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THE RADAR TRENDS

BY MARGIT BISZTRAY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARIA LANKINA



COUTURE COUPLE: Dechnik and Dubreuil pose at The Webster Temporary boutique also pictured below. *Bottom right:* One of Paul Bakery's enticing treats.



OH MY GAUL! *Miami Francophiles rejoice—the French have arrived, armed with fabulous fashions, joie de vivre and a piping-hot pastry supply*

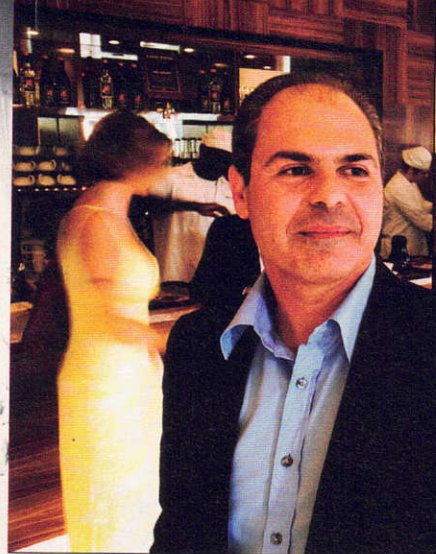
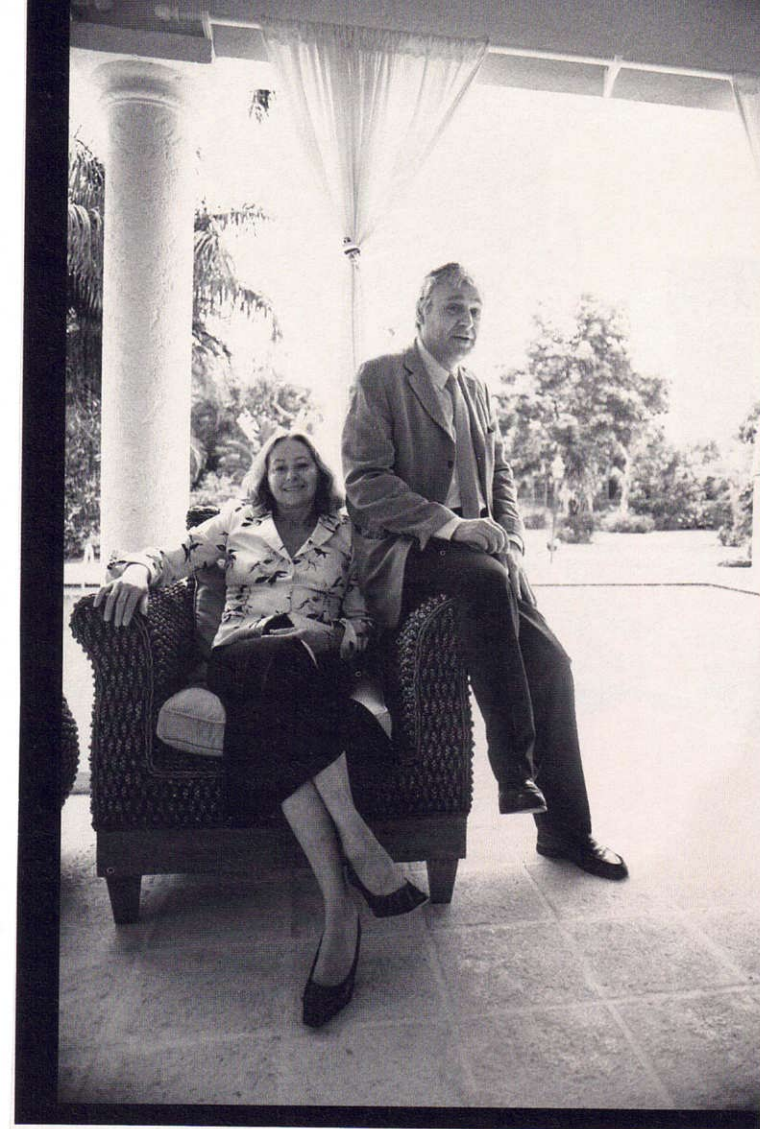
This fall, three monarchs of Parisian fashion will open the doors to their new Miami palace: a renovated Art Deco hotel that will house the first U.S. location of the Parisian restaurant Caviar Kaspia, as well as a 20,000-square-foot luxury boutique called The Webster. The royals? Milan Vukmirovic, Laure Heriard Dubreuil and Frederic Dechnik, whose collective experience in the fashion world covers merchandising and creative direction for Gucci, Hermès, Tom Ford, Balenciaga and YSL. The Webster, a boutique in the spirit of the Vukmirovic-founded cult concept store Colette in Paris, will offer their handpicked selections from elite fashion labels, as well as jewelry, watches and art photography.

The question, of course, is *pourquoi* Miami?

