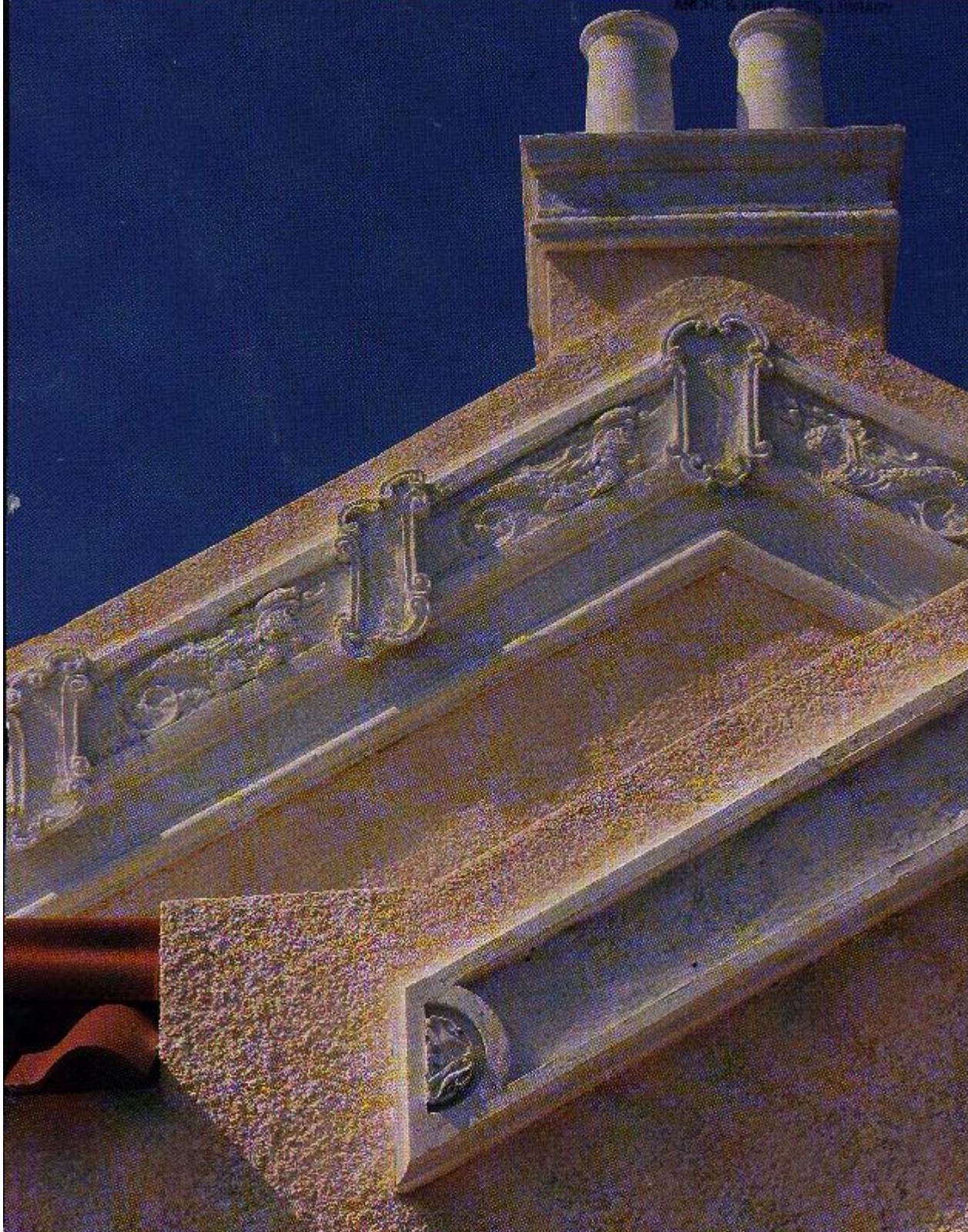


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# FLORIDA ARCHITECT

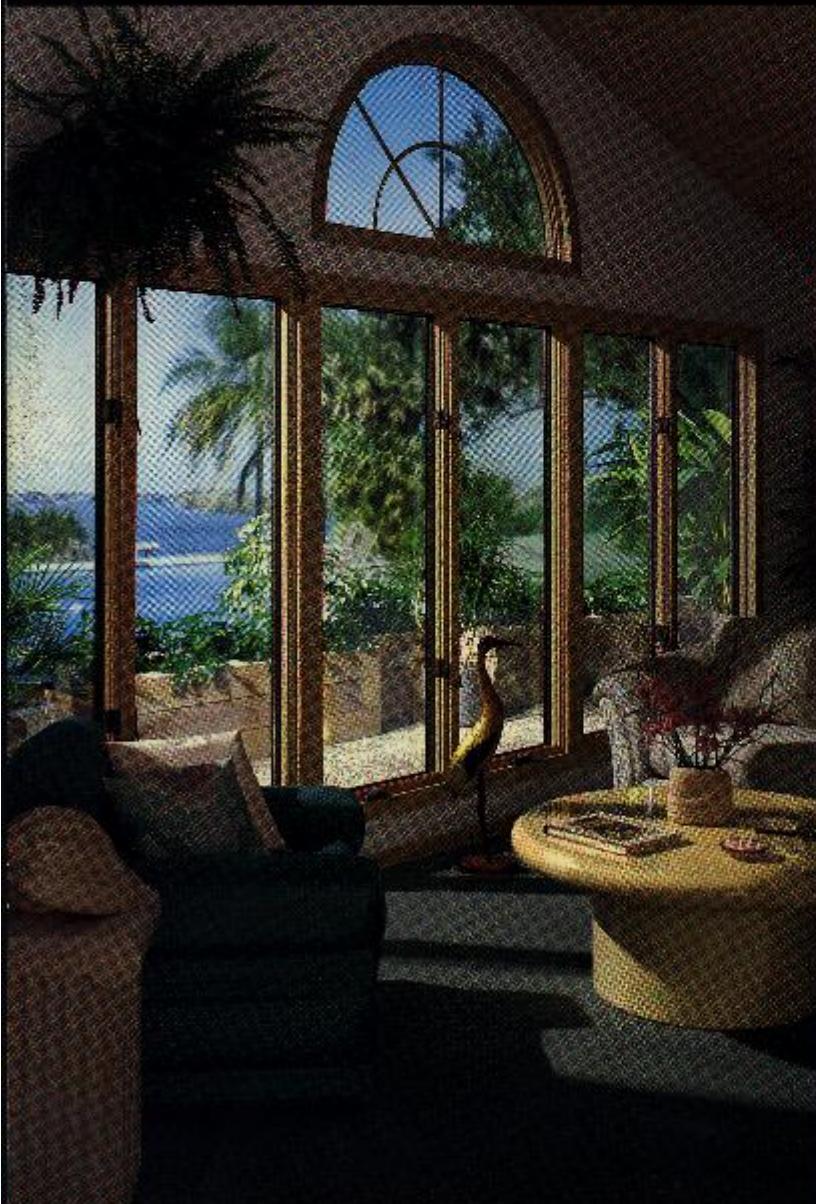
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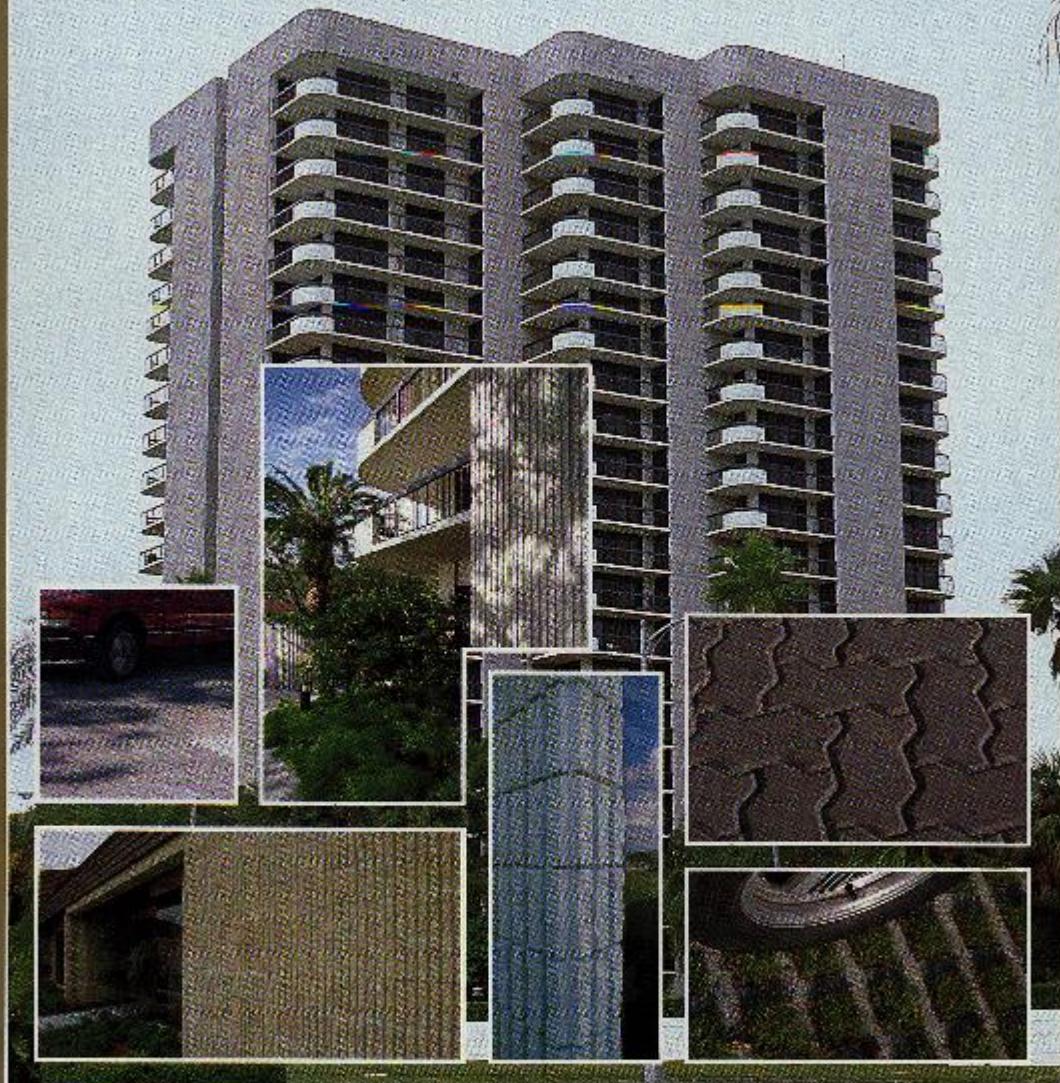
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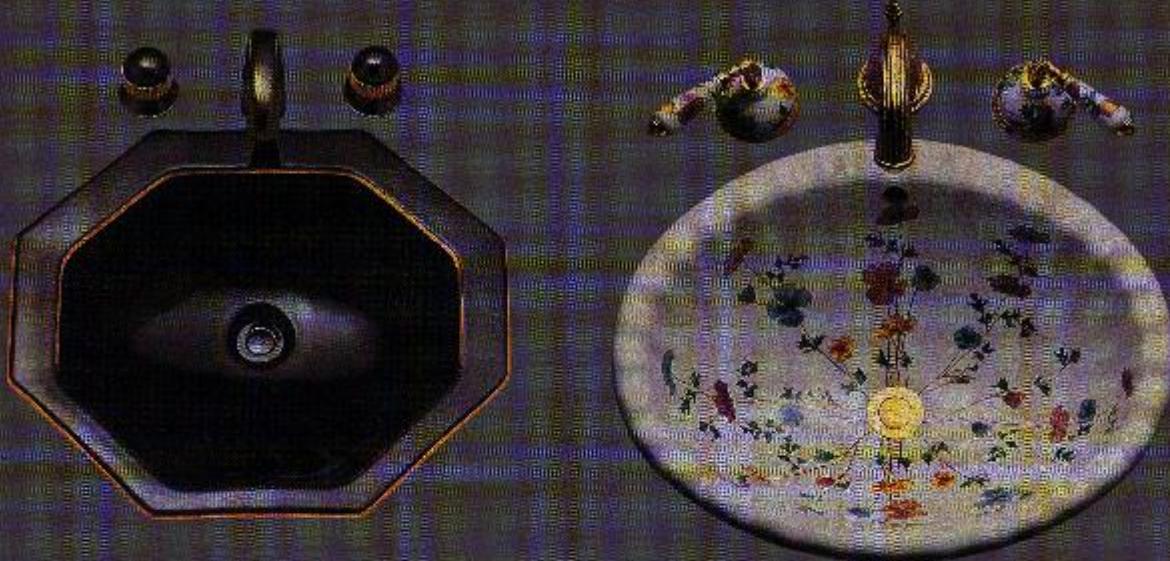
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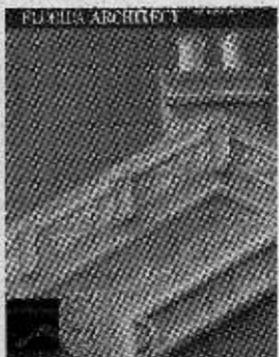
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Volume 33, Number 5

