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ARTS AND CULTURE TAKE CENTER STAGE IN MIAMI

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(MIAMI) – Visitors to Miami with agendas beyond the perfect poolside mojito have never been disappointed exploring the city's lively arts scene. While great beaches, perfect weather and a sizzling nightlife have earned Miami its status as the world's favorite fun-in-the-sun playground, the city is home to a diverse, sophisticated population that has sparked an increase in non-profit cultural groups from 100 to more than 700 over the past 20 years. Defined in part by its geographic location at the crossroads of Latin America and with a kaleidoscope of cultural groups that reflect its mix, Miami's cultural milieu is rich with grassroots organizations as well as world-class cultural institutions.

Miami's evolution into an international destination directly impacts cultural life. As more and more important visual and performing artists are attracted to live and work in Miami, the quality of exhibits and performances rises. As Miami molds itself into a 21st century arts mecca, the most renowned architects of our era, including Cesar Pelli, Robert A.M. Stern, Arquitectonica and Arata Isozaki, are changing the city's face.

Case in point is the dazzling new **Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami Dade County**, which opened in October 2006. Designed by Cesar Pelli, the 570,000-square-foot complex on six acres of land on Biscayne Boulevard is one of only four major centers in the United States featuring three separate performance facilities created to present ballet, opera, theater and symphonic music. Modeled after "purpose-built" performance halls like New York's Lincoln Center, the magnificent venue includes the 2,200-seat Carnival Symphony Hall, the 2,400-seat Sanford and Dolores Ziff Ballet Opera House, and a 200-seat black box Studio Theatre. Four nationally esteemed companies are in residence: the **Concert Association of Florida, Florida Grand Opera, Miami City Ballet** and the **New World Symphony**. A major destination for

visitors and residents alike, the Center has served as an important force in revitalization efforts in downtown Miami.

Underscoring Miami's growing stature as one of the world's preeminent centers for art culture is **Art Basel Miami Beach**, which has become the most talked about art event in the United States. This sister fair to Art Basel Switzerland has become more celebrity-packed, exhilarating and successful each year since its auspicious debut in America in December 2002. Five days of exhibits, A-list parties, lectures, alternative and crossover events and ancillary exhibits rage nonstop for the crème de la crème of the international art world and its collectors, dealers, curators and critics.

If anyone needed further proof of Miami's ascendancy as an arts mecca, **Art Miami** draws close to 32,000 arts lovers to the Wynwood Arts District for its annual event, held simultaneously with Art Basel. It typically draws 130 galleries from 27 countries, including emerging and local venues. Additionally, **Arteaméricas**, held in March has become the world's premier Latin American art fair. It features the best galleries from 18 countries in the Americas and around the world and showcases well-known classic to contemporary artists. Renowned fairs such as these serve as a measure of Miami's art pulse.

A new \$44 million **South Miami-Dade Cultural Center** opened in 2007 on six acres of waterfront property in Cutler Ridge. Conceived as a multidisciplinary arts center and showcase for the performing arts, the complex houses a 966-seat theater, a dramatic "Art in Public Places" project by internationally renowned artist Robert Chamber, an activities building and two outdoor performance spaces.

Year Round Arts Town

Beyond the glitter and glamour of art fairs, Miami is a visual arts town year round. An ever-growing number of cultural institutions, galleries and alternative spaces are fueled by an increasingly notable resident talent pool and supported by serious collectors. Throughout Greater Miami, indoor and out, impressive public art projects by local, nationally and internationally acclaimed artists blanket the landscape, courtesy of **Miami-Dade Art in Public Places**, a model program for the rest of the country. Art aficionados can travel to Miami's southernmost reaches for more fabulous eye candy--namely **Art South**, an artist's collective of working and exhibit space in downtown Homestead.

One of the most striking venues, the **Bass Museum of Art** on Miami Beach, tripled its exhibition space after extensive expansion by world-renowned architect Arata

Isozaki. Now, the Museum's large collection of European painting, sculpture, and textiles from the Renaissance to the present can be properly showcased, while important large-scale outside exhibits can also be mounted. A one-of-a-kind cultural gem, the jewel box **Wolfsonian-FIU** is located in the heart of South Beach's Art Deco District in an historic landmark building. Owned by Florida International University (FIU), the museum is home to the Mitchell Wolfson Jr. collection, a comprehensive survey of the art of design. Consisting of more than 70,000 artifacts including furniture; industrial design objects; glass, ceramics, and metalwork; rare books; periodicals; ephemera; works on paper; paintings; textiles; and medals primarily of North American and European origin, the works date from 1885–1945.

Also on Miami Beach, the **Jewish Museum of Florida** is housed in a beautifully restored 1936 synagogue built by Miami Beach's first Jewish congregation. Considering the rich cultural influence of Miami Beach's Jewish population, the **Holocaust Memorial**, an inspirational sculpture and gardens located a few blocks north, underscores the strength and understanding of this city's culture.

Trendy Lincoln Road is home to a Miami Beach cultural pioneer, **Art Center/South Florida**. Established in 1984 by a small group of artists on the then blighted and vacant thoroughfare, the 60,000-square-foot campus encompasses 52 open to the public artists' studios and exhibition spaces. An impetus for the Road's transformation into a lively magnet for culture, entertainment and shopping, the art center has open studio spaces and bright display windows that draw thousands annually.

