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# Redefining Boundaries

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## IDB Shows There's More to Miami Than Sun and Fun

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) does this every year: It hosts its annual Board of Governors Meeting at some fabulous international city, whereupon its Cultural Center puts together an exhibition centering around the artistic offerings of said city or area.

Which explains why one year you had a splendid show on contemporary Swedish design, and another year an atmospheric and highly flavored exhibition on New Orleans (pre-Katrina).

It's a successful formula and this year is no exception with "Extended Boundary: Latin American and Caribbean Artists in Miami," a thoughtful, focused exhibition that dovetails the 49th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors in—where else—Miami.

That being said, don't expect too much of Miami's well-known pop culture clichés to appear: no red-haired David Caruso of "CSI Miami" squinting into the sun while trying to solve a homicide, no Al "Scarface" Pacino doing his wild-eyed version of population control with an automatic machine gun, and certainly no Sonny Crockett chasing drug dealers on the water in a white jacket.

This exhibition is about a Miami unfamiliar to many people—as envisioned by curator and IDB Cultural Center Director Félix Ángel, who has once again put together the hallmarks of an IDB exhibition: a surprising amount of diversity, a design that sends a pointed message, and selections that stop you in your tracks.

So don't be surprised to be surprised as you go through this exhibition. It's only a partial history of art in Miami as expressed by artists from Latin America and the Caribbean, but it certainly portrays Miami not only as a neighbor of Latin America and the Caribbean, but as a cultural extension of the region.

"Miami today—one might say—has become an extended boundary for Latin America and the Caribbean for reasons that are not hard to understand: physical proximity, easy access from surrounding countries and language familiarity," Ángel explained. "New arrivals enjoy the benefits of available resources, well-established cultural institutions, social organizations and order, and a stable political system that characterizes the United States as a modern democracy, granting opportunity, progress and development to the individual and society."

Ángel has organized an exhibition of 36 works by 15 artists. Framing their pieces on wall backgrounds that are bright, pleasingly blinding and full of primary colors, the exhibition traces the making of a cultural Miami, going back to the 19th and 20th centuries, when a major railroad was finally extended to Biscayne Bay, allowing the first boom in the area.

The exhibition and catalogue are further divided into sections that examine the art and cultural life of Miami from 1896 to 1959 before the first major influx of Cuban immigrants; the opening of the first facility geared toward Latin American art; and a look at the artists themselves that have transformed and contributed to the city over the years.

The works address the emergence of an artistic identity—not a particular style so much as a community. And it's a

MOST POPULAR
His Excellency Fernando Oris de Roa
His Excellency Trevor Traina
Her Excellency Besiana Kadare
His Excellency Mamadou Haïdara
His Excellency Fernando Llorca Castro

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transcendental community in the sense that the art here confounds the clichés that are so familiar to mainstream America, which tends to obsess over the Cuban influence. But here we see a whole regional presence in Miami, including artists from Peru, Argentina, Colombia, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, as well as Cuba. I particularly was drawn to the bold colors of Colombian-born Mario Vélez’s abstract “Possessions No. 55,” **Luisa Mesa’s haunting self-portrait photographic installation “Journey Within,”** the “nest” pieces created by Argentine artist Natasha Duwin, and the startling bronze sculptures of Haitian native Edouard Duval-Carrié that are as scary as a violent goddess of war.

In addition, there’s a generous selection of vintage and contemporary photographs of Miami’s physical cultural and architectural landmarks, including the Coconut Grove Public Library, circa 1901, the Chapel of the Biltmore Hotel from 1926, and the Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami, circa 1952, among others.

What’s remarkable is how almost all the works portray a surprising, unexpected Miami—with a kind of forward progress that detects the emergence of a major cultural evolution. The works bulge with personality, rough, colorful dreams, sharp humor and political edge. On their own, they’re enticing to look at, and could easily come from anywhere in the world, but together, they paint a hypnotic, very specific picture of a city far more complicated than many average sun-seekers and trendsetters realize.

Extended Boundary: Latin American and Caribbean Artists in Miami through May 2 Inter-American Development Bank Cultural Center 1300 New York Ave., NW For more information, please call (202) 623-3774 or visit [www.iadb.org/cultural](http://www.iadb.org/cultural).

### About the Author

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