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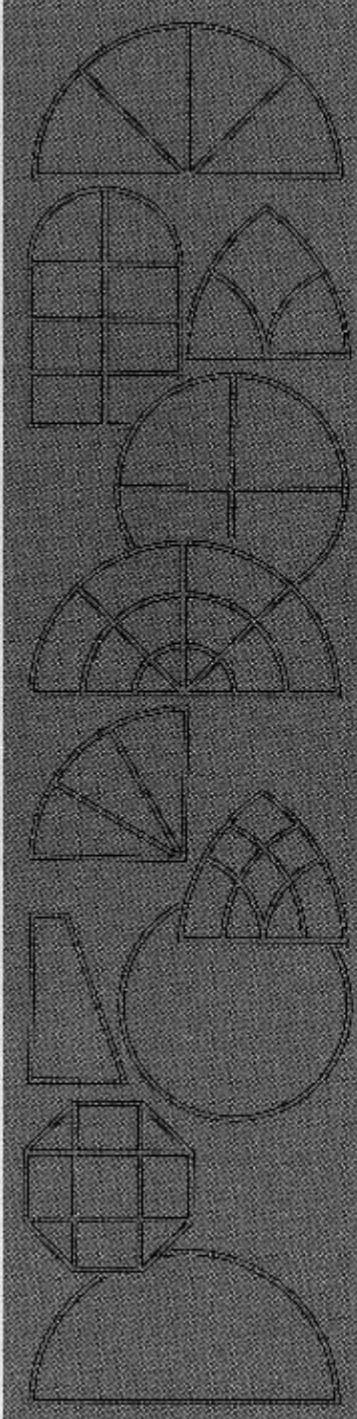
Richard S. Butoff

*Florida Architect*, Official Journal of the Florida Association of the American Institute of Architects, is owned and published by the Association, a Florida Corporation, not for profit. ISSN 0015-8917. It is published six times a year at the Executive Office of the Association, 104 East Jefferson St., Tallahassee, Florida 32302. Telephone (904) 222-7380.

Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the FA/AIA. Editorial material may be reprinted only with the express permission of Florida Architects.

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Cover photo by Steven Brooks. The photo shows a detail from the 21st Street Community Center in Miami Beach, which was restored by Zgromcik & Grafton Architects.



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# EDITORIAL

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Last Spring the Center for the Study of American Architecture at the University of Texas in Austin sponsored a symposium on "New Regionalism: Tradition, Adaptation, Invention." The conference participants included Robert A.M. Stern, Antoine Predock, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Kenneth Frampton, Charles W. Moore and some notable Texas architects such as Frank Welch, John Casbarian, Wayne Attoe, Sinclair Black, Hal Box and Lawrence Speck, who heads the Center.

Editor Jocl Warren Barna wrote an interesting account of the conference for *Texas Architect* magazine. With TA's permission, some of the more quotable quotes and salient thoughts are being shared with FA readers.

Notable, it seems to me, was the basic lack of agreement about what regionalism was? The audience asked how regionalism differs from contextualism or vernacularism, of what is regionalism the opposite, and when is it appropriate to abandon regionalism for a universalist architectural language? And so forth. Apparently, according to Barna, there was no substantive response. The panel did seem to agree, however, that they didn't want to be labeled "regionalists." Antoine Predock's reason . . . "That [label] means you can't work out of state." Stern agreed that he didn't like the term, but went on to say, "The question is a very serious one, because there is somehow a belief . . . that we can recapture in our society . . . that kind of homogeneous place, a town or some entity like that, that existed before industrialization, not to mention before the complexities of our migratory culture. You're not going to have that. But you can have localized . . . highly localized . . . things that do have continuity."

In the end, according to Barna, one of the most memorable points was raised by Plater-Zyberk. She described the work of her firm in South Florida, showing how attention to a new regionalism re-establishes urban values by attempting to "short-circuit regional patterns" and "criticizing current planning practice, which I hesitate to call a tradition, while proposing an alternative tradition specific to place."

Architect and historian Frampton argued in his presentation "that a new regionalism offered hope of overcoming the 'hyper consumptive drives of our overrated neo-technological civilization' as well as the pernicious influence of multi-national corporations on architectural design."

"As far as architecture is concerned, there is evidently precious little chance today that large-scale undertakings will yield works of cultural significance," he further stated. According to Barna, Frampton went all but unanswered.

Diane D. Geer

# NEWS/LETTERS

## News

### A "McChair" and Fries To Go

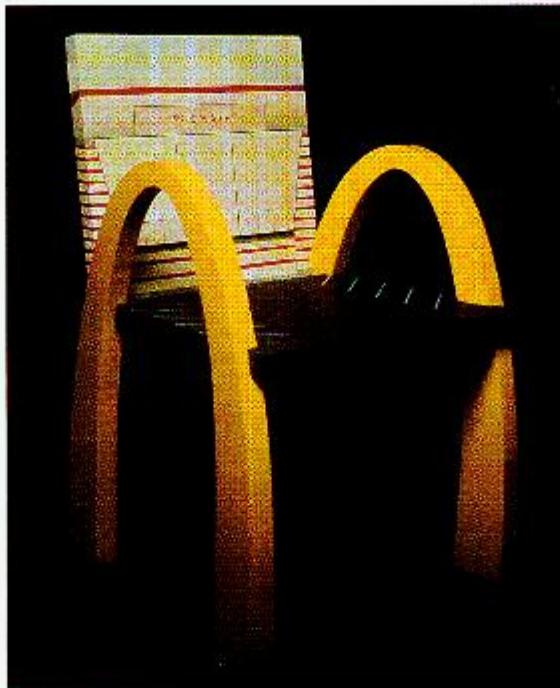
Adam St. John is a native Floridian. He's also a prominent artist and designer who's designed something called a "McChair." Inspiration for the design, which mimics the early 1960's golden-arched architecture of a certain fast-food chain, came from the book *Grinding It Out*, the saga of McDonald's and its founder, Ray Kroc. Designer St. John says that he created the chair as a tribute to the free-enterprise system and to the entrepreneurial spirit that built McDonald's.

The chair, which has a faux granite seat, was selected for inclusion in the permanent collection of 20th Century furniture at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. St. John plans to produce a limited collector's edition of only 250 handcrafted chairs for worldwide distribution . . . each priced at \$2,500.

### CSI To Meet in October

The Fort Lauderdale Chapter of the Construction Specifications Institute will host the Southeast Region Conference (SERC) October 9 through October 12 at the Bahia Mar Quality Royale on Fort Lauderdale Beach. Paul Just, SERC Chairman, has planned educational workshops and joint conferences for both the industry and professional members in order to promote CSI-related issues. These sessions will include classroom and panel discussions or membership interaction and problem solving.

Speakers for the program include Paul Beatty, a vice-president of McGraw-Hill which publishes *Architectural Record* and *Sweets Catalogue Files*; George Van Nall, AIA, FCSI, CCS, a Director of Production at Trott & Bean and Jerry W. Preston, AIA, CCS, a Director of Design and Construction Services for



the State of Tennessee. For information about the conference, contact Paul Just at 305/771-2220.

### Conference on Condominium Living and the Aging Set

Florida condominiums are occupied predominantly by elderly people and they will increasingly become a dominant segment of the condominium population. In analyzing the state of condominium affairs, the Bureau of Condominiums has identified a problem area that needs to be addressed by Florida's policymakers. This area can be addressed in the form of a question: In what ways do the social and legal structure of condominium living affect and/or meet the needs of the elderly? Regarding the aging issue, Florida is at a point now where the rest of the country will be in the year 2100. The models, programs, and legislation we accept will be a guide for the rest of the

country to observe.

