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# Tropical Sunday



ALASTAIR GORDON'S SKYLINE

## DRIVE-BY DESIGN

BY ALASTAIR GORDON  
Special to the Miami Herald

We often think of architecture in Miami as a symmetry between water and sky, hovering, distilled by subtropical light, detached from earthly constraints — from the ground plane, from traffic and social unrest. It's all about the surf and the whiteness of sand and the multimillion-dollar water view. It's all about the infinity pool, the goddess in white, the broadly cantilevered balcony, the lap pool, the subaqueous glow, the illusion of infinite suspension: physical, economic, environmental, social ... until one day, the cycle completes itself, sweet water turns

saline, and the mangrove resumes her sovereignty.

In fact, our first experience of a building is usually not from an ocean liner or the lofty perspective of an osprey. This being Miami, it more typically comes from the grittier perspective of the car, framed by a windscreen, moving past at high speed, or pulling up to a valet parking stand.

This is often an overlooked and misunderstood perspective, one that was thoroughly canonized in postwar novels like Kerouac's "On the Road" and celebrated in more academic studies like "Learning from Las Vegas," a 1972 treatise on the commonplace co-authored by Robert Venturi,

SEE ROADSIDE, 2M

The Design District showroom for Brown Jordan, an outdoor furniture company, designed by Miami's Touzet Studio, overlooks the elevated highway of I-195. Architect Alan Shulman's "Billboard Building" exploits its Design District location adjacent to I-195 to maximum effect, playing roles as both a building and a sign.



EMILIO COLLAVINO

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# In Miami, even architecture is all about the car

BY ALASTAIR GORDON

*Special to the Miami Herald*

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This is often an overlooked and misunderstood perspective, one that was thoroughly canonized in postwar novels like Kerouac's "On the Road" and celebrated in more academic studies like "Learning from Las Vegas," a 1972 treatise on the commonplace co-authored by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, who believed there was something to learn from the highway billboards, strip malls and drive-in restaurants that they dubbed "roadside eclecticism." Venturi saw a grab bag of vibrant new metaphors for the modern city. "Anomalies and uncertainties give validity to architecture," he wrote.

ADVERTISING

World-renowned architects and developers have come to Miami and elevated the automotive anomaly to high art, with so many iconic parking garages that signal a kind of civic disconnection. But it's not all bad. A new, high-speed aesthetic is transforming the south side of the Design District, offering the potential for a more incremental, in-fill kind of development.

Driving west from the beach, coming off the Julia Tuttle Causeway, you suddenly find yourself in a dystopian gauntlet of weirdly vertical buildings that rise precariously close to the elevated highway, seemingly looming over the shoulder in some cases. At 65 miles per hour, the effect is oddly titillating — if somewhat