

As Art Basel arrives, South Florida begins its seasonal sizzle

By Michael Koplan

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A sculpture constructed of LEGO blocks titled "Kosmaj Toy," by Los Carpinteros is shown on display as part of Art Basel Miami Beach, Wednesday, Dec. 5, 2012 in Miami Beach.

Photo: AP

Miami's high season approaches next week, with flights from New York quickly filling up and beach conditions now turning optimal.

Slick gatherings such as Design Miami and Art Basel will soon make their annual arrivals. And local legends are primed to present their latest cultural and culinary wizardry, such as chef Michelle Bernstein, who will unveil a pair of dining concepts — [Michy's Miami Beach Pop Up](#) and the [Garden Café](#) — inside the Miami Beach Botanical Gardens from Dec. 5 to 7.

This year also marks the opening of three new South Beach hotels on Collins Avenue. Funky-but-chic and freshly ribbon-cut last week, [Redbury Hotel South Beach](#) (from \$419), from Sam Narazian's SBE (which also owns SLS Hotel South Beach), outfits its 69 rooms and suites with turntables and features a new Italian restaurant, Lorenzo, helmed by Spiaggia veteran Tony Mantuano.

The 74-room [Metropolitan by COMO](#), Miami Beach, opens in February; its spa and beachfront pool are reserved just for hotel guests and bring a big dose of wellness to the usual South Beach hotel party scene (from \$499). Meanwhile, [Shelborne South Beach](#) will reopen its storied doors in early 2014, fresh off a \$150 million reno. Sporting 200 rooms, the hotel will also boast the buzzy restaurant Morimoto South Beach and an interior design scheme courtesy of fashion-minded Richard Mishaan and Meg Sharpe of NYC's [The Lion and The Crown](#) (from \$389).

Food-wise, the city's big-name chef flood is showing no signs of letting up. Stephen Starr is launching a local-leaning bistro, Verde, inside the city's new [Perez Art Museum Miami](#); the resto and museum both debut on Dec. 4. Seafood lovers will swoon at the Collins Avenue outpost of Lure Fishbar, operating out of Loews Miami Beach Hotel and scheduled to be ready for Basel. In the lobby of [Fontainebleau Miami Beach](#), Michael Mina 74 is poised to launch in early December as a restaurant/bar/ultra-lounge with a hyped-up comfort-food menu: potpies, truffle omelets, grilled snapper and the like.

On a far more down-to-earth level, the guys behind hip Miami hostel [Freehand](#) will soon debut an organic, shared-plate restaurant inside the historic 1930s house on property. Hangover cures can be found via the fried chicken and waffles breakfast at [Tongue & Cheek](#) in the SoFi district. Then there's the [Cypress Room](#), with its mounted deer heads amid mid-century design — a Design District hot table with a spot-on "new-American" menu.

On the nightlife front: [Radio Bar](#), with an actual radio tower built into the place, has gone from pop-up to permanent, and Albert Trummer, a co-founder of NYC Chinatown lounge Apotheke, brings his incendiary cocktail show to the at the Rubell Hotel with [Drogerie](#). Do Not Sit On The Furniture is a frills-free dance club from DJs Behrouz and Will Renuart, whose Electric Pickle is considered a Mecca for EDM lovers (423 16th St., 305-450-3809). The faux down-low theme continues at [Patpong Road](#), a sleazy-by-design bar situated atop the very good Thai restaurant Khong River House, just off Lincoln Road Mall, and set up to resemble an idealized version of a back-alley Bangkok dive.

Or if you want to dabble in the nightlife sciences, try the vitamin/mineral infusions at [Club Essentia](#) spa on the Delano's top floor. There, Dr. Ivan Rusilko's custom-mixed feel-good IV drips will get you revved for your next run on the town.

Energized or not, Miami's serious shoppers make their way to the Design District. Fab men's shoes and bags dominate the recently opened [Berluti](#), where you can play a game of pool while waiting for your shoes to be hand-patinaed. Flashier kicks can be found in [Christian Louboutin Boutique Homme](#), with colors ranging from cherry red to camouflage.

Nearby, in Wynwood, check out of the city's best private museums, such as Rubell Family Collection and de la Cruz Collection, along with a cool galleries. Must-sees include [Frederic Snitzer Gallery](#), [David Castillo](#), [Gallery Diet](#) and the newly opened [Mindy Solomon](#), specializing in emerging artists.

The area also has must-eats and drinks: [The Wynwood Brewing Company](#), where you can sit at the bar and watch the craft brewers in action; [Gramps](#), a performance space cum locals bar that is well suited for grooving to live rock bands or chilling on the patio between games of bocce; and the Japanese/Peruvian dining spot [SuViche](#), which wows with a Pisco bar stocked with a dozen different infusions of the South American

spirit.