The Bureau of Condominiums and the Florida State University College of Law is sponsoring a conference on Condominium Living and the Aging on September 23 and 24, 1986 at the FSU Conference Center in Tallahassee. The purpose of this conference is to provide Florida's policymakers with practical information necessary to make decisions on the social and legal environment of condominiums. Three perspectives will be addressed, including the socio-psychological aspects of the elderly in condominiums, the condominium living environment and the physical needs of the elderly and the legislative and state regulatory responses of the elderly in condominiums. The conference will draw on the experience of professionals such as attorneys, architects, psychologists, developers, condominium managers and legislators. Continuing legal education credits will be available.

Call Dr. Gregory Powell at the Bureau of Condominiums,

1-800-342-8081 for registration information.

### CORREX

The July/August, 1986, issue of FA incorrectly stated that Ted Pappas, FAIA, would "assume office in December, 1986, and become AIA President in 1987."

Pappas will be First Vice-President of the AIA in 1987 and President in 1988. — ed. ■

### New Firms

**Enrique Woodruffe, AIA**, formerly V-president of the Stewart Corporation Architects of Tampa and current President of the Florida Central Chapter of the ATA, has joined the firm of **Walter Hamm & Associates Architects** of Tampa as a partner. The new corporation's name is **Hamm/Woodruffe Corporation-Architects** and currently specializes in multi-family and commercial designs.

### New Commissions

**KBJ Architects, Inc.** will design a 60,000 s.f. multi-purpose center for the Jewish Community Alliance. ■ The \$15 million Courvoisier Centre on Brickell Key will serve as corporate headquarters for one of the world's largest wine and spirits companies and is being developed by a U.S. subsidiary of a Far East trading and development company. The building, designed by **The Nichols Partnership, Inc.**, has strong tropical references. ■ **The Design Advocates, Inc.**, designed Old Ponte Vedra Beach, an oceanfront condominium community on the Atlantic which is being developed by Gate Petroleum Company. ■ **Evans Associates, P.A.** has been retained to provide construction administration services for The Chateau, a golf and country club community in Boca Raton.

"Homes For Young America," three and four bedroom homes designed by **The Evans Group**, are contemporary New England-style homes in a single-family vil-

lage in Palm Harbour. "Homes For Young America" is a division of Life Financial Corporation. ■ **Wedding & Associates, Architects, Inc.** has been commissioned by a Texas developer to design and provide the site planning for a 190,000 s.f. retail center in northern Pinellas County. ■ **Bellon Perez & Perez** has been retained to provide professional services for the City of Hialeah's \$32 million redevelopment project. The project will be built in four construction phases, the first being the retail and residential complex.

**Fugleberg Koch Architects** will design three apartment complexes for Nash Phillips/eopus Developers of Austin, Texas. The projects are in Florida, Georgia and North Carolina and will feature similar design themes. ■

**KBJ Architects** will provide Jacksonville's Downtown Development Authority with an action plan for the revitalization of its central business district. Working with KBJ will be "Society Hill" designer Edmund Bacon, Willard Rouse III, retail specialist Jack Gould and various other planning experts from around the country. ■ **George L. Powell & Associates** has been chosen to design a multi-discipline health care facility in Palm Bay for Health Care Associates. ■ Paragon Holding, developers in St. Maarten, Netherlands Antilles, has commissioned The Evans Group to plan and design Mead's Bay a first class resort hotel in Anguilla. ■ **Architects Fifer and Hammond** have been selected to design a five building complex with 248 apartments in Dade County.

**Slattery & Root** has been commissioned by Chris Everitt Lloyd and John Lloyd to design a 3,700 s.f. two-story private residence at the Polo Club which is now under development. ■ **Collins & Associates Architects/Planners** in Panama City has been awarded a \$1 million contract to design a major addition and alteration project at Tyndall Air Force Base. ■ **Fleischman-Garcia Architect-Planners-Interior Design-**

ers

ers has recently completed a master plan for the proposed Jewish Community Center in Dunedin. The firm has also been retained by the Tampa Port Authority to provide site planning and design for an interim cruise ship terminal near downtown Tampa.

**Bellon Perez & Perez** has been retained by the Dade County Aviation Department to provide professional services for the new \$17 million Concourse D building at Miami International Airport. Construction will begin in November and is scheduled for completion by the end of 1988. ■ **Briel Rhame Poynter & Houser** in association with Thompson Consultants International, was selected to design the expanded terminal project for the Melbourne Regional Airport.

## Awards

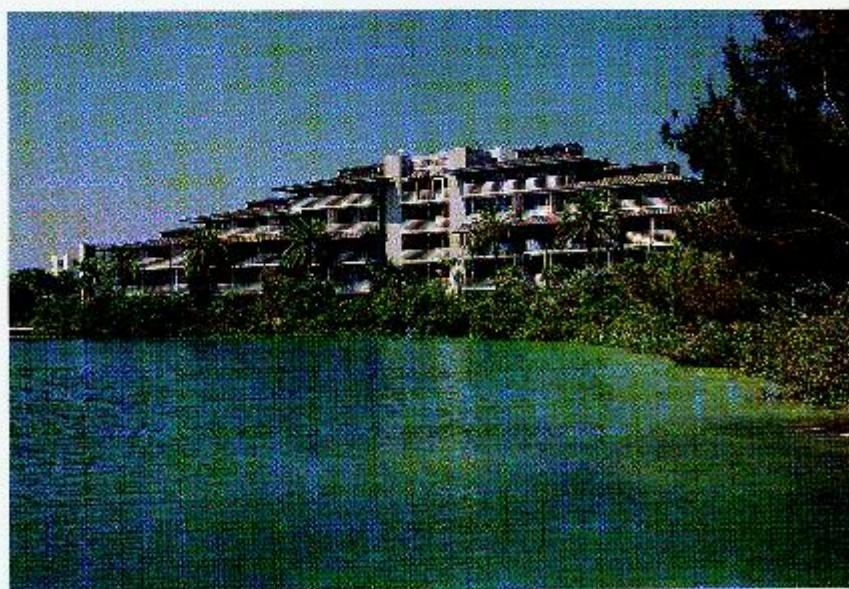
**Douglas R. Root, AIA** and **Paul J. Slattery, AIA**, partners in the firm **Slattery & Root Architects, PA**, were honored by the Community Appearance Board of Boca Raton for their 4,500 s.f. office building which houses the

firm's twenty employees. The architecture office was determined by the City to be a significant contribution to the beauty of Boca Raton. ■ **Charlan Brock & Associates** was presented with three Merit Farnsworth Awards. The awards, which are sponsored by the Miami Herald and the Builders Association of South Florida, were given in recognition of a zero-lot-line community in Jacksonville, an attached, single-family, fee simple project in Tampa and a single family home in Longwood.

The Polk County Correctional Center, designed by Architects Design Group, Inc., has been selected by a national committee as one of the most innovative criminal justice facilities in the nation. The American Institute of Architects and the American Correctional Association's Committee on Architecture for Justice selected 40 projects which illustrate the most up-to-date and innovative designs in criminal justice architecture. ■ **David Laffitte** of KBJ Architects, Inc. was the recipient of an award from the Illuminating Society of

North America for the additions and alterations to Christ Church at Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. KBJ received an Honor Award from the Jacksonville Chapter of the AIA for additions and renovations to Christ Church.

The Gulf Coast Chapter AIA held a juried exhibition of members' work, its first awards program since 1977. The exhibition, which consisted of 70 project display panels and a number of models, was held in a Sarasota Gallery. Projects receiving Awards for Excellence in Architecture were **Edward Siebert's Inn on the Beach**, Lagoon Units on Longboat Key, a residential project on Longboat Key and the Ringling Center in Sarasota, an unbuilt project. **Frank Smith** won two Awards of Excellence for the renovation of the U.S. Garage in Sarasota and the McGuffey Hill Apartments in Charlottesville, Virginia. **Philip Skirball** won the Preservation Award for the restoration of the H.B. Williams Residence in Sarasota.



*Inn on the Beach, Lagoon Units designed by Edward J. Siebert, AIA.*

Dear Editor:

In the May/June issue of *Florida Architect* I came across an article on pg. 42, which discusses the "Professional Licensing of Others". I felt it important that I respond.

I am currently the President of Florida South Chapter of the American Society of Interior Designers, but more and coincidentally, considered a professional interior designer, with 35 years of acknowledged expertise in my field. I must state that I take great exception to the implication that interior designers in our quest for legislation for licensing would carve out an area of architecture for ourselves.

We in no way indicate or suggest, nor ever suggested this, in our bill and to imply this to your membership, is not only false, but damaging to the health, welfare and safety of the general public, which is the essence of all legislation.

Whatever happened to the team concept? We in our offices regularly work in concert with client, builder and architect. It would be naive for anyone to believe that one who spends only a percentage of his time doing a segment of the design process is more adept and qualified than one who spends his entire working experience as a specialist in that segment.

What we as interior designers are trying to accomplish is merely a Title act, which would provide recognition to the public of the existence of a level of competency for what interior designers have traditionally done!

The American Society of Interior Designers, which has been the major proponent of legislation, has prequalified this movement by founding the nationally recognized Foundation for Interior Design Education Research (FIDER) which accredits minimum standard education in Colleges and Universities throughout the country.

The University of Florida and Florida State University are among those accredited. In addition, the American Society of Interior Designers contributed to the establishment of minimum competency exams for the edu-

cated apprenticeship designer. This two day exam explores all the relevant health, welfare and safety problems a designer may face along with testing the designer's ability to communicate his design through a ten hour drawing problem. This exam is known as the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ).

Naturally, it goes without saying we would not want to diminish the responsibilities for architects as called for in the Archi-

tectural Practice Act, but to require interior designers to in fact become licensed architects to be able to perform interior design, is an overqualification of a specialized field.

We, of the American Society of Interior Designers, look forward in the future, as we had hoped for in the past, to maintaining an active positive constructive dialogue with the Florida Association, American Institute of Architects.

We sincerely hope that future leaders of the FA/AIA have the ability to re-establish this dialogue with their allied professionals.

In closing, whether the legislative process is fulfilled in this session or in subsequent years it is merely a matter of educating those who have yet to recognize what was, was, and what is, is.

Bud Merle, A.S.I.D.  
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# LEGAL NOTES

## "Now for the rest of the story — Legislative Analysis and Forecast"

by J. Michael Huey

### Tort Reform

**D**on't get your hopes up that your liability exposure and insurance woes have been solved by the legislature. In fact, you may be in worse shape now that the legislature has passed its tort reform package than you were before. The tort reform legislation will do little, if anything, to alter the litigation of personal injury claims. Furthermore, these measures will do nothing to alter the litigation of design and construction disputes. More tort reform is necessary to effect meaningful alteration of existing litigation patterns. Such reform will probably not come in the way of legislative action in 1987 and, indeed, may only come through judicial or other action with the passage of time.

