

Shtot Magazine

Life in the City

#1 Spring, 2024





Welcome to Shtot Magazine No.1, the first issue of a magazine from a group that explores the art, design, culture, and style of cities. To begin this journey, we're looking at life in cities, from the things that we love about them to the things we want to change.

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For the last century, the majority of people in the United States and Canada have lived in urban areas, and that century has been marked by incredible changes. Halfway through the century, the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States sent photographers across the continent in a project called Documerica. Photographers saw volunteers plant community gardens and litter collect on the sides of domineering freeways. While some specific challenges, like acid rain, have become less pronounced, our cities are still the same complicated places.

One hundred years of urban sprawl has pushed nature into smaller and smaller areas, and that growth has seemingly forced the natural environment and human settlement into becoming mutually exclusive entities. At the same time, cities are home to artists and builders who create spaces of intricate beauty. Communities are divided by freeways and brought together in public parks. Now, the next century of life in cities is about to begin, and we're ready for it.

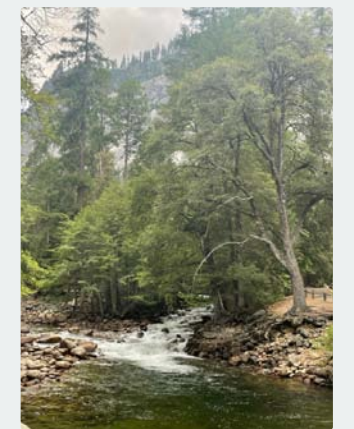
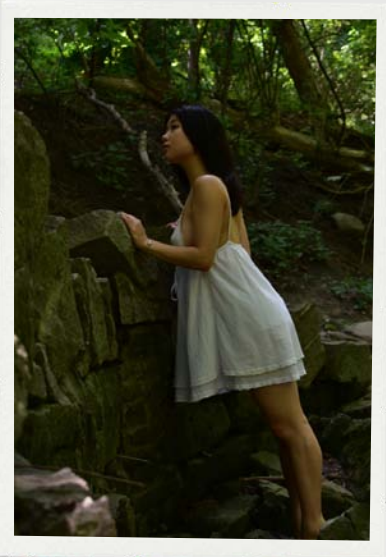
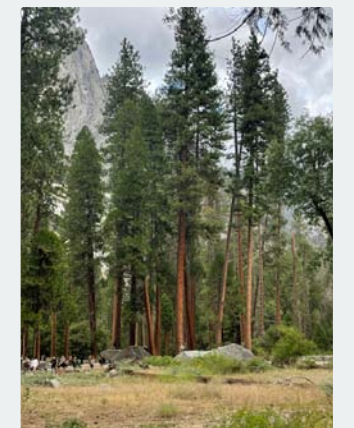
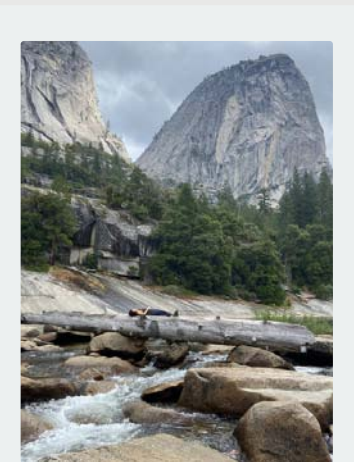


THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT



I used to regard big cities as some romanticized metropolis—a hustle and bustle of welcomed chaos. Then, living downtown, I started to see them as cold and rigid and intimidating. But now, I see that there is softness too. Our built environment is awfully human. We build curves and comfort into our world, perhaps to remind us of some ancient familiarity.

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



And then, a breath of fresh air. Natural environments are calm yet turbulent, gentle yet violent, beautiful yet destructive. I think, in many ways, this dynamic-ness is what connects our built environment with a natural one. A hustle and bustle paired with the quiet and low city hums at night. Bird chirps in the morning and crickets at night. This is home.



