Miami + Palm Beach Social Diary

Miami
Freedom Tower – 600 Biscayne Boulevard
MDC Museum of Art + Design [www.mdcmaod.org](http://www.mdcmaod.org)

The Freedom Tower, entrance on Biscayne Boulevard. The Tower is now the Miami-Dade College Museum of Art + Design.

Freedom Tower, Observation deck & Cupola.
The Freedom Tower, lobby detail.
The Freedom Tower, view from the Observation Deck, looking northeast over the Miami Heat's American Airlines Arena.

The Freedom Tower, view from the Observation Deck, looking north northeast up Biscayne Boulevard. Beyond the inlet, the Frost Museum of Science under construction; to the right, the Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM).

The Freedom Tower, view from the Observation Deck, view to the west with a freight train passing through from
the Port of Miami. "Since the college plans to build on these sites, you won't see this view after the next several years," said of the MDC Museum of Art + Design. Jeremy Mikolajczak, director and chief curator.

The Freedom Tower, view from the Observation Deck. A south view following Biscayne Boulevard to Downtown Miami; afar, Brickell Avenue.

The Freedom Tower, view east from the Observation Deck toward the Port of Miami.
The Freedom Tower originally housed The Miami News.

Long before it became the famed Cuban Refugee Center, Miami's Freedom Tower opened its doors as the home to one of the city's earliest newspapers. James Cox, a former Ohio Governor turned Florida publisher, wanted an impressive and fitting home for The Miami Daily News, the newspaper of the future. And he wanted it right in the center of town. Cox hired the New York architectural firm of Leonard Shultze and S. Fullerton Weaver to construct this masterpiece. In 1925, the men gave Cox - and the city of Miami – the Freedom Tower. To the thousands of Cuban refugees who would later pass through its doors, it became known simply as "El Refugio."
"From Newspaper to Refugee Center" for the exile community.
THE FREEDOM TOWER

This exhibit honors this building, which opened its doors in 1925 as the home of one of the city’s oldest newspapers, the Miami Daily News.

In 1962, five years after the newspaper found a new home by the Miami River, the U.S. government leased the tower to process the growing number of Cubans fleeing Fidel Castro’s Cuba between 1962 and 1974.

For Cubans, the building became their Ellis Island of the Cold War era, commonly referred to as “El Refugio.”
The museum’s second floor has expansive display spaces.

The New World Mural

Among the Freedom Tower’s notable aspects is the New World Mural, a spectacular 40-foot mural on the mezzanine level. Representing the community’s shared heritage, the mural is a recreation of an original tapestry from the 1920s that had decayed over the course of the century. During a restoration of the Freedom Tower in 1987, a group called the Miami Artisans brought new life to the piece with the creation of the New World Mural.

Due to the Freedom Tower’s long-time shuttering, this beautiful symbol of the meeting of the Old World and the New World remained unknown to most Miamians. On the heels of the 500th anniversary of the Spanish conquest of Florida, today it serves as an iconic visual reference of Miami’s history.

The mural’s center image presents Ponce de Leon and the Tequesta chief before a map of the New World. They are flanked by symbols of discovery, power, myth and adventure. Galleons rigged for full sail end the corners of a pyramidal layout hidden by the imposing circles of the map background. The mural is a fantastical celebration of unity and fate. Mermaids, fruit, fantastic sail boats and galleons, conquistadors with muskets and American Indians in canoes set the scene for half a millennium ago.

The mural celebrates the arrival of Europeans in America, a likely reason for the tapestry’s original commission when the Freedom Tower was built in 1925. It would become an important point of reference for Cuban immigrants as well as the backdrop of the famed Queen of Salsa, Celia Cruz, who lay in state there during her public wake.
The *Cuba Out of Cuba* exhibit features the work of noted photographer Alexis Rodriguez-Duarte.

*Cuba Out of Cuba: Through the Lens of Alexis Rodriguez-Duarte in Collaboration with Tico Torres* September 19, 2014 – August 30, 2015

*The Cuba Out of Cuba* exhibit features the work of noted photographer Alexis Rodriguez-Duarte.

_Cuba Out of Cuba: Through the lens of Alexis Rodriguez-Duarte in collaboration with Tico Torres_ features what have become iconic photographs of Cuban figures living outside the island, among them performers, composers, designers, writers and artists. The Cuba Out of Cuba series was shot over the last twenty years in Miami, New York, London, Paris, Florence, Venice and Los Angeles.

**Alexis Rodriguez-Duarte** was born in Havana, Cuba. In 1968 he and his parents were among Cuban exiles who left the island aboard the humanitarian airlift called the Freedom Flights and settled in Little Havana. At the age of 10, he was given his first camera by his grandfather, which led to his love affair with photography. Today, he is a New York and Miami-based internationally renowned photographer whose work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, *Town & Country*, and *Harper’s Bazaar*, among other major publications. His work has been exhibited at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C., Museum of the City of New York, The Victoria and Albert Museum in London and The Bass Museum of Art in Miami Beach among others.

Rodriguez-Duarte and his husband of 31 years, Tico Torres, are co-authors of the book, *Presenting Calle Ocho* (Clarkson Potter, 2004) Torres, a fashion photo stylist is a master of the mise-en-scène, creating the scene for many of the iconic images presented. Torres and his family were among the many Cuban exiles who came through the Freedom Tower and settled in Miami’s Hialeah community. Rodriguez-Duarte and Torres are honored to be returning together full circle to the Freedom Tower after capturing images of hero to numerous children.
Cuba Out of Cuba exhibit.

Cuba Out of Cuba, artifact.
Leaving the *Cuba Out of Cuba* exhibit, the late afternoon shadows led the way out of the Freedom Tower.
Portrait of Celia Cruz, *Cuba Out of Cuba* exhibit. Adios Celia! Her music lives in the hearts of the millions of exiles, who now generations later must wonder if in their lifetime they will ever return to their Homeland.

Photography by Augustus Mayhew.