In the meantime, many insurance companies are not writing new liability policies and some are refusing to renew existing policies. As of October 1, 1986, carriers must submit new rates (effective as of January 1, 1987) not exceeding rate levels that were in effect on January 1, 1984. This provision of the new law will probably cause many insurance companies to refuse to write new policies in Florida after this year. It is reported that CNA is among those — meaning a more limited liability insurance market for architects. The insurance industry is attaching the insurance rate rollback and the extensive reporting requirements contained in the tort reform package. On July 15, a Leon County circuit judge ruled that the commercial insurance carriers did not have to immediately return a ten percent (10%) premium credit to policyholders but could put this money in an escrow account pending final outcome of the insurance carriers' constitutional challenge of the tort reform law. The court is to schedule the matter for trial in September and, by the end of the year, there should be a definitive ruling which, as you know, will be appealed.

So — what one might believe from reading the accounts of the legislature's actions on tort reform to be some positive relief is, upon closer examination, no relief at all for architects and other commercial parties facing an ever increasing litigation explosion. This sad commentary is not intended as criticism of the legislature's effort to address tort reform. The legislature, thanks to determined leadership in both houses, made a gallant attempt to adopt meaningful changes to improve the tort system. However, the issues surrounding the rights of injured parties versus the rights of parties alleged to have caused the injuries are most complex and for every horror story told by one side, there's a horror story on the other side.

On the brighter side, FA/AIA was successful in lobbying the passage of a bill *precluding* personal injury claims against design professionals by injured construction workers receiving workers compensation benefits. Other specific restrictions are necessary in order to properly address commercial litigation. The doctrine of comparative negligence should be revisited along with the issues of frivolous suits, attorney's fees, and lawyer sanctions. Architects, frustrated by the current system, must not become disenchanted with the legislature or the courts, but must continue to work for changes which reduce the time and expense of commercial dispute resolutions and achieve an equitable result.

### Statute of Limitations

What the legislature giveth it may also taketh away. So learned Associated Industries of Florida and the business community during the 1986 Legislative Session. For years, there was a twelve-year cap on product liability suits in order to avoid stale suits. Architects, engineers and contractors, correspondingly, have a fifteen-year cap on suits for design

and construction negligence. The Florida Supreme Court recently upheld the products liability statutory cap which was attacked as unconstitutional. That decision gave design professionals and contractors some hope that our highest state court might uphold the fifteen-year cap on suits for design and construction deficiencies. The paradox is that the business community was so busy pushing the tort reform package that it allowed a repeal of the valuable limitation on liability. Now, we must be concerned whether the legislature will attempt to repeal our fifteen-year cap. Stale-suits are a problem and the judiciary finally recognized the validity of a maximum time period of exposure. FA/AIA must convince the legislature not to backslide on this issue.

### Taxes

Tax issues will dominate the legislative agenda for the next two years. During its last session, the legislature adopted legislation repealing the sales tax exemptions for professional and other services effective July 1, 1987. A special 21-member commission was established to review the "public policy and fiscal impact" of all sales tax exemptions. The commission is to report to the legislature prior to the 1987 Legislative Session. The issue of tax exemptions for professional services is fairly debatable and it is probably appropriate that the legislature revisit it. There are some practical problems in implementing such a tax in light of the unique nature of the contractual relationships between architects and owners, consultants, etc. Even though none of us want to pay additional taxes, we must remember that Florida still ranks about 43rd among the states in taxes imposed. I sense the real issue is not whether architects or lawyers are taxed, but whether there is a *fair and consistent* taxing policy. The goal of the FA/AIA should be to insist upon such a policy.

### Asbestos Update

Architects have been drawn into the asbestos crisis by various federal, state and local governments which require architects to design or specify the asbestos abatement procedures for existing government facilities. While asbestos abatement has been the subject of considerable discussion at the federal level, this year marks the first time that Florida has undertaken such a careful review of the issue. The legislature enacted a law establishing the Florida Asbestos Commission to implement the development of an asbestos identification and remediation plan for public buildings in the state. The Commission's plan is to prescribe, among other things, a certification and continuing education program for asbestos contractors, architects, engineers, consultants and industrial hygienists. The FA/AIA must work closely with this Commission and the legislature to assure the adequacy of such plan and to see that adequate liability protections are extended to those professionals willing to offer their services in this area.

### "For what it's worth"

After fifteen years of involvement in legislative affairs on behalf of FA/AIA, I can unequivocally represent that the legislative process works for you in direct proportion to your interest and effort. Time and time again, we have proved active involvement in a meritorious cause produces a good result. If you've been involved — stay involved; if you have not been involved — get involved.

J. Michael Huey is General Counsel to the FA/AIA. He is a partner in the Tallahassee law firm of Huey, Grubbs, Kuersteiner & Tucke, P.A.

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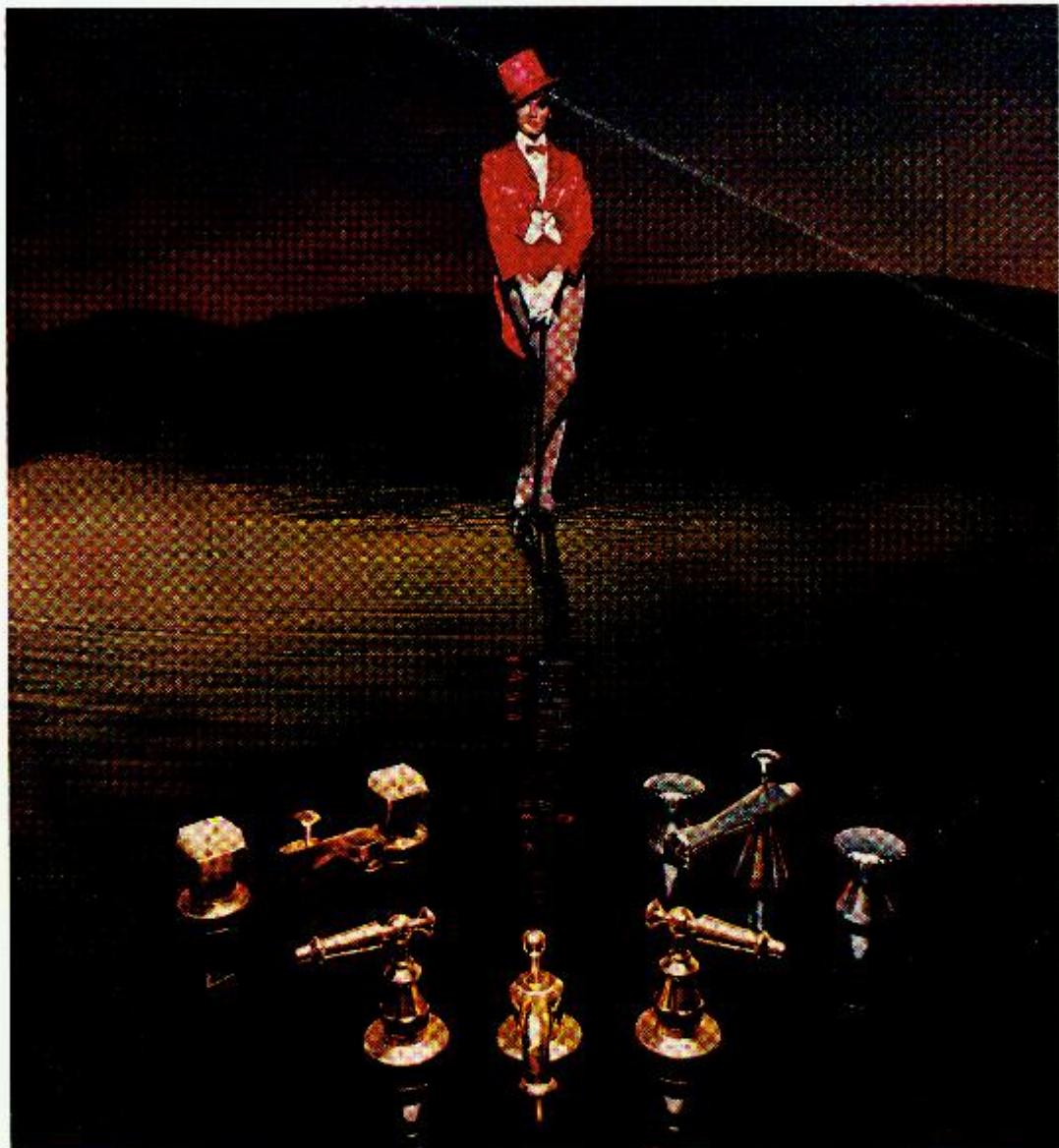


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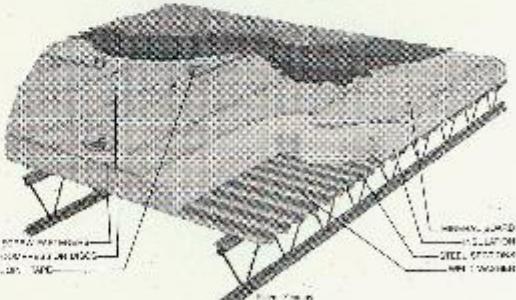
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## Style: The pursuit of meaning in architecture

by Ming Wu, AIA

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** At the FA/AIA Design Conference '86 held last May in Hovey-in-the-Hills, the Keynote Address was delivered by Ming Wu, AIA, of Kohu Pedersen Fox Associates, P.C. Mr. Wu's address generated such interest that it is reprinted here.

I consider it my good fortune to have this opportunity tonight to share some thoughts of mine with all of you who are my fellow architects. Certainly I have no revelations, no profound truths, nor great wisdom to impart. Rather I am the humble custodian of a few ideas which I am presenting for your criticism. Though I have been invited to be the keynote speaker, the fact that I am standing here and you are seated there does not suggest that my thoughts are anymore valid or less malleable than yours, particularly with regard to this thorny subject of style.