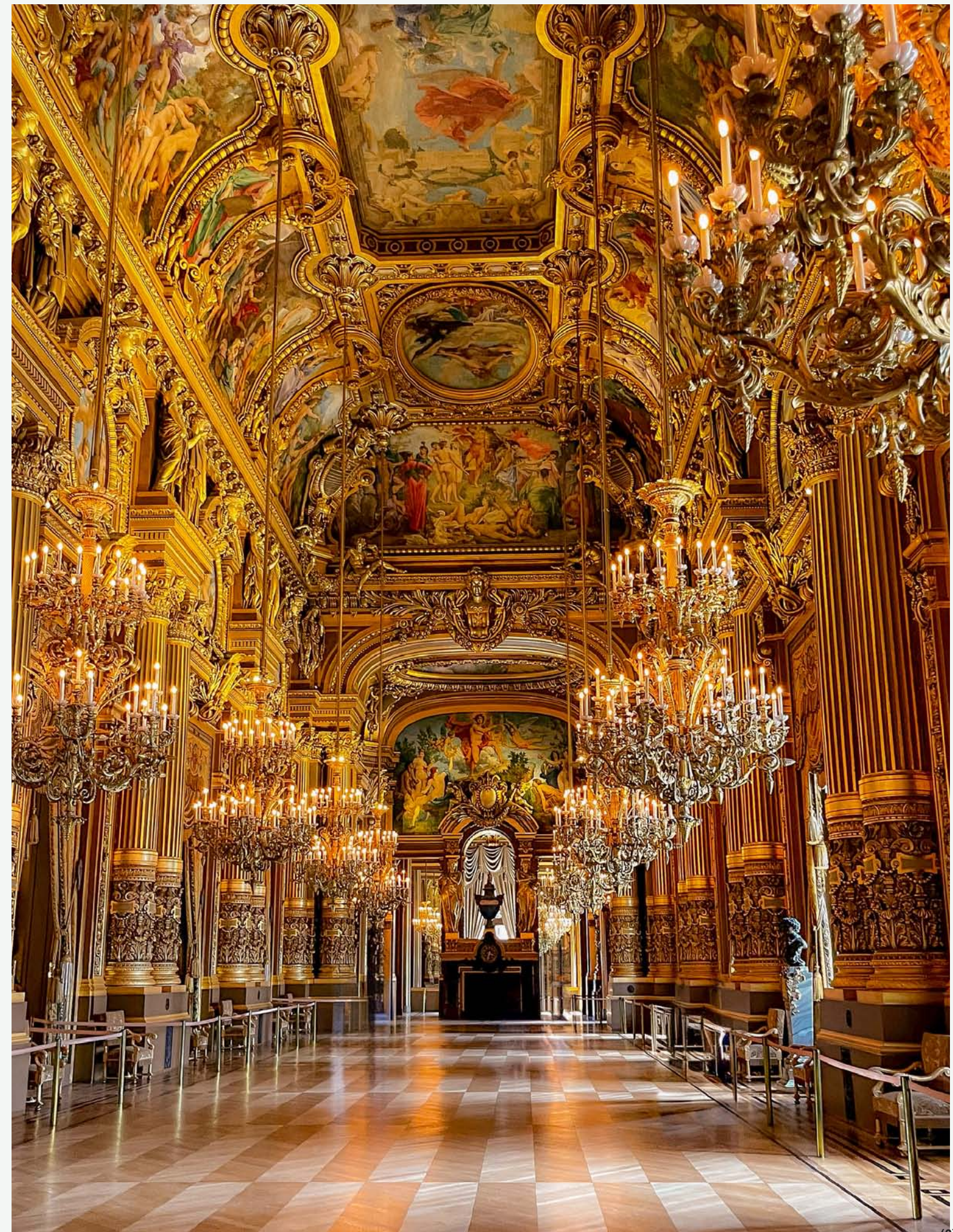
Palais Garnier

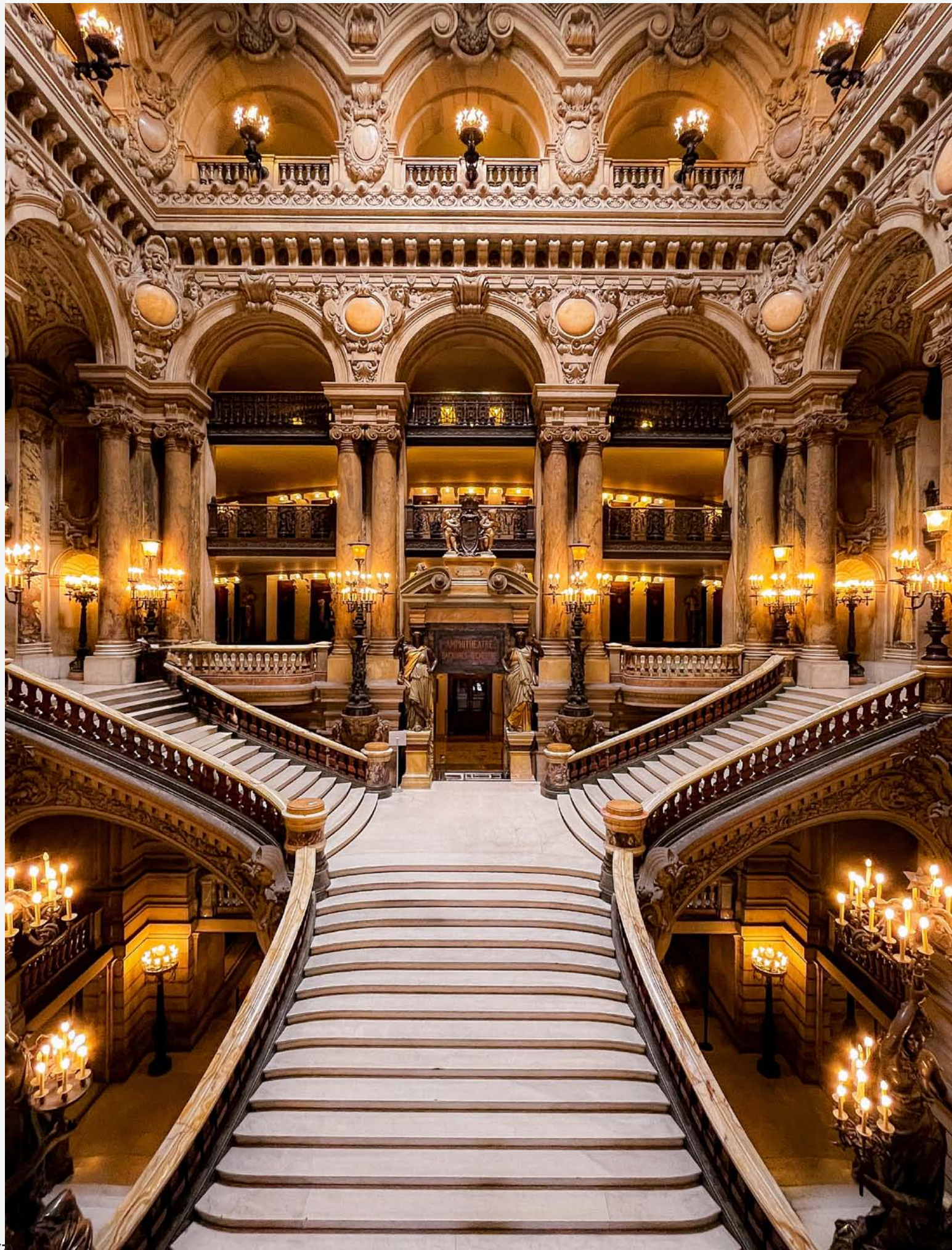
Katherine J. Desourdie

In the heart of Paris, where the Seine flows with timeless tales, stands a monument to architectural innovation: the Palais Garnier. Beyond its storied facade lies a realm where architecture dances with dreams, design weaves a tapestry of elegance, and every stone whispers secrets of bygone eras. For centuries, the Palais Garnier has been a beacon of inspiration for artists and dreamers alike. Its sophisticated forms and eternal grace have enchanted the souls of poets, painters, and musicians, each finding in its halls a reflection of their own creative spirit.

The Palais Garnier is more than just a building; it is a portal to another world, a passage through history and imagination. Beneath its vaulted ceilings and the gaze of chandeliers, echoes of the past mingle with whispers of the future. Each step through its corridors is a step through time itself, a reminder that the pursuit of beauty is a journey without end.