Art Abounds All Around Town

Anyone seeking an overview of Miami's contemporary art scene as interpreted by young, up-and-coming artists won't want to miss the galleries surrounding the Charles Gwathmey-designed **Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA)** in North Miami. The last Friday of each month is Gallery Night in North Miami, and a concentration of exciting young exhibitors, including Ambrosino, Leonard Tachmes Gallery and T. Curtsnoc Gallery stay open late for legions of wine-sipping arts supporters, while MoCa hosts monthly jazz concerts. The museum has garnered a reputation for innovative exhibits that capture the current state of the arts, both locally and internationally.

More galleries that warrant attention are located within **Miami's Design District**, a unique community just north of downtown Miami, that is fast becoming the center of the home furnishings and interior design industry in South Florida -- all uniquely open to the public. A number of excellent galleries have chosen to locate within the synergistic

environment created by the myriad furniture and design showrooms that line the streets. Notable galleries include Bernice Steinbaum, Diaspora Vibe Gallery, the Moore Space and Barbara Gillman Gallery.

The neighboring **Wynwood Arts District** is home to more than 70 museums, galleries, warehouses and exhibition spaces, including a new outpost of **MOCA at Goldman Warehouse**. Nearby, the **Rubell Family Collection** houses one of the world's most important private collections of contemporary art, with over 1,500 pieces spanning 30 years of the movement. The **Margulies Collection** is renowned for its amazing photography and contemporary art exhibitions.

Continuing south, the city's major downtown museum, **Miami Art Museum (MAM)** exhibits and collects Western Hemisphere works of art from 1940 to present. Adjacent to MAM, within the Philip Johnson-designed Miami-Dade Cultural Center, the **Historical Museum of South Florida** traces the community's roots with interactive displays. The center is also home to the main branch of the **Miami Dade Public Library** and the **Louis Wolfson II Media History Center**.

In Coconut Grove, **Vizcaya Museum and Gardens** is one of Miami's greatest treasures, renowned for its Italian Renaissance architecture, priceless artwork and furnishings. Built by industrialist James Deering in 1916, the estate draws more than 200,000 visitors each year who stroll the property to envision how the other half lived. **The Miami Science Museum** is just down the road, with hourly star shows, multimedia extravaganzas and hands-on exhibits for adults and children.

Coral Gables -- home to the well-heeled **Lowe Art Museum** at the University of Miami -- boasts its own well-established gallery scene. Gables Gallery Night takes place the first Friday of each month from October through March when galleries open their doors and ply visitors with wine and cheese while they peruse Latin masters and contemporary icons. A trolley and comprehensive map help transport gallery-goers from space to space. Nearby **Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden**, one of the world's preeminent botanical gardens, includes a nationally recognized museum of plant exploration.

The beautiful **Miami Children's Museum** on Watson Island is a welcome addition to Miami's arts scene. Occupying 56,500 square feet on two levels, the museum ranks as one of the 10 largest children's museums in the United States. Nearby the new **WEAM** in South Beach is for adults only, featuring erotic paintings, sculptures and ceramic artifacts. **The Frost Art Museum** recently expanded to 46,000 square feet in a beautiful

new building designed by, internationally recognized architect from the Hellmuth Obata and Kassabaum (HOK) firm, Yann Weymouth, at Florida International University

All the World's a Stage

Performance reigns supreme throughout all of Greater Miami. One of the city's oldest companies, since 1941, the **Florida Grand Opera** has been producing five grand operas per year, featuring the finest guest performers in classic stories of passion and beauty. On the other end of the spectrum, the **Filmore Miami Beach at Jackie Gleason** hosts Broadway touring productions, children's theater, concerts, comedy and dance performances.

From gospel concerts at local churches to al fresco jazz performances on Lincoln Road, Miami's musical and performance art groups reflect the diversity of the populace. **Miami Light Project**, a non-profit organization, nurtures the growth of avant garde and experimental performance in Miami, providing space, workshops and support for new works. Over the years, their Contemporary Performance Series has brought artists like Laurie Anderson, Philip Glass and Spalding Gray to Miami.

Notable music series take place throughout the year, ranging from **Festival Miami**, classical music events presented by the **University of Miami's School of Music** to Subtropics, an experimental music festival. Performance arts groups cover all genres and cultural backgrounds -- from **Teatro Avante** to **Jamaica Awareness**, the **Gold Coast Theatre Company**, **Dance Now! Ensemble**, **Momentum Dance**, and **La Rosa Flamenco Theater** to the innovative **Tigertail Productions**; which presents an array of world music and dance artists.

Other important performance venues in Miami include the **James L. Knight Center**, a popular downtown concert hall, the state-of-the-art **American Airlines Arena** at Bayfront Park and the **Gusman Center for the Performing Arts**, a landmark architectural treasure in downtown Miami. The historic **Lyric Theater**, built in Overtown in 1915, represented the apex of African- American entertainment and social life in its prime, while Miami Beach's landmark **Colony Theater** recently reopened after extensive renovations.

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