To begin, I would like to commend the Educational Conference Committee for electing to address the issue of style and making it the theme of this inaugural design conference. The Committee has made an excellent choice for two reasons. First, style is a very timely topic at present. It is the design issue of the hour for our profession. Moreover, it has captured the public's imagination as well. It is very chic, it is very hot... and not only in the United States, but globally. The media has picked it up and thrust architecture and all of us squarely in the public's eye — center stage — and in the process has made many of us celebrities of sorts. Not only our work, but who we are, how we live, how we dress, even our gastronomic preferences have become subject to public scrutiny. We and what we do are today's "inner story" material. Our work is no longer confined only to publication in professional and trade journals. We are just as likely



Photo by Jack Poppel

to be featured in the weekly news magazines, or reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, or in *Vogue Magazine*. Art and film publications have grappled as well with the subject of architectural style. We've become Sunday magazine reading for millions.

We are receiving recognition and compensation not only for the buildings we design, but also for our drawings and sketches, our furniture designs, as well as for the design of dishware and other household furnishings. While this has always taken place historically to some extent, it is occurring today with a particular fervor and haste — and not without a certain mass marketing strategy propelling it.

Of late we even find ourselves on television.

Furthermore, the influence of architecture and of style is being felt in the other allied fields of artistic pursuit. In clothing design, the leading edge of the fashion world is producing a "look", so to speak, that is very architectural and structured in its cut and silhouette. In the film industry, there are currently several movies in which architecture figures prominently in the sets, the locations, and in the

overall concept and theme of the production. I am thinking in particular of Ricardo Bofill's Marne-La-Vallée new town and of Richard Meier's Bronx Redevelopment Center, both current stars of the silver screen. Similarly, of late, architects have been participants in the field of dance, our handiwork making its debut on countless stages around the world.

Closer to home, in the speculative office building market, "style wars," if you will, is raging and fierce, as developers exploit style as both a marketing tool and a competitive necessity.

Clearly the subject of architectural style is very much a part of popular culture today and enjoying a high profile at that. My only caveat and concern is that we not become too distracted by our fashionable circumstances, that we not become star struck. This Madison Avenue brand of promotion is hopefully only a temporary aberration. It is not the most flattering nor the most desirable sort of recognition. Furthermore, the time frame under which we operate and under which our work must endure public scrutiny is a much longer one.

Secondly, the fact that the subject of style is so timely — that it is "in the air," so to speak, and that it is not only our preoccupation but, as well, is in the public's consciousness — points to something of much greater import. I would suggest that our fixation on the matter of style represents the pursuit and redefinition of meaning in contemporary architecture.

*"Style is a quest for a meaningful, built environment. Appropriate style can be equated to appropriate meaning. Style is the vehicle, the language and vocabulary, and the symbolic notation with which we create and by which we communicate meaning in architecture."*

In general terms architecture, like all artifacts of society, is produced and exists in a historical continuum. It represents a distillation of the prevailing ideas of a civilization regarding social, political, economic, spiritual, and aesthetic considerations — at a given point in time. It is a mirror of man's condition at that moment in history. In as much as the ideas and circumstances of man are continuously evolving, so too architecture is evolutionary. It is an ongoing synthesis and reevaluation of the past with respect to the present. This is what gives meaning and understanding to our built environment. Our work must at once express the essence of what is unique about our time yet link it naturally and in a manner which is comprehensible to all that has come before — that which is our legacy. Indeed the historian, Oswald Spengler, has observed that the world views and character of cultures is described and documented in their respective architectures.

At present our pursuit of meaning through the exploration of style is obsessive, even excessive at times, to the point of being a blinding preoccupa-

tion with the surface, the veneer of architecture — and therefore at the sacrifice of content and, hence, of real meaning. To a great extent this is understandable as it is an overreaction to and an overcompensation for the architectural climate engendered by Modernism.

*"Modernism as a body of thought really followed quite naturally from what had preceded it. Modernism, ideologically speaking, was a plausible, if not logical, extension of the historical continuum."*

Modern architecture was an expression of the rational world view which first began to emerge during the Renaissance as a reaction against the medieval in-

stitutions of church, empire, and feudalism. Renaissance thinkers put man, the individual, rather than God and church at the center of the universe — as the measure of all things. Man, while a creature of nature, could stand apart from it. Furthermore, the rational and analytical view of the world promoted the sciences and mathematics as the languages of nature. Mastery of these resulted in, first, the understanding and subsequently the control and domination of nature by man. Then in the 17th century Newton utilized mathematics to describe earthly mechanics and the motion of celestial bodies. This lent greater support to the rationalist and modern view of the world. In the 18th century, the Enlightenment, rationalism extended from the natural sci-

ences to human affairs and political science — and played an important philosophical role in both the French and American Revolutions. Then in the 19th century something of profound and far reaching consequence took place, which irrefutably confirmed the power of rationalism. I am referring, of course, to the Industrial Revolution. At this time the technology of building made a quantum leap forward — first cast iron, then wrought iron, then steel. It was accompanied by similar technological breakthroughs in the perfection and manufacture of glass which thus enjoyed vastly increased application. And very importantly, in 1857, in New York City Elisha Otis installed the first passenger elevator. The rest, as they say, is truly history.

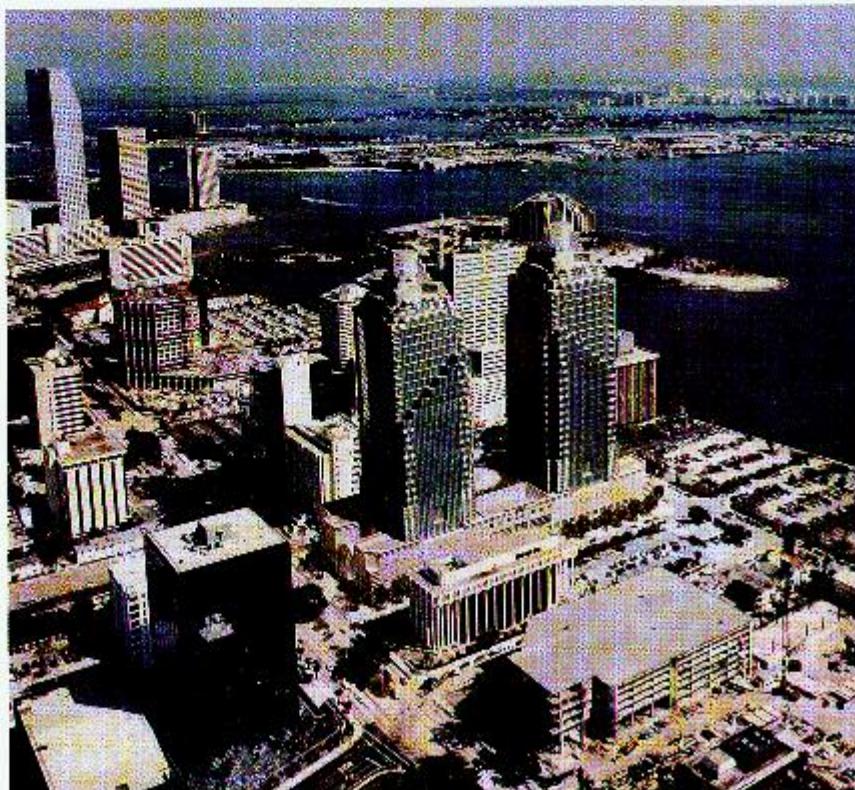


Photo by Jack Horner

What is important for us to note is this. The Industrial Revolution was an event without precedent in the entire history of human civilization that had preceded it, except perhaps for the discovery of fire by early man. This sudden surge in man's technical prowess affected every aspect of our lives, and in a mere several decades drastically altered our built environment. Before the Industrial Revolution the entire history of building, reaching back to the Egyptians and further still, was of a stone and masonry tradition. I am speaking, of course, primarily of public, ceremonial, and institutional architecture. Even concrete construction was well known and expertly utilized as early as Roman times. My point is that up until recent time architecture and society had proceeded forward gradually, hand-in-hand, in lockstep. Architecture was a mirror and commentary upon society. It was therefore meaningful to the people for whom it was built.

*"By the turn of the century technology had clearly outstripped society and culture. As technicians and technocrats we proved to be very fast. But as humanists we are fundamentally slow. And architecture is a humanistic pursuit."*

Furthermore, it does not exist to serve technology — rather the reverse. If during the Renaissance architecture was an expression of man the humanist, then by late Modernism it had become an expression of a technological superman, to borrow Nietzsche's notion. Thus Modern architecture — after the initial inspiration, after the romantic and visionary phase (the proverbial baby not to be thrown out with the bathwater) — after this, it inevitably grew stale, meaningless and ultimately alienating.

Ironically, I believe there was continuous exploration for meaning, for a substantive style, in the Modern period with regard to both architecture and urbanism. Think back to the late '40's, '50's, through to the '60's and recall Functionalism, expression of program, expression of circulation, Structuralism, New Brutalism, International Style, Superstudio, and Hi-tech. These were all meant to infuse mainstream Modern architecture with meaning. Many were truly styles. The intentions were good. But the effort was misplaced in that the vocabulary was too much tied to techniques and too much removed from cultural conventions and humanistic concerns. Even the '60's concept of urban renewal, the stepchild of Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin, was on paper a noble effort to make urban existence more meaningful, more ideal. Then in the late '60's and early '70's we attempted to make architecture more meaningful from a sociological bent, hence the concepts of interactive design, participatory design, social behavior and architecture. It was a period of activism and ferment. Remember when entire townspeople "assisted" the architect in designing a community center?

About this time as well, three seminal written works were beginning to make the rounds of the architectural community, both in academia and in the profession. I am referring, of course, to Jane Jacob's *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* by Robert Venturi, and *Mathematics of the Ideal Villa* by Colin Rowe. These proved to be enormously influential and prophetic essays. Each addressed the notion of a synthesis of past and present in the design process, and in so doing commenced the restoration of architecture's historical and ideological continuum. They are handbooks, if you will, for making meaning in architecture. Whether student, teacher, or practitioner, these writings have done much to

guide all of us to where we find ourselves today, that is: at a point in time when we are critically investigating style as the vehicle for creating meaning in our work — but a style which is part and parcel of a legacy.

In assessing our current condition I have the following observations to share with you. During the past fifteen years, we architects have participated in a very productive critique of all that was handed down to us from Modernism concerning the city and its architecture. We have come to recognize once again that history, society, and humanistic and cultural considerations are essential and positive influences in the contemplation and making of architecture. However, unavoidably, and perhaps of necessity, the pendulum has swung too far. Our critique of the modern and avant-garde has often become misdirected, even totally reactionary at times resulting in shallow and abusive historicism and in 'knee-jerk' contextualism.

