

INDULGE

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exquisite Miami summer

{THE STYLE MAKER}

Edward Beiner

Three decades ago, this Brazilian transplant followed his gut all the way to Miami—and built an eyewear empire.

Edward Beiner is a man who trusts his instincts, even when they lead him into uncertain territory. In 1980, the Brazilian-born, Puerto Rico-raised eyewear designer was looking all over the United States in search of a place to set up a new American life. He toured San Francisco, San Diego, Scottsdale and Atlanta before something—call it a feeling—told him balmy Miami was the right place for him. He felt this in his bones, he recalled recently, despite the fact that, at the time, the city was in absolute upheaval. Just a month before he moved here, the Mariel boatlift had begun; a week after, the McDuffie riots broke out. He remembered that on his flight into Miami, “I carried a Time magazine with a cover story about Miami. The headline was ‘Paradise Lost’ and the story said Miami had descended to its lowest point,” he said. “But I knew that after the rain, there is always sunshine.”

And plenty of it, especially for the man, who not long after, was on his way to becoming Florida’s crown prince of eyewear. When he first came to Miami, Beiner was working for a large corporate eyewear retailer. Six months later, a week after earning his certificate to practice as an optician in Florida, he quit the job. “I am going to start my business—now,” he remembers thinking. “I had \$2,000 in my pocket.”

The search for a place to locate his first shop was also driven by instinct—and perhaps a little



serendipity. He’d found a storefront on Sunset Drive, but his lawyer suggested he take a look at some options in Kendall before signing the lease. Driving east on Sunset, Beiner found he couldn’t make a left turn onto U.S. 1. So he drove around trying to find an entrance to the highway—and ended up in South Miami instead. “I found a nice little town and beautiful boutiques,” he said. “I went to friends and family and borrowed \$50,000. The rest is history.”

In the last thirty years, Beiner, who now has a dozen stores throughout Florida and both designs and manufactures his merchandise, said he has “lived many lives. But what always drove me was the fashion.” His recently launched bespoke brand, *Ottica su Misura*, which allows customers

to design their own glasses and have them custom fit, is only his most recent act, his way of acknowledging the trend toward individualization and personalization that’s impacting businesses across the board. Such a move is also an important survival tactic in a market that frequently sees large manufacturers gobble up small eyewear companies like his.

But Beiner, ever the entrepreneur, insists on staying his course. He expects to open three new stores in the next five years, and perhaps expand outside Florida. “I had a dream, and the dream always took a new direction every few years. And that’s good,” said Beiner. “You have to follow where your instincts lead.”

TEXT BY DANELLE MORTON / PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICK GARCIA