

Revitalizing Communities with Culture

By Saxon Henry

Each meets Basquiat. Clubbers meet collectors. Miami's fun-in-the-sun reputation has expanded to include that of a burgeoning cultural mecca, especially for those who appreciate contemporary art. Art Basel Miami Beach, the art fair that occurs annually in early December, brings with it tens of thousands of people who are more interested in Schnabel than snorkeling — and fills up hotels, restaurants, stores and nightclubs during a traditionally dead time for Miami's tourism-reliant businesses.

"Art Basel Miami Beach has become one of the top five events in Miami," states Nicholas Christopher, president of Turon Travel, Inc., the official travel agency for Art Basel Miami Beach 2006. "We've more than doubled our bookings for the event since 2004 — from around 700 up to more than 1,500 hotel rooms in 2006."

The short-term economic boost of Art Basel is but one of the dividends of introducing major arts events and institutions into communities. Just four years after

with CANDO," says Dermer.

This follows in the wake of other neighborhoods that Basel built — the Miami Design District and the Wynwood Art District, which features a mélange of museums, galleries, collections, studios and alternative art spaces across Biscayne Bay from Miami Beach. These formerly less-than-appealing neighborhoods hold a variety of art- and design-related events that benefit Miami's economy not just during the December deluge, but throughout the year.

It is Miami's art-friendly attitude that has helped the city to retool its communities, and other cities have experienced similar revitalization thanks to the arts. In London, Tate Modern led the charge for redevelopment in Southwark, a once disreputable entertainment district. Enconced in a former power station that was transformed by Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron, the museum sits like a crown jewel among the string of attractions dotting the banks of the Thames River.

been up for sale for at least seven years," he explains. "At the time, there were almost no private flats or houses; now, virtually every old industrial building has been converted into loft apartments. A flat that cost about £35,000 in 1994 now costs around £400,000. This is probably the biggest impact, and Tate most certainly played a major role in raising awareness and real estate values."

A significant draw for local and international tourism, Tate Modern drew four million visitors to the neighborhood in 2005, beating out the Tower of London, which received two million visitors, as the most popular attraction in London. But it's not only major cities that benefit from the expansion of arts and cultural venues. Chattanooga, Tennessee — with a 2000-census population of 155,554 — is on the list as well.

After losing more than 10 percent of its population during the 1980s, Chattanooga became one of only 18 U.S. cities to rebound from a decade of decline to increase its population during the 1990s. Before efforts to improve the city, it was considered a smog-laden, industrial town. Several arts districts — the Bluff View Art District and the North Shore Area, both of which are filled with galleries and restaurants — helped to change this perception and Chattanooga's economic reality.

"Annually, Chattanooga's arts and cultural organizations drive \$41 million into the local economy," says Donald L. Andrews, president of Allied Arts of Greater Chattanooga. Most recently, a \$20-million-dollar, 28,000-square-foot expansion of the Hunter Museum of American Art that opened last year is adding steam to Chattanooga's momentum, which is drawing younger adults, aged 18 to 34, to live in the once dilapidated downtown area.

The trend toward city renewal, with the arts as a critical component to an overall economic development strategy, is not likely to abate any time soon. "We recognize that the arts, capable of stimulating the heart and the brain, also stimulate our local economy," says City of



A view from the bridge: Tate Modern, London.

Photography: Alamy

the fair opened its doors on Miami's shores, it has changed the complexion of an already vibrant city, making a significant impact on new business development, real estate and the quality of life

The museum opened in 2000 to much anticipation. And nearby restaurateurs, shopkeepers and hoteliers have not been disappointed. Anna Perra, owner of Tentazioni Restaurant, has been in