*"To once hosts to resurrect meaning in architecture we have in fact further jeopardized it through our often indiscriminate and uncritical embrace of a plethora of styles."*

While revivalism and stylistic pluralism in and of themselves are not negative conditions by any means, they become a mask of indecision and a lack of conviction, they become mere pastiche, when applied with unquestioning acceptance and without commentary or wit. Thus our stylistic fervor and facetiousness often produces egregious excesses in our facades — a mindless mannerism. It distresses me greatly that today, across this country as well as abroad, particularly in the field of commercial architecture, a certain cut-rate Post Modernism is running rampant and unchecked. This rather crass commercialization of style

could well be our Waterloo. It will certainly detract from and trivialize our better efforts. We are architects, not stylists, and this striving for novelty and effect in what I often perceive to be a competitive environment of one-upmanship will not further our aim to make a more meaningful architecture. Style rather becomes analogous to mere chatter — words without content — buildings that do not articulate ideas.

So what are we to do? And how do we proceed? First we must pause, even step back, and undertake a critical appraisal of our present predicament — of our preoccupation with this issue of style. There are indications that this is already taking place. The word coming back to us from those at the frontiers of our profession suggests that the pendulum is beginning its inexorable swing back. The period of baroque Post-Modernism, if you will, is coming to a close, leaving with us three important conditions for our work:

1. That a milieu of renewed freedom of experimentation and original expression in design has been established.
2. That an intelligent and critical reunion with our past — our architectural legacy — has been achieved.
3. And that a reacquaintance with the idea of ornamentation has been made.

If through style we indeed are addressing the issue of meaning, then the agenda we are now putting forth must include the following notions which contribute to the formulation of meaning.

As we design, we must pay heed to:

1. *Typology and precedent* which can assist us in understanding and evaluating program and function, and thus in giving them intelligible form.

2. *The physical context* which must be reckoned with in both its:
  - Geographic/climatic aspects
  - As well as in terms of the existing built fabric into which we must stitch our design either by emulation and synthesis or by

contrast and counterpoint.

3. The *intellectual context*, both in terms of:

- Culture and tradition in general, and specifically with regard to
- Regionalism — in other words the dominant, local architectural style. This is something which has always been a great strength as well as a vital source of inspiration and originality for American architecture. Parenthetically, the preservation of regionalism is an even more urgent matter today at a time when the world community continues to grow closer and closer together — thus threatening our built environment with a certain stylistic homogeneity on a global scale.

4. We must always give our attention to the *materials employed* and to *construction methodology* — in other words, to the tectonics of our designs. There must exist a creative respect for the integrity of materials and, in their assembly, an understanding and exposition — whatever the form of expression — of the technologies of the present. The language of construction is indeed a significant influence in the formulation of a meaningful style. Furthermore, Modernism — particularly the early, heroic Modernism — must be given its due and addressed as an integral and undeniable part of our architectural legacy. It constitutes an episode of the historical continuum. It should rightfully be represented in the palette with which we work.

If I were to identify as a style that which informs and guides my design, perhaps I would refer to it as a classicizing modernism. But nomenclature aside, what I am seeking in principle is an architecture rigorously conceived and made that is imbued with certain qualities of essentialness, inevitability, and eternality. It is an architecture that achieves richness and truth, through the spare and austere use of materials and through the clear application of structure to give order to form and space. It

is an architecture of light and shadow. It is an architecture which is a thoughtful and substantive synthesis of contemporary experience with ancient, enduring, and immutable principles of design — thus giving rise to a new expression, and one which is of the present time.

We, as architects, are engaged in an activity which in its

best moments aspire to being an art form. What we do, if we do it well, can in instances be an enabling act and one of the highest forms of expression available to man. Buildings, monuments, and cities are among the most grand and most permanent artifacts of a civilization. They are the manifestation in built form of the nature of our society. They

are a repository and an exposition of our ideas about ourselves and our condition. They are essays in stone, steel and glass about our humanist tradition. As architects, we each have only so few occasions in a lifetime to make buildings and to shape cities. We must take precious care with each and every opportunity.

## ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY



ERIC OXENDORF

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## 1986 FA/AIA Awards for Excellence in Architecture

The 1986 Awards for Excellence in Architecture brought a three-member jury together to view one hundred and eighty six projects from the Florida/Caribbean region. Eight projects were selected to receive awards and they were as diverse as a radio station in Orlando and a large cancer treatment center in Tampa. Two of the projects were restorations and the rest were new designs. All are shown on the following pages.

**Harry Charles Wolf, III, FAIA**, has a Bachelor of Architecture degree from M.I.T. From 1966 to the present he has had his own firm in New York City, Wolfe Associates. In 1974-75, he chaired the AIA National Design Committee and sought solutions to the dilemma of urban decay. He has served on many design juries, lectures frequently and has had his work published in every architecture magazine of note. He has been listed in *Who's Who in the World* continuously from 1978 to the present. Wolf's design for the Mecklenburg County Courthouse has received international critical acclaim. His office is presently working on Embassy Commissions for Abu Dhabi, UAE; Doha, Qatar, and a joint venture in Indonesia is in its preliminary stages.

**Wolf Von Eckardt** is a writer and critic with a special interest in architectural, urban and industrial design. He was Design Critic for *Time* magazine from 1981 to 1985 and for 18 years before that he was Architecture Critic for the *Washington Post*. Von Eckardt is the author of a number of books including *Live the Good Life: Creating Human Community Through the Arts* and *Back to the Drawing Board: Planning Livable Cities*. He is currently at work, with Sander Gilman, on *Oscar Wilde's London*. He is a frequent lecturer at universities and professional conventions and is an honorary member of the American Institute of Architects.

**Barbara Neski, FAIA**, received a Master of Architecture from Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1951. She has been a Design Critic at Columbia University and a Professor of Architecture at Pratt Institute from 1973 to the present. Ms. Neski has been in partnership with her husband, Julian Neski, for 20 years and Neski Associates/Architects has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors including seven Record Houses awards and AIA Special Mention, Citation and Honorable Mention awards. Her work has been exhibited extensively in this country and at the Expo in Japan in 1970.

# AWARDS

## Miami Lakes Town Center Phase B

Miami Lakes, Florida

### Architect

Baldwin Sackman + Associates,  
P.A. Architects  
Coconut Grove, Florida

Landscape Architect  
Wallace Johnson

Owner/Developer  
The Graham Companies

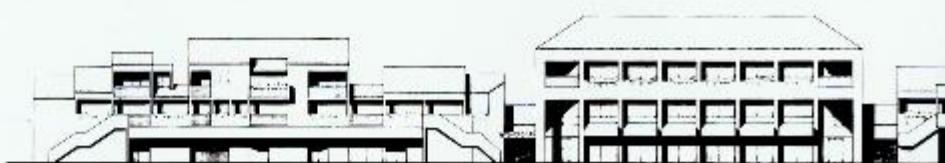
General Contractor  
Miller and Solomon

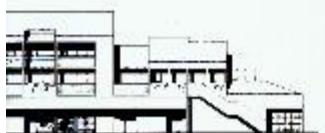
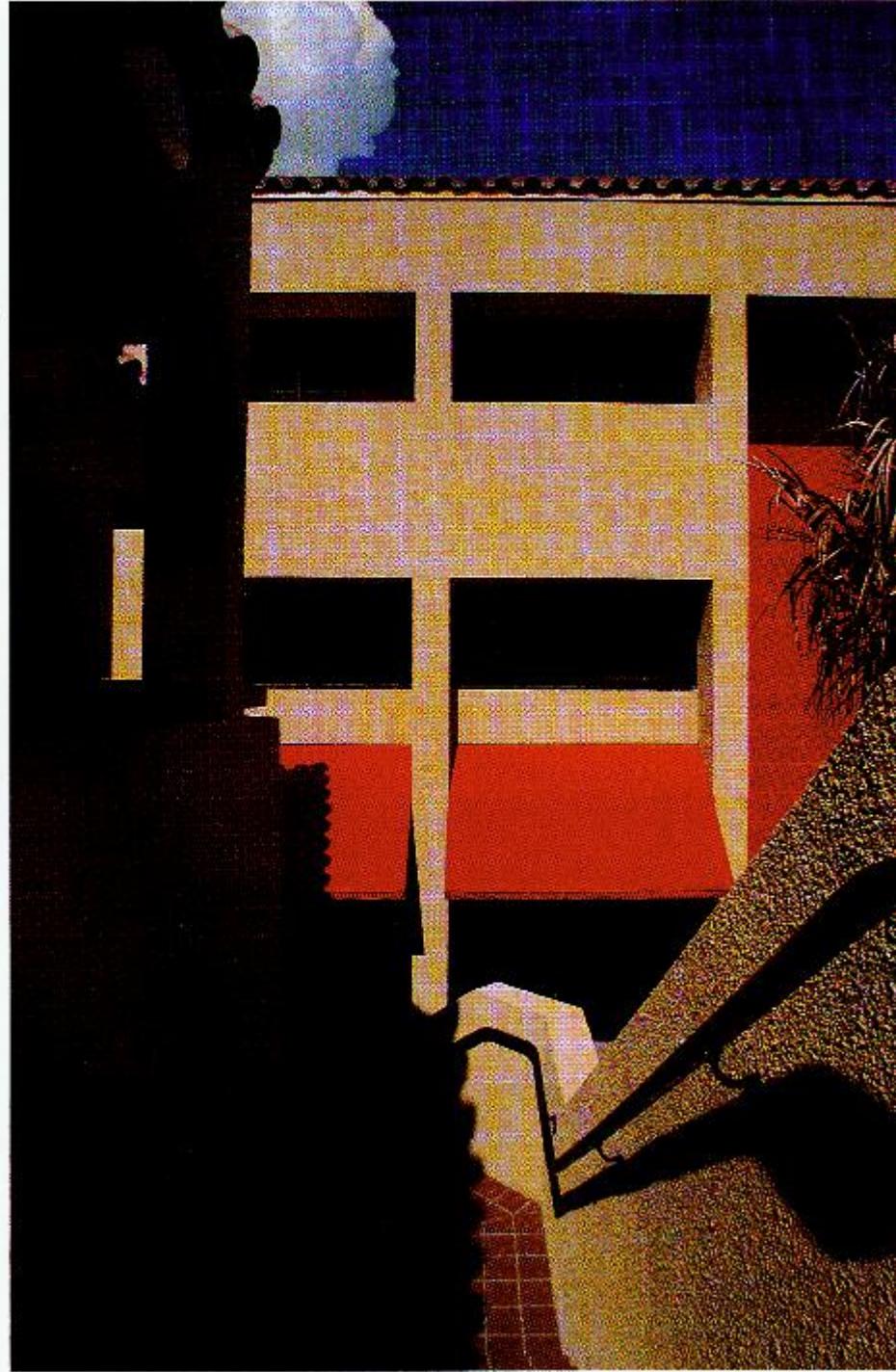
The Town Center was designed to recapture the relaxed easy-going character of a village square or a hometown Main Street. The elements and materials used, including barrel tile and brick pavers, express the feeling of vernacular town centers of the past. This mixed use project provides retail shops and boutiques on the ground floor interconnected by brick walkways and arcades while providing private security access through the rear elevation to the residential units. The residential units vary in height from one to two stories and generate interesting building elevations in scale with the street.

