LEADING LADY

The spectacular Faena Hotel is a historic property given a vibrant new life with dizzying style and a grand vision of cultural renaissance in Miami’s South Beach.

Words Marina Ray
From the outside, Faena Hotel conjures all the charm of a glamorous past. Art Deco design, geometric outlines, and elegant porte-cochères oftentimes sporting a Maybach. Instead of succumbing to the utilitarian South Beach minimalist style, this interior layers high-gloss appeal inspired by old-school glamour and high-budget film productions such as *Midnight Cowboy*, *The Great Gatsby*, even *Romeo + Juliet*. Picture wild tropical murals, massive gold pillars and gilded art. Add a dash of Buenos Aires, lots and lots of red, and you'll end up with one of the most talked-about properties in the world.

Before its reimagining, Faena Hotel existed as the Saxony, built in 1947 by George Sax and designed by Roy F. France. It was considered the first luxury hotel of its time, offering air-conditioning, sweeping ocean views and lavish rooms. The art-deco "Queen of Collins Avenue" hosted Hollywood's elite, including Marilyn Monroe, Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra, who sang to sell-out audiences. However, when Las Vegas hired performers with the promise of higher pay, Miami Beach languished, and over the decades, started to look more American Riviera. But in December 2015, the once-neglected hotel icon was finally reimagined at a fantastically reopening.

Reimagining the district
For all its majesty, the Faena Hotel is the cornerstone of a larger billion-dollar development, Faena District. Named for visionary Argentine fashion designer turned property developer Alan Faena, this mixed-use area aims to spearhead a cultural renaissance. Officially designated a Miami Beach district in 2014, it stretches four blocks along Collins Avenue, from 32nd to 36th streets, in once-rundown Mid-Beach. Attaching his name to a project of such scale and prominence in the first for the Argentine entrepreneur, in 2009, he and Russian philanthropist and billionaire owner of Warner Music Group Len Blavatnik partnered on rejuvenating a decrepit part of Buenos Aires - the industrial docklands of Puerto Madero. The area has become one of the most vibrant residential and cultural parts of the city, and the duo hopes to emulate that success in this version of utopia, or "Futopia," north of South Beach.
A POTENT ATTENTION GRABBER

It takes a special car to raise eyebrows in Miami, America’s party town where conspicuous wealth and luxury abound. In this sub-tropical climate it’s got to be open topped; and with a solitary sports car to be found is just about every driveway, it’s the fast back bubble of an AMG-feathered V8 that turns heads.

With its low-slung chassis and Panamerican grille, the two-seater Mercedes-AMG GT Roadster has the extravert style but can also back it up, with a 416kW and 680Nm engine tuned with the help of Mercedes-AMG. Riding on AMG RIDE CONTROL, the sporty suspension has adaptive damping means that whether you’re rolling down Collins Avenue, crossing the iconic Seven Mile Bridge to Key West or cruising up the coast on the A1A, you’re as comfortable as you are conspicuous. And should tropical heat turn to tropical downpour, the triple-layer fabric roof deploys in just 11 seconds at a speed of up to 50km/h. The AMG GT Roadster is also ideally suited to conditions in Australia, where it will go on sale later in 2017.

Hot spots & new openings
Miami’s South Beach revival means if it’s hot, it’s happening here

1. **MUSEUM**
The Bass Museum of Art is set to reopen in 2017 after an expansion by architect Arata Isozaki. The first exhibition at its new home is expected to include mixed media art by Yoko Ono.

2. **CABARET**
Cabaret is ready, the old-world, new-age live cabaret show choreographed by Bambalì, performs weekly at Faena Theater. Afterward, a cabaret movie night at the intimate Bass Bar for cocktails.

3. **DINING**
The Sarsaparilla Club, an Asian-inspired dining spot headed by chefs Janine Booth and Australian, and Jeff Meilich, is located within the Shikinomai, an Art Deco hotel on Manhattan of Miami’s signature style.