As we trace the contours of the Palais Garnier, it reminds us that architecture is more than mere bricks and mortar; it is a language, poetry, a symphony of stones.





In the intricate dance of columns and arches, the Palais Garnier finds its harmony. Symmetry and proportion intertwine like lovers locked in an eternal embrace, creating balance that resonates through every corridor and alcove.

The grand staircase is a stage upon which the drama of arrival unfolds. Here, amid the soft glow of chandeliers and the hushed murmurs of anticipation, one feels a sense of awe and wonder that lingers long after the ascent is complete.

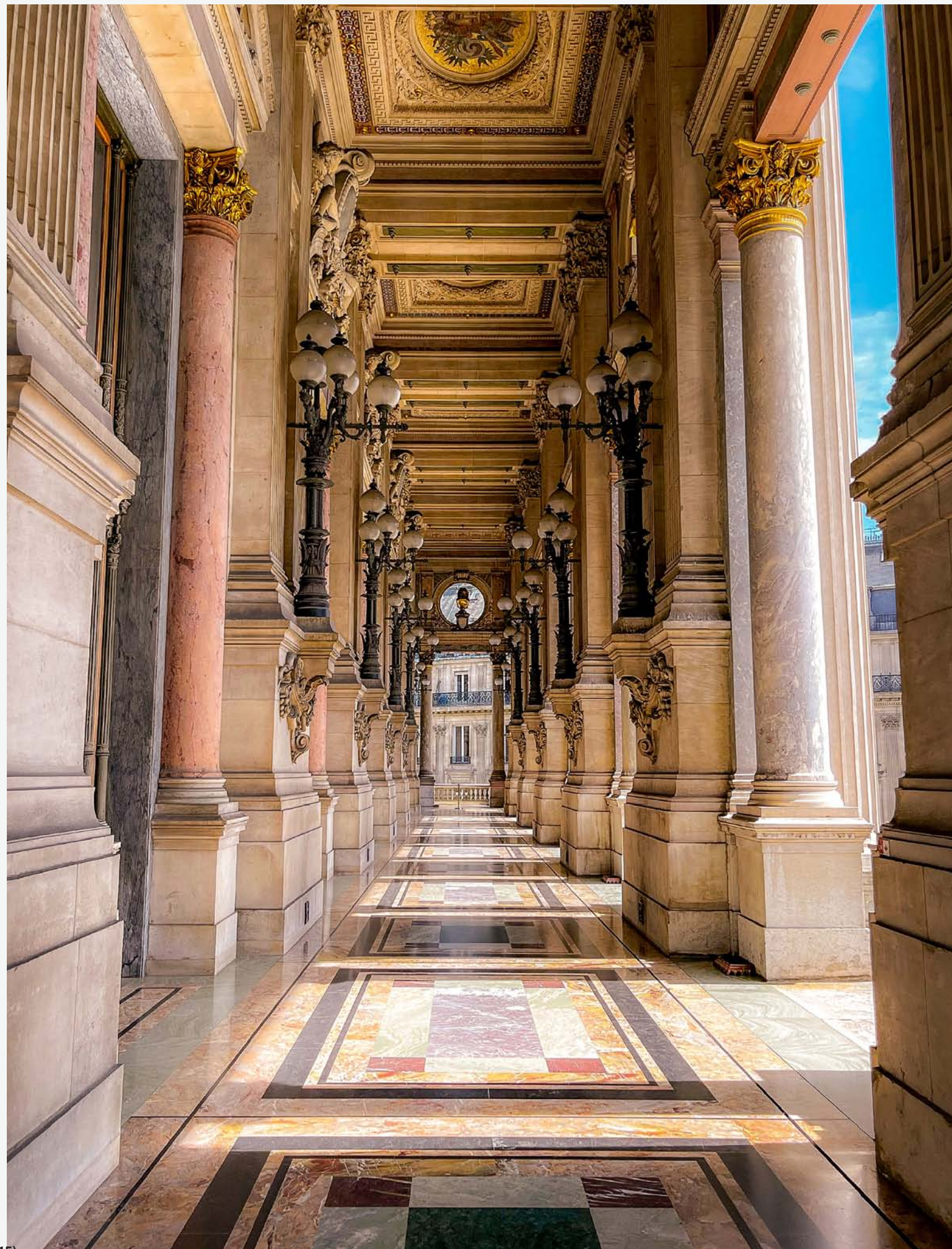




In the evening, the glow of chandeliers bathes the foyer in honeyed luminosity. The golden drapes flow like molten streams of amber, and the wood echoes with the laughter of craftsmen.

