

South Beach is also slated for three new automated parking garages designed by ADD Inc Miami that are believed to be the first of their kind in Florida. After drivers drop off their cars in a bay, thin robotic platforms will slide underneath, lift them up and whisk them away to a parking spot.

Imaginative new garages are cropping up elsewhere. The Santa Monica Civic Center parking structure in California is clad in brightly colored panels, and Chicago's Greenway Self Park is touted as an "earth-friendly" facility with energy-generating wind turbines.

For drivers, the normally humdrum experience of parking gets a dash of flair. Simón Parra, a part-time resident of the city, refuses to park his black Chevy Suburban anywhere but the Herzog & de Meuron garage at 1111 Lincoln Road. "It's a work of art more than a garage," he says. "Everywhere you look, there's a view."

The Parking Garage as Architectural Star



The Park@420 garage at Drexel Ave. and 16th St. in Miami Beach, designed by architect Enrique Norten.

He doesn't mind paying a premium for the experience. The parking rate at 1111 Lincoln Road, \$4 an hour, is more than double the rate at the municipal lot a block away.

Herzog & de Meuron's creation, part of a \$65 million project, has gone the furthest in revolutionizing traditional notions of a garage. "Our building is not designed to be a garage," says owner and developer Robert Wennett. "It's designed to be a civic space."

The structure—with thin concrete slabs at irregular heights and no exterior walls, leaving vehicles on open display—is more than a place to stash cars. It features luxury retailers at the

street level, a glass box housing a clothing store on the fifth floor and a soaring space with stunning views on the seventh floor that can be rented for events—all connected by an internal staircase that spirals up like a DNA helix. "This garage doesn't feel like a box that's impenetrable," says Mr. Wennett. "We wanted people to move through this building." A few hundred people a day wander in to explore, he says, and the seventh-floor space has hosted weddings, yoga classes and a Lexus commercial.

While garages often are disguised by, say, an outer layer of office space, the new Miami Beach garages announce their presence unapologetically and aim to entice the eye. "You no longer have to shy away and hide" them, Ms. Hadid says.

Early renderings of her garage show a futuristic structure, open to the elements like Herzog & de Meuron's, with ramps that loop up like a ribbon and a hollowed-out interior that draws in light.

In Mr. Norten's garage, Park@420, light enters the perforations throughout the day, sometimes spraying the floor with bright spots, other times filtering in obliquely to give the space a chapel-like feel. The exterior also offers vivid displays, with palm trees casting shadows on the white façade during the day and interior lights producing a glowing effect at night.

As star architects descend on Miami Beach, they seem to be goading more of their peers to join. "What's happening now is similar to what happened in the Art Deco period, when the city developed a collaborative of architects who played off each other's designs," says William Cary, assistant director of the Miami Beach planning department.

In 1996, Arquitectonica completed the "Chia Pet," a garage with six levels of parking plopped on top of a historic block of buildings and shrouded entirely in greenery, and earned rave reviews. "Arquitectonica made it fashionable to make parking structures," Mr. Cary says. "And Herzog & de Meuron just raised it to a whole new level."

The fact that the parking garage has been a neglected form excites some architects, says Bernardo Fort-Brescia, founding principal of Arquitectonica. "That's precisely the challenge—how to turn that garage into something that people love," he says.

Another challenge: the structures must still manage to move vehicles in and out efficiently. At 1111 Lincoln Road, the gap between some of the floors is as much as 34 feet, more than three times the norm, says Tim Haahs, a parking consultant who worked on the project. Herzog & de Meuron resolved this issue with a number of steep internal ramps, he says. The garage is so tall, it required a 55-foot height variance, Mr. Cary says.

In some ways, the architectural ferment today harks back to the early 20th century, when garages were beautifully designed by well-known architects, says Shannon Sanders McDonald, author of "The Parking Garage: Design and Evolution of a Modern Urban Form." By the 1970s, though, "they became cost-driven and functional and ugly," she says. Not until the late 1980s and 1990s did architects grapple once again with how to incorporate garages into the urban environment.

Miami Beach was at the forefront then, too. Stocked with architectural gems, including Art Deco and Miami Modern buildings, the city wanted to ensure that its parking structures "became urban assets rather than urban albatrosses," Mr. Cary says.

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