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Thirty years later, Burle Marx's Biscayne Boulevard paving scheme – who knew? – nears completion



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Few people notice the swirly sidewalk paving patterns along Biscayne Boulevard in downtown Miami – which can truly only be appreciated from a height. Fewer still know legendary Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx, responsible for the famous Copacabana beach sidewalks in Rio, designed the original boulevard plan back in the 1980s.



Since then, the pavers have been put in place bit by bit, as development and road reconstruction occurred. So now the last big piece is in place, making it a continuous design from 13th Street by the Arsht Center down to SE 2nd St. You can barely discern the orangey paving in this panoramic pic from the Downtown Development Authority, which gives you an idea of the sweep but not, alas, the details (hoping better pics to come).

The DDA has decided it's time to trumpet this putative treasure right beneath our feet. A dedication ceremony will take place starting at 4 p.m. Friday (Oct. 2), in front of the Freedom Tower. There will be a talk by Lauro Cavalcanti, director of the Palacio Imperial in Rio and a Burle Marx expert. Merriment follows at 5:30 p.m. on the plaza in front of the AA Arena with Brazilian dancers, drummers and a free performance by Rio bossa-electronica ensemble Bossacucanova.

There's still more to be done, including plantings according to a palette Burle Marx, who died in 1994, left. There are, too, questions of how closely the execution hews to Burle Marx's vision. No doubt, what's in place is a simplified, less colorful version, to judge against the far-more intricate original renderings. And a key piece – a plaza in front of the deepwater slip visible at top left above – appears to have been dropped or forgotten. But the DDA, which has taken on coordination of the project's completion – it had been a bit of an orphan in the city – believes it can improve it and turn it into a signature downtown element.