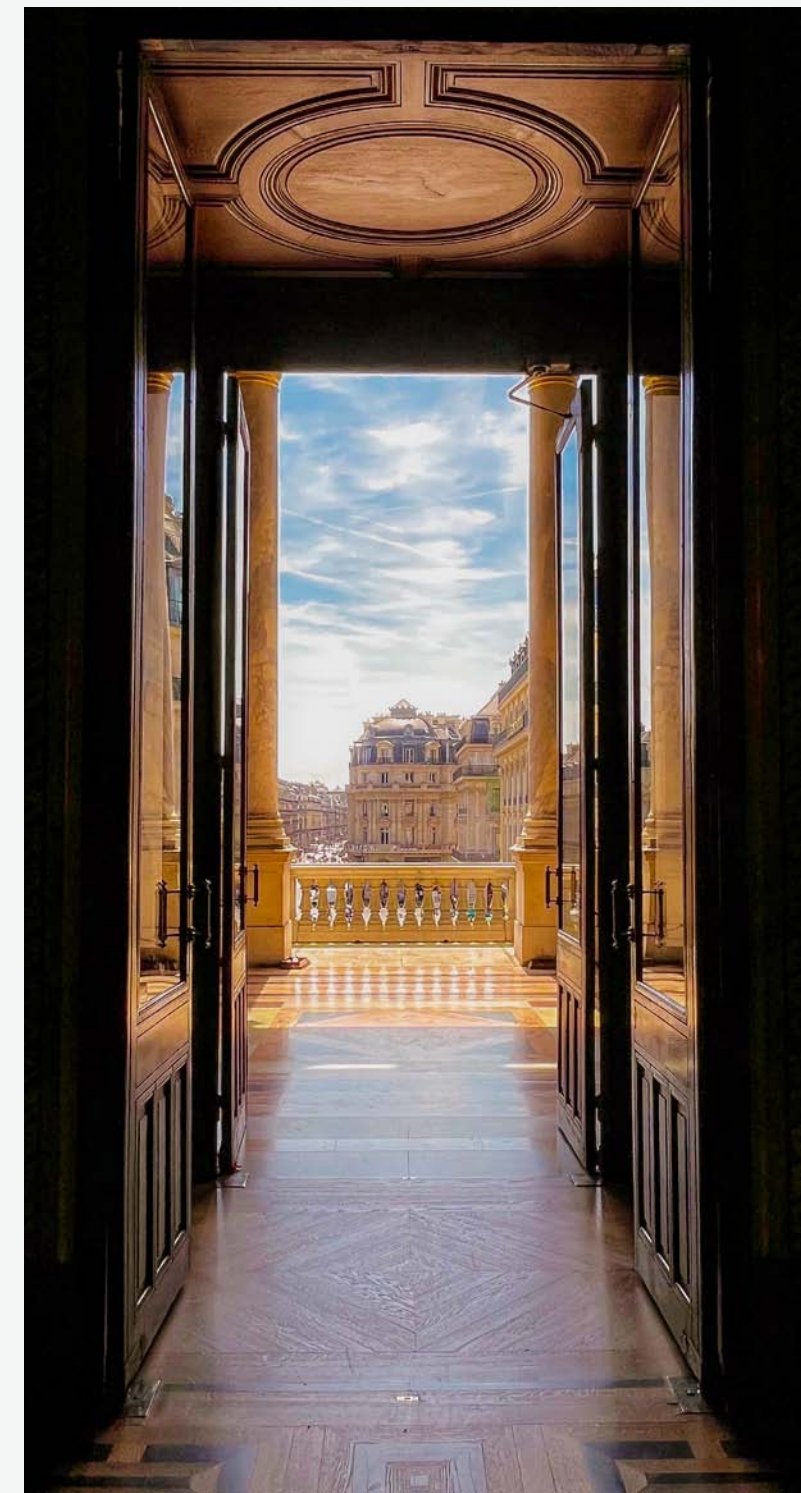
In this tranquil oasis, disconnected from the hectic pace of everyday living, one finds solace in the simple act of being. Here, light is not merely an absence of darkness, but a breath of life into every corner, casting patterns that shift and sway with the passage of time.





