

Fireflies of Memory

Written by Mark Sell, BT Contributor
November 2018

Motel “guests” will relive MiMo’s fringe and celebrated past



In that fifth dimension beyond space and time, from November 30 through December 23, you're invited to meet 30 souls who lived for a while in the rooms of the rechristened Gold Dust Motel at 7700 Biscayne Blvd.

You may meet a Playboy bunny, a would-be CIA operative, a hooker, an ex-boxer, and a lovelorn waitress. There's also a bookie, the speakeasy manager, and a cast of tourists, residents, traveling salesmen, hustlers, and dreamers who've stayed at the motel through fat times and lean since 1957.

All are composites of real people, brought back to life by prize-winning Miami playwright Juan C. Sanchez and a cast of 30 actors.

This is the second edition of *Miami Motel Stories*, an immersive experience produced by Tanya Bravo, founder and executive director of the Juggerknot Theatre Company. The work is directed by Mia Rovegno, imported from New York. The first edition won raves last year at the 1920s-era Tower Hotel in Little Havana. Coming up in 2019: Overtown and North Miami Beach.

To be more precise, the production is called *Miami Motel Stories MiMo* -- a double-sided wordplay on Miami motels and mid-century modern, the term for the playful postwar

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architectural and design style that defined the row of motels along the Boulevard between 50th Street and the Little River Canal.

Tickets run \$45-\$75, are going fast, and are available at www.miamimotelstories.com. The lowest rate gets you into the 1957 opening tiki party, the grounds, the 1960 coffee shop, the speakeasy, the bookie joint, and a meeting with the talkative fisherman by the Little River Canal.

For \$65, you get to pick a pink, blue, or yellow key, unlocking doors to the rooms and people inhabiting different decades, in décor befitting their times and psychic states. Only four can enter the room at a time, honoring the intimacy. The \$75 ticket gets you all that and an after-party.

So much for the basics. The real story of this production goes ever deeper. It is one of executive intelligence and community collaboration. As with so much in Miami, it's also about real estate. But the heart of the story is a passion to capture the fireflies of memory before they vanish in this fast-changing city.

And change is afoot at this site, too. Developer and historic preservationist Avra Jain, head of the Vagabond Group four blocks down the street, bought the motel, until recently Motel Blu, for \$6.1 million in September, and rechristened it with its original name, the Gold Dust Motel.

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