



1111 Lincoln Road by Herzog & de Meuron, Miami, USA

June 2010 | By Rowan Moore

Herzog & de Meuron hang loose in Miami and reinvent the car park as a sculptural, flexible entity. Photography by Roland Halbe

The most obvious thing about Herzog & de Meuron's 1111 Lincoln Road is that it is a car park like no other. Rather than a piece of monofunctional traffic equipment, it wants to 'mix programme in unique ways that people have not seen before.' This it does, but it also does something more. Its centrepiece is a sumptuous work of architecture, both playful and expressive, using only one material: concrete. And then it does something else. It assembles a collection of elements - the sumptuous work, some houses by the same architects in a wholly different style, some finish off or sew up.

It makes a strong and distinctive place, while allowing strong and distinctive things to happen there in the future. It doesn't draw lines between its elements, between the different people who have helped make it, or between itself and its surroundings.

Emphatic though it is, it's not quite clear where it begins and ends, in either space or time.

1111 Lincoln Road was 'envisioned' by Robert Wennett, a developer and art collector who declares that 'for 20 years I did things which were about being commercial. [So] I wanted to do something about legacy, about what I would leave.' He wanted to create a 'civic building' and, notwithstanding his choice of famous Pritzker architects, he wanted something 'absolutely not iconic. I was trying to solve a very important urban problem.'

The project's programme includes shops, a restaurant, offices, a rebuilt bank, some houses and a courtyard apartment for Wennett. He is also encouraging events - art installations, fashion shoots, wedding parties - on the decks of the garage itself. Its location is Lincoln Road, which runs at right angles to the parade of hotels along Miami Beach, and is the hub of such pedestrian life as the city has.

The road is enlivened by landscaping by Morris Lapidus, Miami's post-war genius of camp hotel design, and it has an inside-outside feel, with paving and planting making it seem, in a nice way, like an atrium with the roof off. Number 1111 is the point, at the far end from the ocean, where pedestrianisation stops and the street hooks into the armature of roads that shapes the rest of this car-based city. It is an interface between car and foot, a harbour, dock or portal.



This is a place that has fluctuated wildly with Miami's shifting fortunes. A century ago there were just 'trees and camels,' as Wennett puts it, in his office furnished with ocean views and intriguing art, before Lincoln Road was touted as the 'Fifth Avenue of the south'. Its status grew as Miami became a destination for glamorous travel, then plummeted following 1960s race riots and white flight. Since the 1980s it has risen again as the city has recovered. Now, thanks to events like the annual Art Basel Miami Beach art fair, it can add cultural sophistication to the charms of its climate and beaches.

The brutalist block on the site of 1111 was from the bad times. It was a bank built, in the era of Cold War and riots, 'to show strength'. The building is tough and forbidding but not without a certain impressive quality (if you can overlook its anti-social aspects), like the hard, rusticated palazzi bankers built in Renaissance Florence. For Wennett it is 'fantastic, so pure' and he admires the way its brise soleil dispenses with the need for blinds, which 'are the most ugly thing you can have on a building.'

Wennett opted to keep the building, despite the general view that it was a bunker. 'I never considered knocking it down,' he says. 'It's not my character. If you had free rein with the site it would never have been so interesting. It forces you to think. Great architecture comes out of the quirkiness of the site.' Instead, he built the open concrete frame of the parking decks next door, forming a 'diptych' of new and old, open and closed.

They did, however 'want an urbanistic, friendly, connected building' and so changed the lower two floors of the bank building from concrete to glass. A band of money-spinning retail (lingerie, sportswear, books) now runs along the bottom of both buildings. A rooftop restaurant on the old exploits magnificent views across Miami's low-lying art deco district.

And like an asterisk or a beauty spot, a shop selling select fashion brands stands alone five levels up on the parking structure.

After the old block and the new parking structure, the project's third element is a site to the side, where the relocated banking hall is placed, with inward-looking houses above it whose materials are 'Miami modern - terrazzo, concrete, fabulous metal gates - but in a totally different way.' Commercially speaking, the residential element is 'just frosting. It's not needed, but it makes the place more interesting.'

