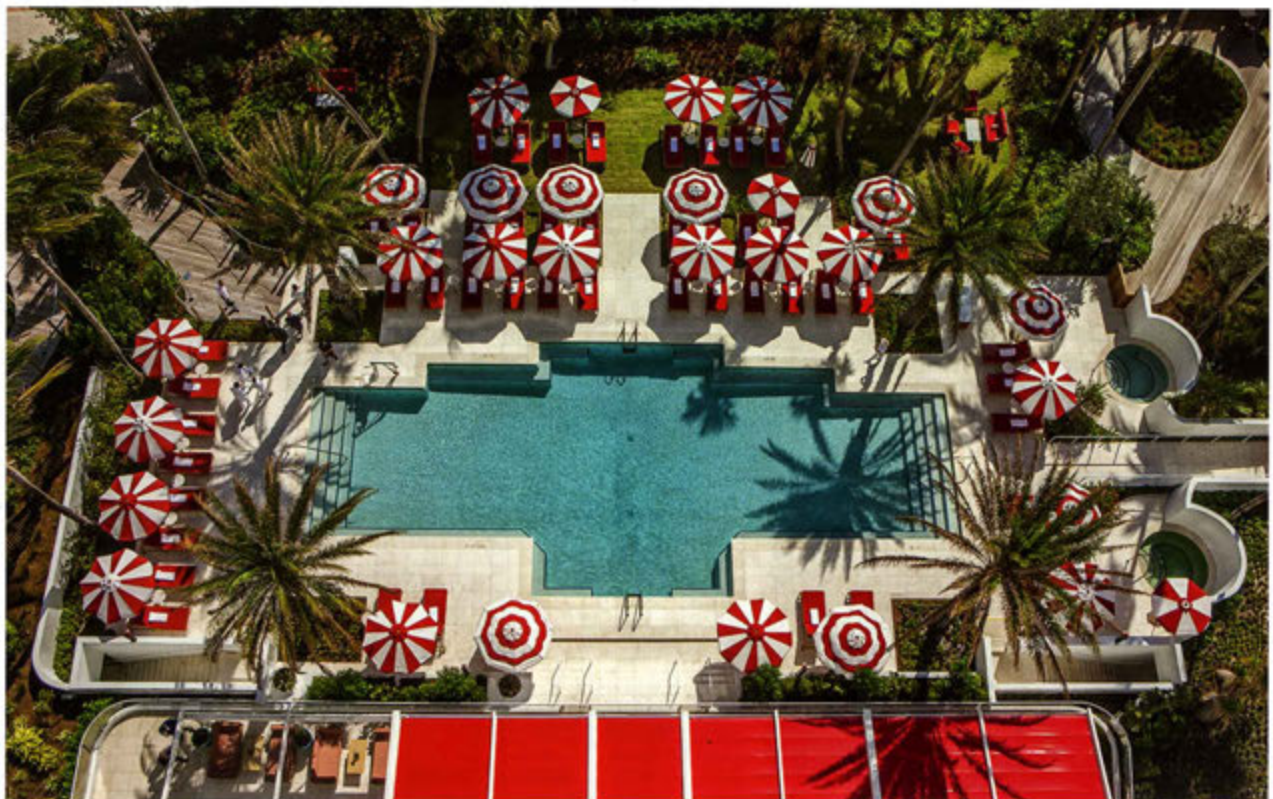
Alan and the aforementioned creative have together created a new venue that recalls this mid-20th-century glamour: stunning Art Deco appeal, old-world grandeur, hardwood floors, sumptuous red velvet and cool blue-tiled bathrooms. Hotel guests will be looked after by 'experience managers', who can assist in designing the overall experience – from pre-arrival planning to departure

BELOW Faena Hotel Miami beach is the epitome of modern glamour with stunning views of the ocean, bay, and Miami skyline, as well as pool views that pay homage to Miami's Art Deco appeal and old-world grandeur.

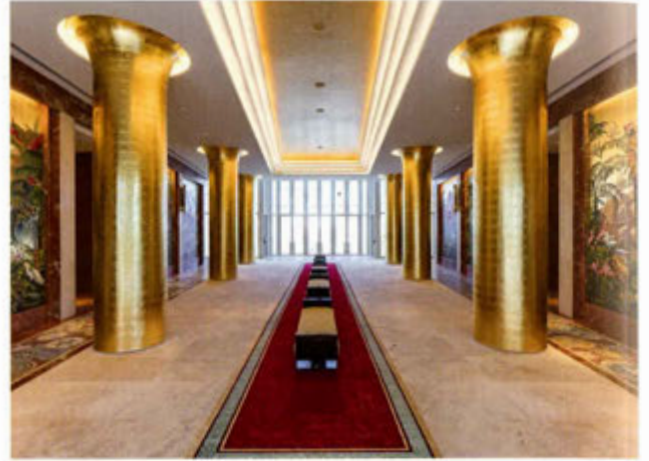
arrangements. Sun-worshippers of all ages will love the palm-lined pool area and beach club Faena Playa, situated on 100,000 square feet of pristine white sand.

Within the property there is a stunning 3,000sq ft theatre, with its weekend cabaret-style revues for guests and public. This adds a worldly flair to Miami Beach, as will special performances by musicians, dancers and singers from all over the globe. Faena Theater has recently debuted *C'est Rouge!*, an original Faena production. A sensual and seductive revue of singular vignettes set to Latin American and jazz rhythms by an extraordinary septet band, *C'est Rouge!* fuses entertainment, humour and beauty to showcase the ability of the human body to create awe-inspiring performances.

When it comes to the food and drink offerings, Faena is also home to some superb chefs with equally inspiring vision. Step forward, Argentine chef Francis Mallmann and young Paul Qui, a perfect balance between experience and a modern-day approach to food. Mallmann overlooks the hotel's fire kitchen, *Los Fuegos*, offering a contemporary »



HOTEL JUNKIE



« take on Argentine dining. Paul Qui is heading up Pao, his first restaurant outside of Texas, which offers the chef's renowned brand of Asian cuisine.

I have to say that Faena is now my absolute favourite hotel in Miami. As much as I love the minimal Art Deco feel of most of the other hotel properties here – Delano South Beach, the Betsy Hotel, Loews, The Raleigh Hotel – I can't resist the opulence and extravagant feel of the Faena. Some Miami properties don't feel like you're getting what you pay for and fall short – but not so here. I am also a huge fan of Baz Luhrmann's style and flair, hence the hotel feels like you are caught in the middle of the glamour of *The Great Gatsby* and *Chicago*, with a touch of the craziness of *Romeo + Juliet*.

ABOVE The luxury hotel embraces modern art, architecture and culture throughout the grounds. "Gone but not Forgotten" by Damien Hirst commands attention in the Faena hotel's outdoor space, while golden pillars give guests an opulent welcome in the lobby.

BELOW Luxe textures and vibrant colour palettes define the interiors of the Faena, as well as the outdoor dining area at Los Fuegos. (pictured)

During my stay I occupied a Premier Oceanfront Suite. The size of the room and facilities are perfect, with only one criticism: I felt that the singular sink and size of the bathroom weren't adequate for the size of the room. The bedrooms are outfitted with bright turquoise-velvet drapes and a red-velvet sofa, coral armchairs and a stunning Deco area. Animal prints, brushed-gold fixtures and diamond-patterned wood-grain furnishings are used as accents. The room had a large balcony with superior views.

Staff were attentive, friendly, in the know; it's simply an all-round brilliant hotel. Faena now comfortably sits in my personal top 10 hotels in the world list. A must for anyone seeking luxury and playfulness in an already playful city. ■



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