

TROPICAL COOL

Two glamorous new showrooms intensify the Miami Design District's pull as an international destination

BY MARTIN FILLER

Miami has long been a magnet for well-heeled Latin Americans who use it in the same way that affluent Southeast Asians do Hong Kong: as an all-purpose shopping center attached to a most agreeable city. As the Miami Design District, reclaimed from a run-down warehouse neighborhood, continues to grow in size and sophistication, there is even more reason for it to draw an audience beyond the immediate region. Conveniently located just a ten-minute drive from the Miami International Airport, the showrooms of the design district are often the scene of fly-by decorating, as designers and their clients jet into town, decide on what to order, and zoom out the same day.



Sutherland Outdoor seating



Dramatic centerpiece of Alison Spear's showroom for Holy Hunt in Miami is double height skylighted atrium with steel-and-glass stairway

Holly Hunt space, designed by Alison Spear.

Though not as extensive or over-the-top opulent as L.A.'s Melrose decorating quarter, the Miami Design District is well focused on a young generation that wants alternatives to the clichés of Palm Beach grandeur and the kitsch of self-consciously tropical trappings. Heading the list of showrooms that are bringing new cool to the humid Florida atmosphere is the stunning



Furniture by Christian Liaigre beneath art
Installation by Lisa Arioti

Here the New York and Miami-based architect goes head-to-head in competition with her sister, Laurinda Spear of the Coral Gables firm Arquitectonica, the leading purveyor of the high-flown style that has been called Romantic Modernism. In creating a striking minimalist scheme, Alison Spear proves herself up to the challenge of working on her celebrated sibling's home turf. The lofty,

spacious galleries at Holly Hunt incorporate discrete environments for the designs of Randolph & Hein, Michael Smith, Rose Tarlow, and Sutherland Outdoor, as well as the Holly Hunt Collection itself (which includes pieces by Christian Liaigre), while the strong architectural context brings all the offerings into a coherent and very convincing whole.



Minimalist exterior.