Jury: "What counts here, as the jury sees it, is not the individual architecture, but the wholesome ambience created by the ensemble of retail shops, offices and residential units. The scale of the project is excellent. The landscaping adds to the sense of unpretentiousness. The center should generate a good feeling of neighborhood."



Photos by Steven Brooke





# AWARDS

## 21st Street Community Center

Miami Beach, Florida

**Architect**

Zyscovich & Grafton Architects  
Miami, Florida

**Owner/Developer**

City of Miami Beach

**Contractor**

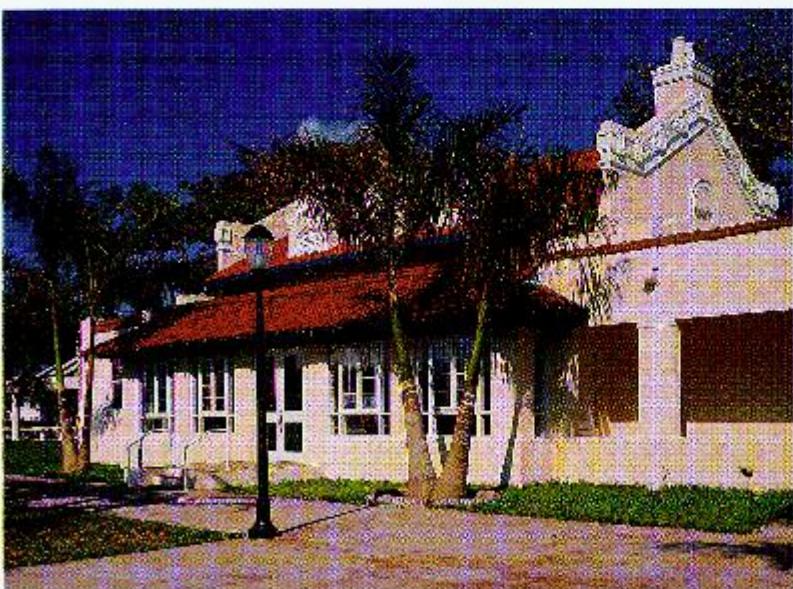
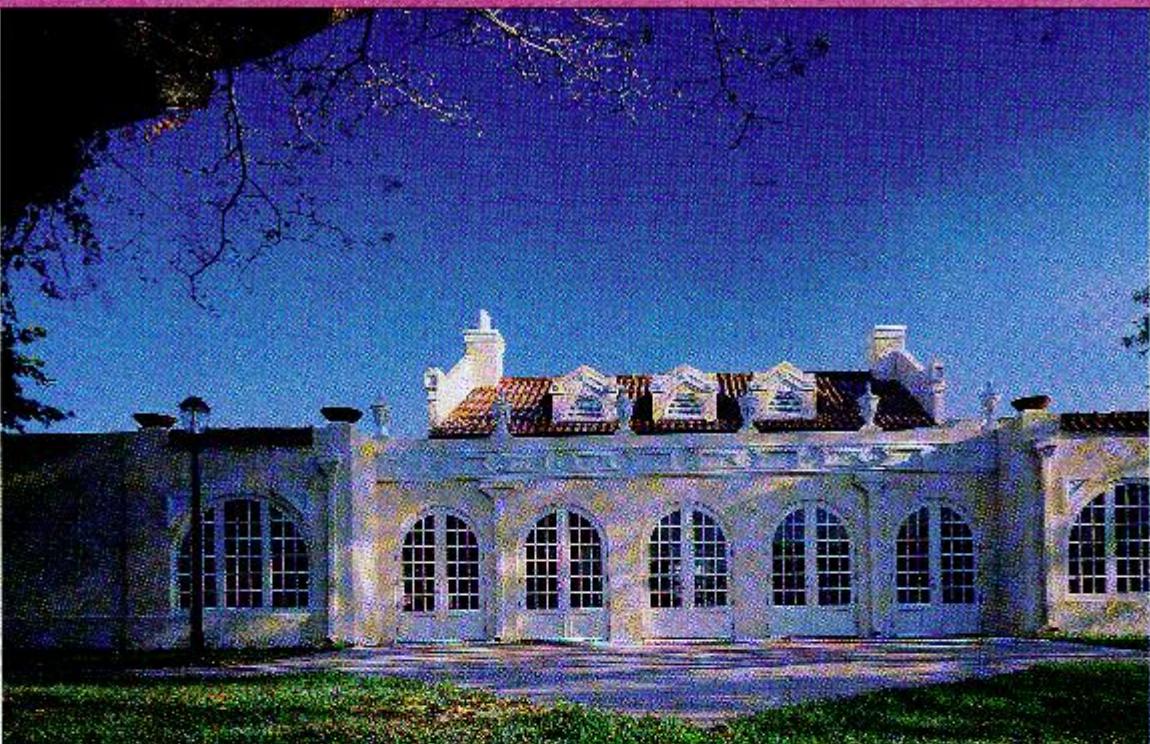
Romart Construction

This building was constructed in 1916 as a golf clubhouse and certain programmatic modifications were required to adapt the center from its original use to a facility for the elderly. A further design objective was to create a sense of harmony among the disparate elements of the project, some new and some existing. These elements include the main club house, the chess club pavilions, the theatre building, the band shell, the dance plaza and various outdoor walkways, patios and courtyards.

Jury: "Straightforward restoration of an old building is more commendable than intrusions by a restoration architect. The project shows sensitivity and discretion with regard to necessary additions, such as air-conditioning. We especially applaud the idea of using the old clubhouse for a purpose that emphasizes the grace and spaciousness of the great hall."



Photos by Steven Brooke



# AWARDS

## Radio Station for WDBO/K92FM

Orlando, Florida

**Architect**

Helman Hurley Charvat  
Peacock Architects, Inc.  
Maitland, Florida  
Alexander W. Stone,  
Project Designer

**Consulting Engineer**  
Alan and Conrad, Inc.

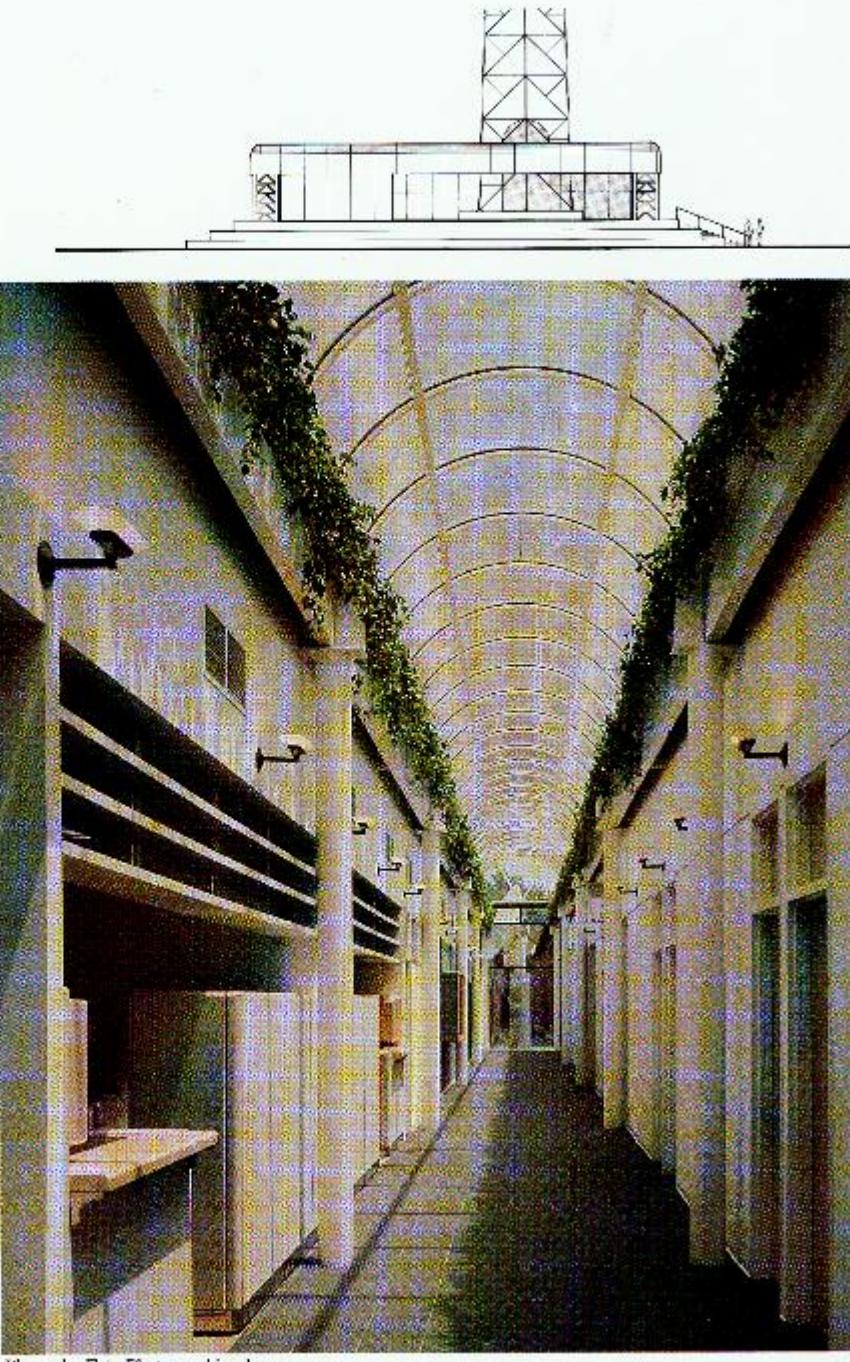
**Landscape Architect**  
Herbert/Halback, Inc.