Our seaside city bears little resemblance to the Gallic grandeur of Paris or Marseilles, but nonetheless the French are coming—and not just the fashionistas. Philippe Vinogradoff, general counsel of France in Miami, says the number of registered French in Miami rose 30 percent to 14,000 in 2007, up from 11,000 in 2006. The Miami International Film Festival recently ushered in its 25th anniversary under the direction of its second French-born leader, Patrick de Bokay, and Wynwood counts a number of French gallerists.

Emmanuel Perrotin, arbiter of the edgy Parisian art world, says he was naturally drawn to the "other" Basel city after years of participating in Art Basel Switzerland. "It was never a question between London, Angeles or New York," he says. "The question now is between Berlin, Zurich, and Miami. The art scene is growing fast and strong, and every week every year all the art world is in Miami."

Perrotin first visited Miami in 2001, and with the help of his friends Rubells and Cathy Vedovi, purchased a 13,000-square-foot former refrigerator showroom to house his second gallery, which debuted in 2004. "As soon as I saw the building—the typical MiMo CONTINUE



From left: Vinogradoff and his wife at their Coral Gables home. Alfa at Paul Bakery on Lincoln Road.

a beauty capital like Miami."

In truth, however, few people move to Miami just for the sake of work, and Miami's French immigrants are no exception. "A lot of French young people today want the experience of living abroad, above all in the U.S., and Miami is known in France," Vinogradoff, the French general

counsel, says, noting that the average age of Miami's French is 35.

"Over the past few years, Miami has experienced an amazing boom," The Webster's Vukmirovic says. "There is a new, internationally-savvy and cultured public that enjoys what Miami has to offer, including ocean and sun, chic hotels, hip restaurants and nightclubs."

French-bred Alex Duff, a restaurant consultant (Pacific Time, A Fish Called Avalon) and real estate broker-associate who has lived in Miami most of the past 17 years, says the social structure is another key to explaining the growing number of transplants. "It's easier to meet people in Miami than in New York," Duff says. "It's less clique-y, less rigid, less expensive, but gets a lot of press vis-à-vis fashion, art and as a party destination." Duff goes on to cite the French influence on nightlife, pointing out that The Opium Group's owners include Parisians the Milon brothers.

And, Duff points out, it's not just the beaches that beckon; it's also the dollars, or rather, the Euros. "The sun, the beach, the lifestyle—those are draws. But for 30 percent to 50 percent less than in Europe, it's irresistible," he notes.

For those prone to missing *la Patrie*, the existing French cultural network is strong. Events are arranged through Miami Accueil and the Alliance Française in Coral Gables. Parties, meanwhile, are arranged through bilingual word of mouth and the intrinsic sex appeal of French DJs, French food and French-worthy wine and Champagne. There are French Tuesdays (a roaming event) and the Back to Fundamentals night every Friday at Nikki Beach, which rivals St.Tropez's wildest soirées.

There's no shortage of authentic French flavors either, with choices ranging from La Goulue, Café Maurice, A la Folie, Palme d'Or, Pascal's on Ponce, Delices de France, Brasserie Les Halles, Blue Door and the recently opened Ratatouille at the Clinton Hotel South Beach. Vladimir Alfa and Luc Bansay, respectively CEO and vice president of Paul USA, attribute the success of French outposts in the Miami area to its well-traveled, well-educated consumers. "Miami is cosmopolitan and multicultural, so it's more receptive to a French restaurant because people know how the food's supposed to be," Bansay says. "They've been to Paul in London, Tokyo and Paris."

Miamians who've been to the original Paul café in Lille are in for an extra dose of déjà vu: the newest Paul Bakery on Lincoln Road is a nearly exact replica, with dozens of inviting outdoor tables and golden breads heaped in plain sight. Just what Miami needs to wake up and smell the *café au lait*. **M**

...CONTINUED architecture of the '50s with its original staircase, the windows on top of the walls, the incredible ceiling height—well, it was exactly what I would have dreamed of had I had the opportunity to design a space myself," he enthuses.

Indeed, the hip but historic Art Deco and MiMo aesthetics have obvious appeal to those in creative fields. "Miami is one of the rare cities in the U.S. where you have such a profound historical dimension," says The Webster's Vukmirovic. "It's very rare for a metropolitan city to have this artistic aspect of Art Deco, as well as palm trees and internationally diverse culture. It's an incredibly inspirational city."

It is also in the right place at the right time. "L'Oreal was the first French company to move to Florida in 1977 because it was centrally located for business in the Caribbean and South America," says Milos Djuric, Miami General Manager for L'Oreal Parbal. "Now there are many French companies here because this region is huge for cosmetics, which is a \$1.5 billion industry—and 70 percent of the luxury cosmetics business is French-owned."

Dominique Bouchetob has been the U.S. sales representative for the Provence-based organic cosmetic company Green Mama since 2004, and she says Miami's beauty-centric culture links it with France. "France is leading the way in 21st century cosmetic technology using non-toxic ingredients, because the French have always known it's about long-term beauty," she says. "Now people here are discovering it too, especially in