A fourth element is the re-landscaping of this stretch of Lincoln Road, designed by Raymond Jungles. It adapts the spirit of both Jungles' mentor Roberto Burle Marx and Lapidus' work down the street, with patterned paving and abundant planting. It eschews the ubiquitous palm tree, not actually native to this part of Florida, in favour of evergreen oaks, which are, and whose huge canopies create shade.

There are a series of art installations - a Dan Graham pavilion in the street, a wiry Monika Sosnowska slipped in to the parking area. Signage and identity are by brand consultancy Wolff Olins, creators of the Tate's fuzzy logo and the jagged London 2012 Olympics brand. Here they advised a subtle approach, with understated signage and minimum advertising. This extended to the PR strategy: there would be no flashy opening events, but a slow build-up of interest.

The thing around which everything revolves is the concrete frame of the parking structure. If Miami is a city of surfaces, of pink plaster and deco doodahs, this is a building without facades - naked, skeletal, abandoning the charming wrappings for which its architects are sometimes known. Even when finished you might think this frame is still under construction. Yet it is not without its own kind of extravagance.

Decks with extra high ceilings - the ones where uses like parties and installations are envisioned - combine with low ones to create a buzzy, syncopated rhythm, as do the Vs and slants of the pillars.


Inside, the switches of expansion and compression, combined with broad views of sea, trees and buildings, create intrigue. You want to go to the next level to see what happens next.

It exploits the relaxed attitude to enclosure that the climate permits: if Lincoln Road is like an interior with the roof off, the parking garage is a landscape with a roof on.

What really makes it zing is the combination of spatial opulence with constructional refinement. The structure is detailed to give extra-thin leading edges, which makes this big thing look fragile and taut. The design seeks to eliminate 'everything about parking garages that people hate: low ceilings, overhead lights, narrow ramps, pipes and sprinklers.' All directional signs are in the ground, leaving vertical surfaces uncluttered. Barely-there balustrades at the edge of the decks give a certain vertigo to the act of parking, as if, like Thelma and Louise, you are about to shoot into the void.

I came to 1111 Lincoln Road expecting the idea of mixed uses to be more fully realised. I had imagined a street in the air with shops and cafés all the way up. In fact, it is more disjointed. Most of the shops face one way, and the restaurant is on the roof of the old building, disconnected from the parking structure. But these discontinuities create an open-ended place. It doesn't tell you what to do. It offers spaces to enjoy just for themselves, not because you might buy something there. It offers an alternative to the idea that public life always equates to consumption.

1111 Lincoln Road, among other things, is a work of deal making. It needed deals with the bank about their new space, and trades with the city's planners. Zoning laws specified total surface area rather than height, which is why the extra-high decks were possible and, because the planners liked the idea of this 'civic building', they were amenable. It is a project with many contributors -architects, artists, designers, planners, developers, retailers, restaurateurs and the people who will stage events there.

Wennett says 'this building is in motion' and it's 'like a performance piece.' He also says it's about 'twisting your sense of where you are, putting you in different perspectives, shaking things up, putting you where you haven't been before.' Property developers are rarely this quotable, but then property developers rarely do something like this. It's hard to describe it better than he does. 

Architect Herzog & de Meuron, Basel, Switzerland

Project team Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, Christine Binswanger, Charles Stone, Jason Frantzen, Nils Sanderson, Mark Loughnan, Karl Blette, Christopher Haas, Yong Huang, Yuichi Kodai, Paul Martinez, Caro van der Venne, Savannah Lamal

Associate architect Charles H Benson & Associate Architects, Miami Beach

Structural engineer Optimus Structural Design

Services engineer Franyie Engineers

Landscape consultant Raymond Jungles

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[leni schwendinger](#) | 7 August 2010 2:51 pm

The garage is anchored by Raymond Jungles landscape design and illuminated by Leni Schwendinger Light Projects to enhance the visitors' nighttime experience.

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