In this elevated realm, the loggia offers a serene moment where earth meets sky and past meets present; where the gentle caress of the wind meets the warm embrace of sunlight.

Intricate carvings, delicate friezes, and ornate columns blend seamlessly, crafting an opulent ambiance within the space. As sunlight dances across the surfaces, shadows playfully accentuate the textures, adding depth and dimension to the scene.



Miami's Underline

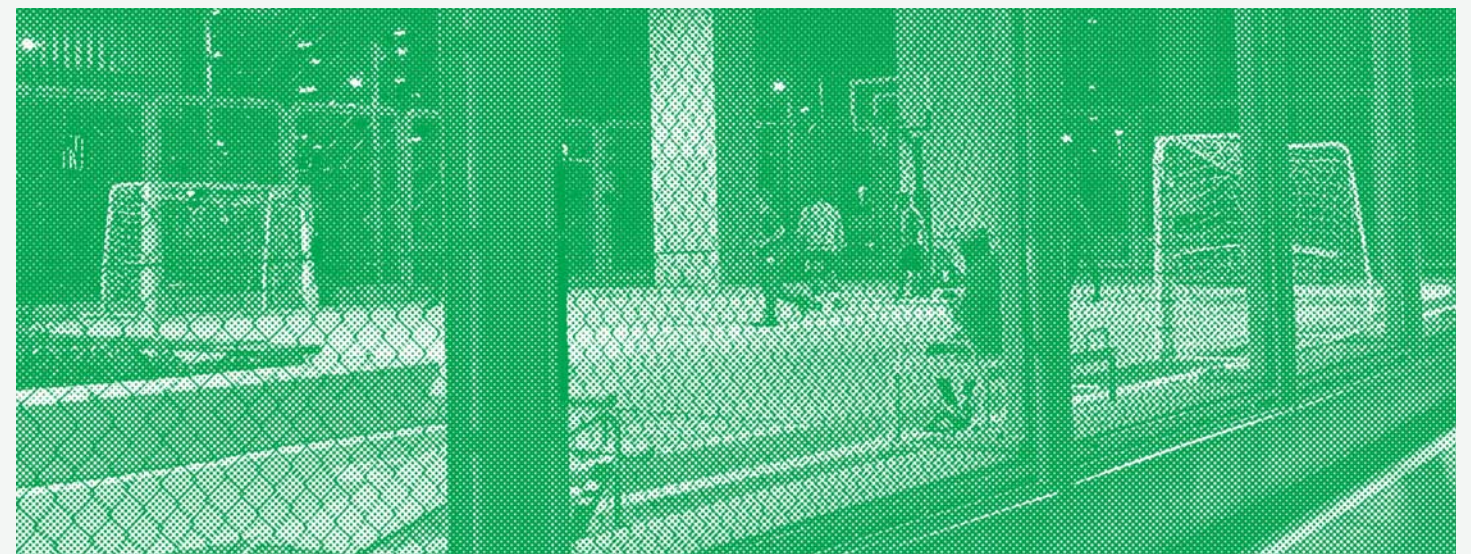
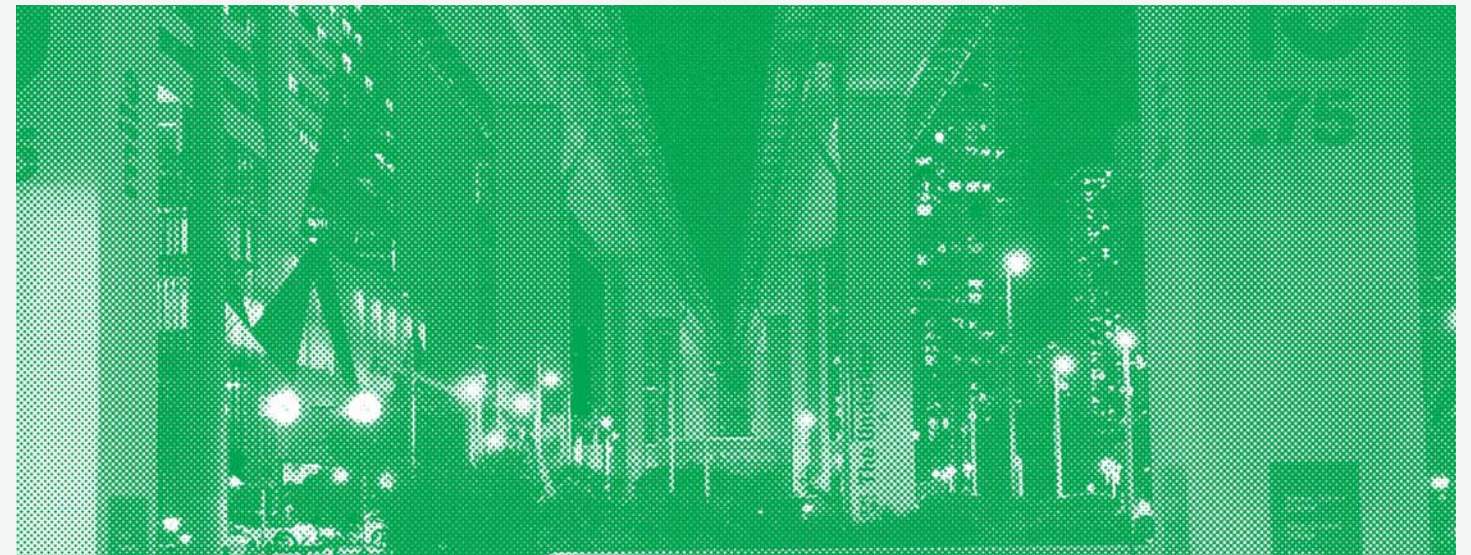
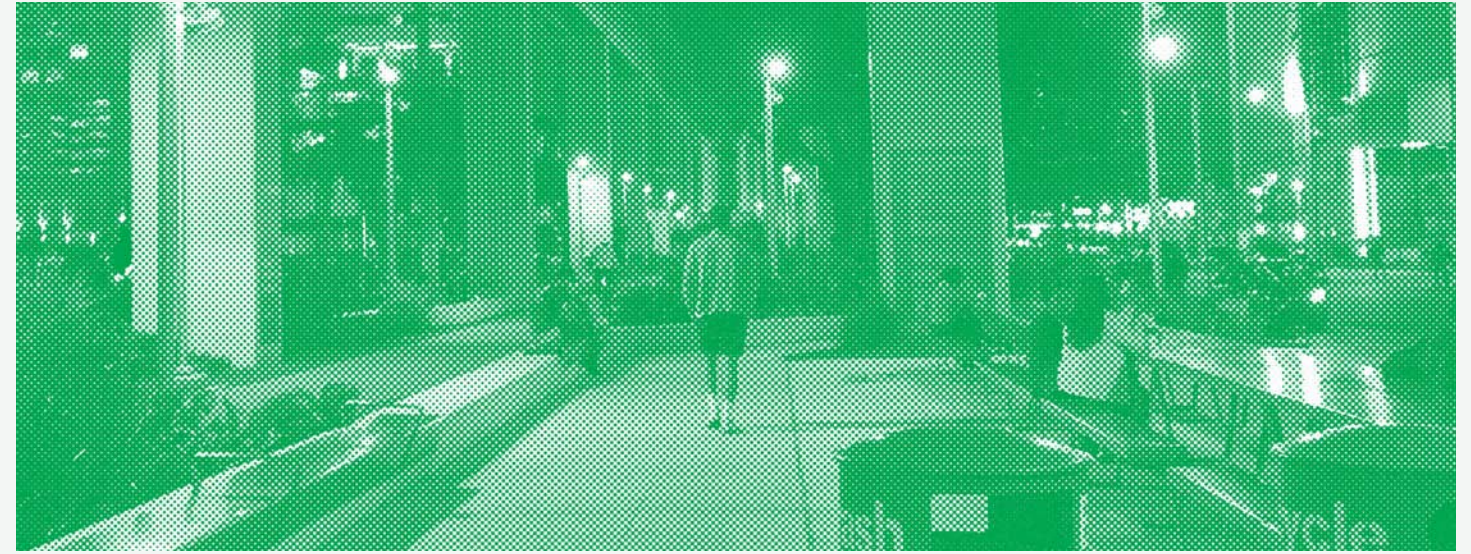
Downtown Miami is home to one of the tallest clusters of buildings in the United States. Its towering apartment buildings compete to offer views of the ocean that would increase their value. To accommodate the crowds of tourists that fly south from the colder parts of the country, downtown Miami boasts block after block of restaurants and bars. Narrow roads and sheer density create traffic that slows private vehicles and rideshare cars. To ease up the flow of people, the city of Miami built an elevated train system called Metrorail and a free people mover called MetroMover. Metrorail is two interlined routes, one of which goes to a suburb in the north of the city, and the other to the international airport. They both end in a suburb at the southern end of the city and travel together through downtown. MetroMover is made of three loops that share a central section. One goes north, the other stays in the core, and the last goes south across the Miami River.

