

The Columbus Dispatch

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2006

Chic sanctuary

The Crawl praises the Bar of Modern Art, a hip nightspot in a converted church | **D12**



Life

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH | FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2006

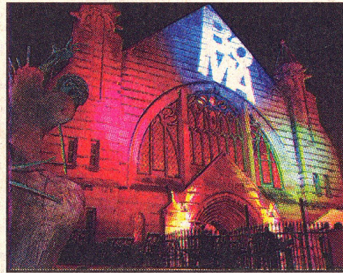
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THE FLIP SIDE

THE CRAWL | BAR OF MODERN ART

The Crawl is an occasional series highlighting central Ohio night life and other diversions. It appears Fridays on The Flip Side.

LEFT: A model strides down the runway on StyleLounge night.
CENTER: A spotlight identifies the new venue.
RIGHT: Server Daren Datchuik makes a delivery.



In the church-turned-nightspot, patrons pack the second floor, overlooking the main dance floor.

JAMES D. DeCAMP | DISPATCH PHOTO

THE FLIP SIDE

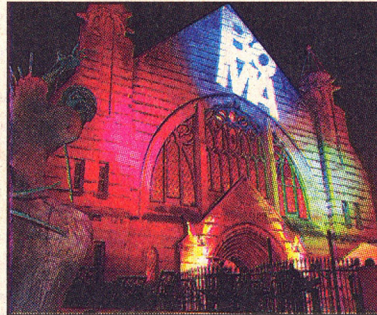
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LOFTY SPACE

Inspired pleasure dome invites patrons to explore

You could say the Bar of Modern Art has been more than 100 years in the making. Or maybe it just feels that way.

Located on E. Broad Street in the former First Baptist Church — erected in 1898 — the just-opened location has teased passers-by since BoMA's partners purchased the spot in August 2005.

So what's inside?

Only an art gallery with almost 1,000 linear feet of display space, a three-story nightclub with a 40,000-watt sound system, seven bars, and, in a few weeks, a full-service restaurant.

In short, there's nothing in town like it.

Minutes after walking through the ornate stone archway — past a hulking but friendly bouncer dressed in black — my friend asked: "Are we still in Columbus?"

Yes, Dorothy, we are. And while the concept is uber-hip, the atmosphere remains refreshingly nonintimidating.



NICK CHORDAS

For starters, the dress code allows for eclecticism. Patrons are encouraged to "Come in style." That meant everything from cocktail dresses to fashionable jeans on a recent visit.

More important, BoMA offers a wide range of entertainment options — from a quiet drink in the intimate first-floor Salon to thumping house music in the basement Underground. If you can't find a room to fit your mood in the 23,000-square-foot space, you're not looking.

I started on the ground level, where the locally designed Blown Glass and Metal bars sit on opposite sides of the main dance floor. "Eye candy" takes on new meaning at BoMA: Even the drink stations qualify as works of art.

A top-shelf gin and tonic plus a house martini total a reasonable \$13. Another bonus: A tab that can be accessed anywhere in the building, allowing the imbibing patron to explore.

And exploring is recommended. Although getting lost inside BoMA is unlikely (unless you've consumed too much gin), each staircase and hallway has been equipped with something to catch your eye.

Co-owner Tom Starker, who has opened clubs in Columbus and New York, offers this description: "Every night there's a gallery hop." My favorite spot was the second-floor Great Room, a high-ceiling affair filled with white leather, original stained glass and framed black-and-white pictures of James Dean by photographer Dennis Stock. I sat below Dean posing with a sow and still felt fashionable.

Also, don't miss the basement Graffiti Lounge, a sparse but inviting space created by central Ohio artists Ashley Voss and Jeremy Nichols.

By the time I returned to the main level, the crowd on the dance floor had spilled onto the stage. A DJ performed under a screen flashing images of — appropriately — the movie 54.

The party was still going when I cashed out around 2 a.m. Leaving through the stone archway, my friend had not only become a believer but also wondered when we might return.

BoMA, as it turns out, was worth the wait. nchordas@dispatch.com

Basics

583 E. Broad St.;
614-233-3000

Hours

9 p.m. to 2:30 a.m. Wednesdays through Sundays; hours to expand when restaurant opens

Cover

\$5 after 9 p.m., \$10 after midnight

Art

Twenty artists are represented, and gallery associates are on hand to answer questions. Director Chad Tooker hopes to rotate shows every two to three months.

Night life

Themed nights include: BoMA-Nation on Wednesdays, featuring a mix of dance music from throughout the world; and StyleLounge on Fridays, focusing on fashion. Coming soon: contemporary Christian music on Tuesdays and BoMA Room, a 19-piece swing band with host Sable Coat, on Sundays.

Dining

The kitchen is expected to open in the coming weeks. The menu, from executive chef Alex Rodriguez, is described as "New American with an international flair." Coffees and desserts will be available late.

10 words or less

BoMA's artful call:
Come one, come all.

In the

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