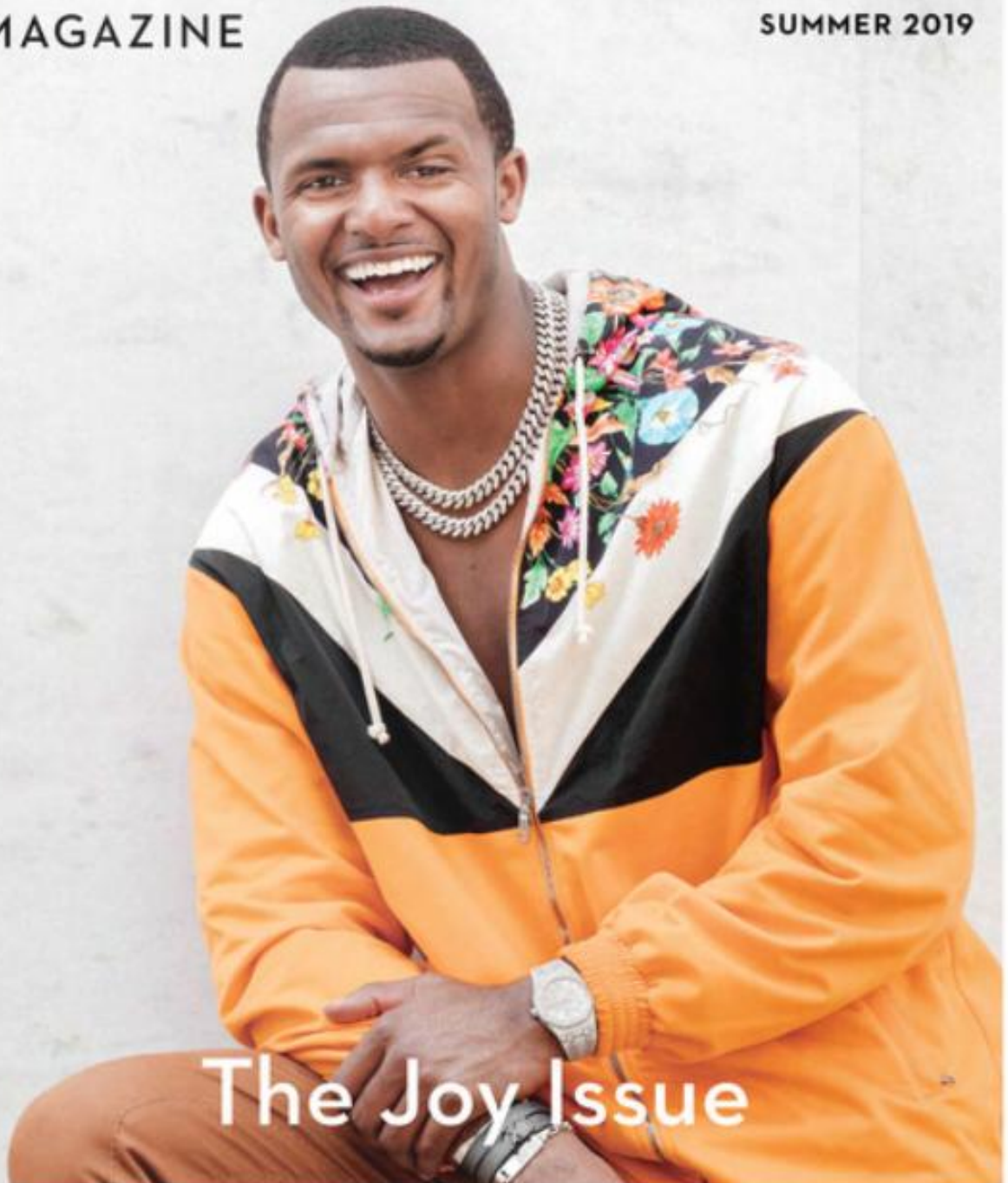


DESIGN DISTRICT

MAGAZINE

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The Joy Issue



REACH FOR THE SKY



Architect Bernardo Fort-Brescia helped reshape the Miami skyline, inspired by wind and water. His practice Arquitectonica is setting their sights on Sunny Isles to bring the Ritz-Carlton to life in a fluid form.

YOUR EARLY WORK IN MIAMI AT ARQUITECTONICA WAS CONSIDERED AUDACIOUS AND REDEFINED THE MIAMI SKYLINE. WHAT EMBOLDENED YOU TO BREAK THE MOLD?

When we started our practice, Miami was losing its luster. The Art Deco and 60's Lapidus times were long gone. The city was changing rapidly from snowbird resort town to an international business and leisure hub. We felt the architecture could help visually communicate the new Miami to the world. The work had to tell the story of the urban tropics.

FROM A DISTANCE, YOUR BUILDINGS OFTEN HAVE A STRONG REPEATING PATTERN THAT EVOKES NATURE. CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHAT FROM THE NATURAL WORLD INSPIRES YOU?

Nature has always been part of our inspiration — it is also part of Miami's unique intertwining of the environment with the



man-made. No city has the interlocking of land and water. The fluid forms of the ocean and the windblown vegetation that always appear in movement are part of our vocabulary.

WHAT ARE THE MATERIALS YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING WITH – ARE YOU PARTICULARLY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT A KIND OF STONE, OR METAL, OR AN INNOVATION IN MATERIALITY?

We generally prefer the transparency of glass and endless patterns of wood and the honest expression of concrete. Of course, concrete is the most plastic of construction materials. We use stone selectively and we like local keystones. We trend towards authenticity.

YOU HAVE OFFICES ALL OVER THE WORLD, FROM SAO PAULO TO PARIS TO HONG KONG.

WHAT ARE THE COMMONALITIES OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENTS IN WHICH YOU WORK? WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES?

Every place is different, and an architect has to recognize this. But there are also interesting new trends in every place. Because we

have a practice across the United States and around the world, we often cross-fertilize. We propose ideas originated in other places and we take ideas originated in Miami to other places as well.

The world is both one and diverse. Nobody has a monopoly on innovation.

WHAT IS ARCHITECTURE'S RESPONSIBILITY TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE, AND WHAT INNOVATIONS DO YOU ENVISION?

I think the developed world is dealing with climate change. There are great financial resources and access to new technologies. Holland dealt with its own issues a long time ago and proved all is solvable. We need to worry about poor countries who don't have these resources. Miami is at the forefront of research of sea level rise and climate change. The universities and government are very engaged. Architecture and local codes follow new thinking regarding resiliency.

DO YOU INCORPORATE REFERENCES TO FLORIDA HISTORY INTO YOUR PROJECTS? WHAT FLOURISHES, SHAPES, OR PALETTES HAVE YOU LEANED INTO OVER THE YEARS?

The colorful palette of the Caribbean has always had a role in Miami architecture. So has nautical shapes that remind us of our oceanic culture. We draw from naval architecture and the colors of our oceans, our corals, and our rich flora.

TELL US ABOUT THE RITZ CARLTON PROJECT, AND THE SUNNY ISLES COMMUNITY? HOW HAVE YOU APPROACHED THAT SKYLINE?

We sought a fluid form, as if shaped by the erosion from the water and winds. The shape rises from the sand dunes capturing the essence of the place. The curves carry to the roof creating a terracing effect as if in a yacht or an ocean liner. By the time one is suspended high up in space, one only senses the ocean and the plasticity of the architecture as if sailing beyond it.

Images: Courtesy of Arquitectonica



Design District Magazine is the official magazine of the Miami Design District - the global destination for the best in art, design, culture, food and fashion.