Inspired by New York's iconic Highline Park, an existing bike path underneath the Metrorail guideway has been in the process of being upgraded into a linear park named "The Underline". This linear park takes a featureless concrete path, gives it upgraded lighting and a green branding scheme, and attempts to create a sense of place. It was born from the experiences of a woman who had been temporarily reliant on public transit for mobility and her noticing of the opportunity the rail corridor allowed.



The first phase of the project is complete. In its half-mile stretch, it contains a public basketball court and running track, public art, and plazas around Brickell Station, which anchors the section. Condo towers line this section, making the Brickell neighborhood the densest in Miami. Outside of these towers, I-95 and the South Channel enclose the area.

The Underline is similar to both the Bentway in Toronto underneath the Gardiner Expressway or the BC Parkway underneath the Expo Line of the Vancouver Skytrain in its utilization of otherwise wasted space under a piece of elevated infrastructure. Like the Bentway, the Underline aims to provide the public with a gathering space for recreation and activities. Originally a bike path under a rail line, the Underline connects neighborhoods in Miami with active transportation, a shared goal with the BC Parkway. However, the Bentway doesn't aim to connect neighborhoods and the BC Parkway doesn't aim to host events. The Underline is a fully realized space for both connection and communication in the city. Cyclists take advantage of the protection from vehicle traffic and bike past basketball courts that host groups of friends enjoying a game in the evening. Even after dark, the path remains safe due to good lighting, which encourages people to come out and create an "eyes on the street" atmosphere.



This park is more than a sidewalk and less than a fairground. It serves a purpose of pleasant utility, being both functional as a part of the city's infrastructure and enjoyable as a space for meeting and relaxing. These kinds of spaces encourage going for a walk instead of a drive, for exploring a neighborhood instead of plugging directions into a GPS, and for enjoying art instead of reading billboards. A city's vitality lives or dies on its ability to be explored, to be revealed to the experiencer. Think of how Lower Manhattan's competing grids create solvable mazes filled with restaurants and bars. Life in a city is a narrative, and parks like The Underline serve as vehicles for those narratives to progress. Cities should not only build pathways to connect neighborhoods, but provide incentives to move from place to place. An unfamiliar tourist will be turned away by bare concrete sidewalks without trees, but will be attracted by public art or comfortable street furniture.

What The Underline accomplishes that the Bentway and BC Parkway do not is both the means and the incentive to explore. A clear and distinctive green branding assures users that they haven't lost the way and bright lights keep the path from being hidden. Murals and sculptures create curiosity while travelling between spaces that can be interacted with.

When complete, The Underline will enable a kind of connection that encourages Miamians to visit their neighbors and to proudly show off even more of their city to visitors. Even in its current stage, it welcomes people to linger in Brickell and see more than just the restaurant that had brought them in. The Underline, with its mix of comfortable paths and attractive public spaces, is a fantastic model for the type of infrastructure that should be built in our growing cities.



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