Curio at Miami’s Faena Bazaar Adds Brands, Sees Sales Spike

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By Rebecca Kleinman on June 4, 2021

MIAMI — Curio at Faena Bazaar has gone from pop-up to permanent retail paradise. The luxury lifestyle destination test launched in 2019, closed briefly during COVID-19 and has grown exponentially ever since reopening for the long haul in November, according to partners Danielle Licata and Jeff Lasota.

“Sales have increased every month, and this May was our number one so far,” said Licata, who predicted an elongated season unlike the typical summer drop-off based on the city’s changing demographics. “Miami is going through a renaissance. A lot of West Coasters and people from New York and New Jersey came for COVID-19 and decided to make it their home. Or they rented their house in the Hamptons for a huge rate and are staying here.”
It’s no secret that Florida retail is on fire, but their concept also brings back a glam bohemian elan that’s been absent on the beach for a long time. After lengthy careers building big brands — she for Informa’s East Coast women’s shows, most notably Coterie, and he for Stella McCartney and Yeezy, among others — they’re championing under-the-radar, high-end designers through their New York agency Curio, and its showroom and retail offshoots. Many lines the store carries have little to no wholesale representation.

“We’re not competing with the marquee brands at Bal Harbour Shops and the Webster,” said Lasota, who discovers designers through word of mouth, Instagram and travel, which he hopes to resume soon. “We may share a few, but we’ll always maintain a strong mix of new and recognizable brands, much like Barneys had 20 years ago. It’s more about storytelling.”

Buying on breadth rather than depth, they consistently write orders for about 250 brands and limit each style to one size run at most. Pieces never go on sale.

“You can come back in two weeks, and it’s a totally different store,” said a saleswoman, who merchandises pieces from different collections by vibe and theme. “Customers may not be familiar with a label, but they instantly recognize the quality.”

Licata and Lasota aim to secure some type of exclusive partnership, whether a brand doesn’t yet have a U.S. presence or only sells direct to consumer or through online retailers. These include Kimberly Taylor, Nackiyé, Gül Hürgel and MariaSanz, and these relationships often extend to a private label collaboration and one offs. They also suggest how designers can tweak items for the market.

“We take what they do best and make exclusives,” said Lasota, of requesting a brand to turn a tunic into blouses with matching shorts, a Babe Paley resort throwback in seersucker to terry cloth that flies out here. “We call them cabana sets.”

Separate floors focus on more formal attire and resortwear, both with fine jewelry and other accessories at respective price points mixed in. There are dedicated sections for sleepwear, shoes, men’s and an apothecary for beauty, perfumes and candles with lines like Cire Trudon and D.S. & Durga. Fragrances, which include a custom experience booked through Airbnb, performed extremely well during and after quarantine.
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“People really craved sensory experiences,” said Licata, whose men’s business is also booming, having tripled sales, inspiring its relocation from a boyfriend corner to a boutique space with its own entrance on the ground floor to stock bestsellers such as OAS swimwear from Sweden and Colombia-based Azulu’s linen clothing. “It works well to be on its own and is adjacent to the new café. Guys can have a cigar and read the paper in the courtyard.”

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A branch of the local franchise Crema Gourmet Espresso Bar bows soon. Other services are My Darling Ivy hair salon from New York and fitness classes by DanceBody and Hot Pilates.
As master tenants of the 20,000-square-foot, four-story property, Lasota and Licata choose their partners and oversee buying, with the exception of vintage and home. They leave those categories to Morphew Vintage from New York and Casa Casa, customer-turned-partner Monica Exposito’s home concierge and interior design upstart. Her collectible furnishings and home accessories are often signed by their makers (Karl Springer, Pierre Cardin, Adrian Pearsall, Milo Baughman). New, exclusive Turkish glassware and Venus-shaped, ceramic vases made in Italy modernize gifting and wedding registries.

“The women who are shopping for a dress are also renovating their homes and hosting a lot. A fashionable woman would have a fashionable tabletop,” said Licata, who’s building out a full showroom on the ground floor for home. “It all has to be cohesive.”