**Owner/Developer**  
KATZ Broadcasting

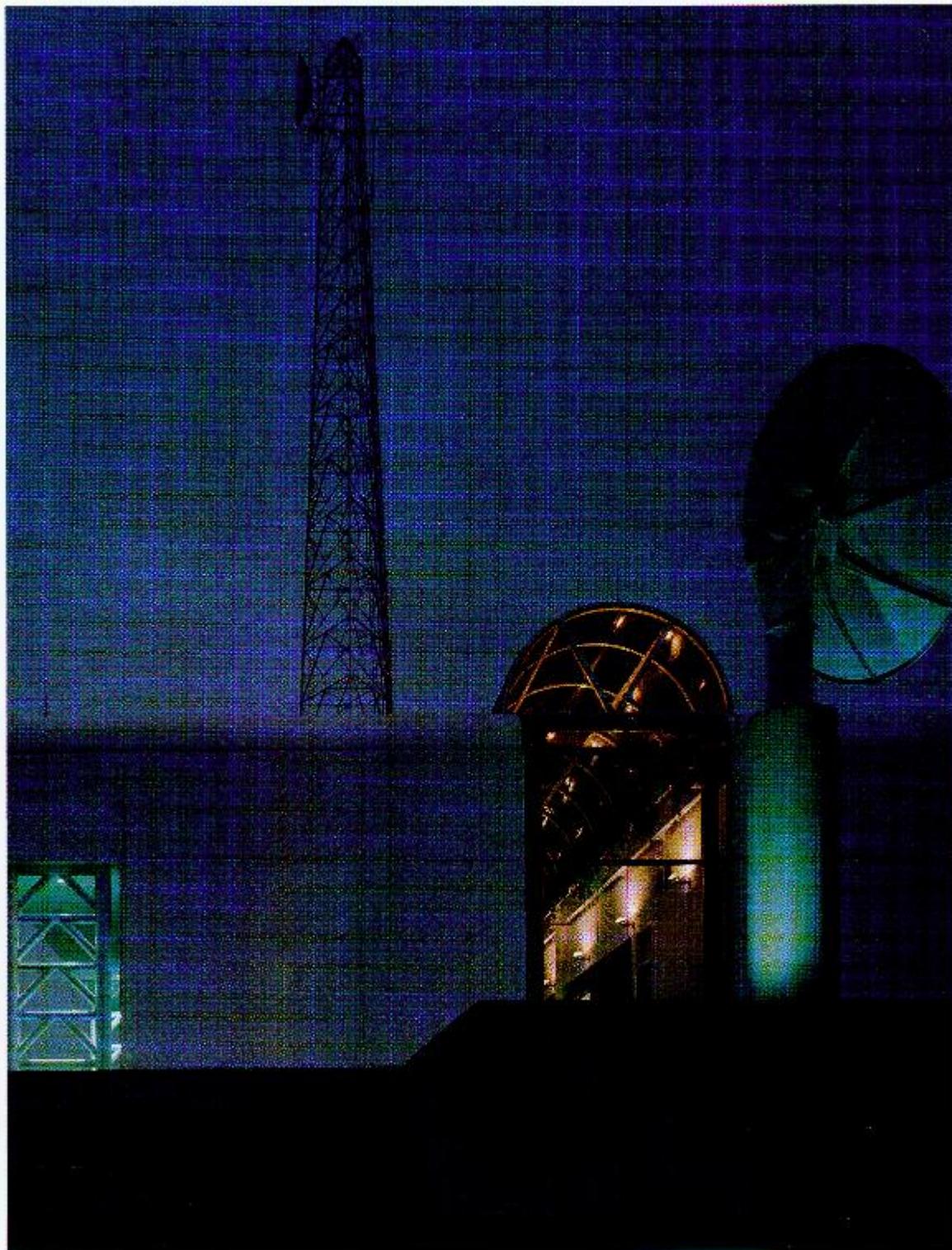
**General Contractor**  
R. C. Stevens

This broadcast facility and corporate office for a radio station is steel frame construction on a concrete slab. It utilizes synthetic stucco wall and fascia panels, painted steel truss columns and fixed glass in aluminum frames. The truss columns are designed to withstand hurricane force wind. There is a highly sophisticated electrical grounding system for tower, plaza and building. The two significant components of the station, the 200 ft. tower and the 12 ft. diameter satellite dish, are integrated into the design by means of a skylight covered corridor, which allows visual contact with these elements as one moves through the building.

Jury: "This design strikes us as excellent because of the good, functional plan raised to a poetic, symbolic level, integrating the tower, the satellite dish and the offices into one coherent piece of architecture. It does not pretend to be more than it is. The structure is well expressed and the white color is admirably suited to the Florida climate. The glass dome over the corridor borders on a cliché, but it is not disturbing."



Photos by Esto Photographic, Inc.



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## Business as unusual

### Eastwood Business Commons Tampa, Florida

Architect: The Zimmerman

Design Group

Structural Engineer: R. J.

Possen Co.

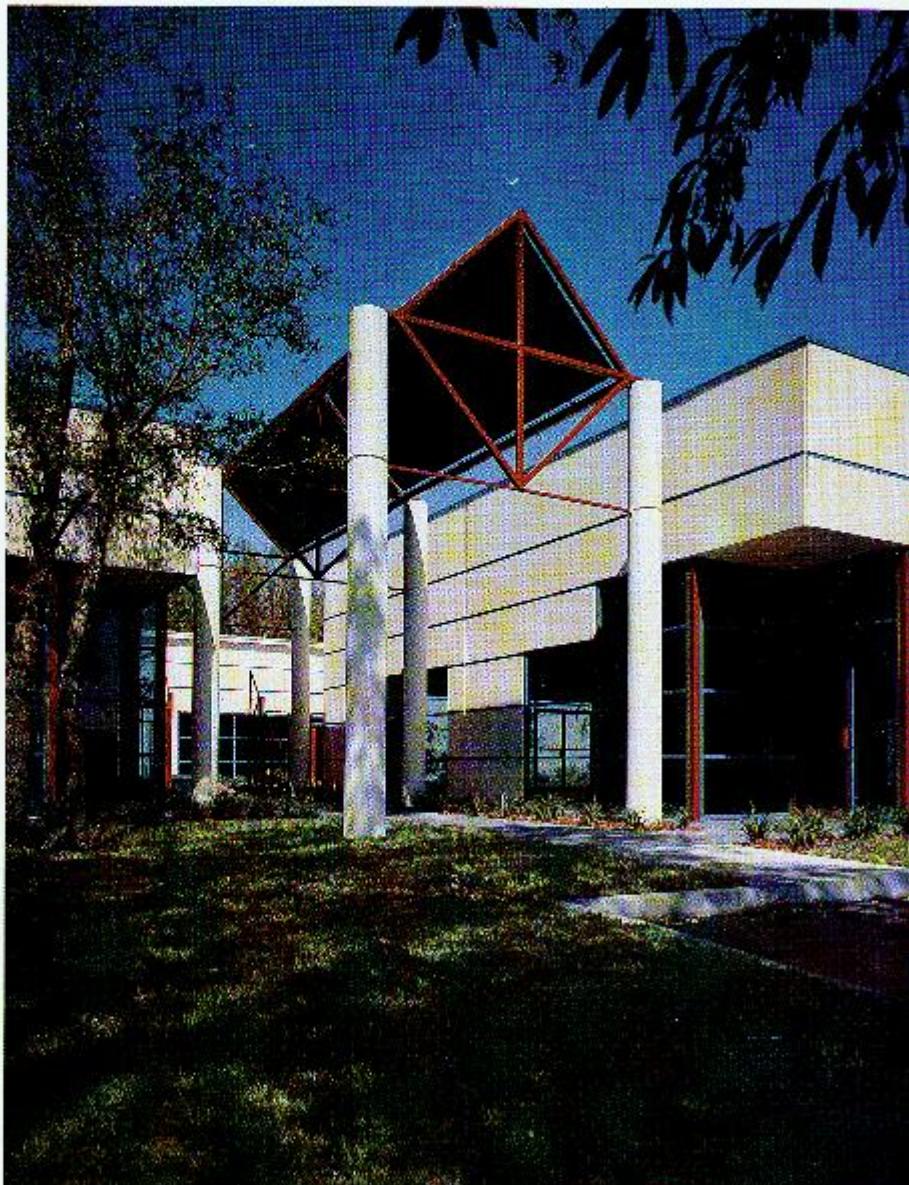
Owner: R. J. Possen Co.

**E**astwood Business Commons is an office/warehouse facility that was designed to accommodate its heavily wooded, irregularly shaped site. The design concept satisfied the owner in terms of saving quality trees and providing maximum flexibility for tenant lease spaces.

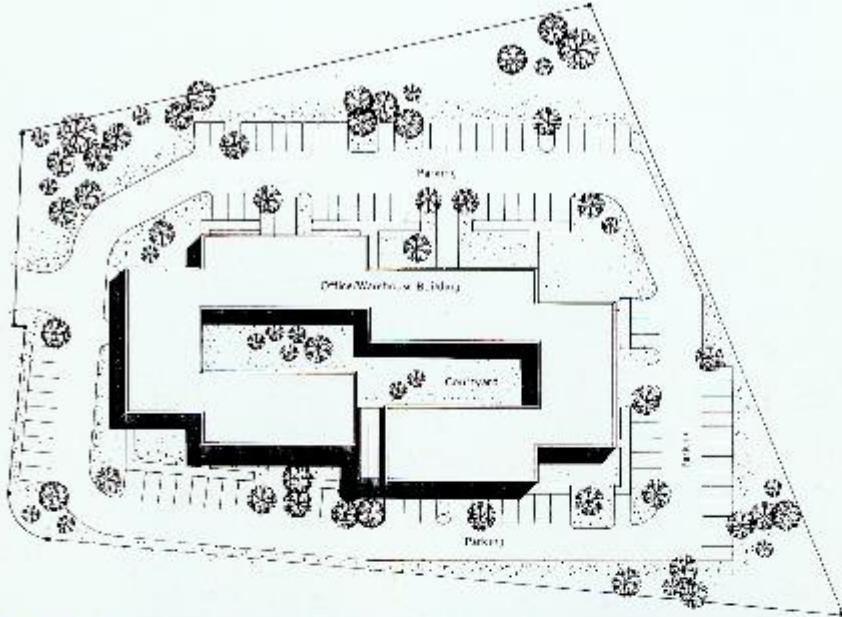
Six adjoining building modules, staggered and placed around trees and tree clusters, created an aesthetically pleasing pedestrian courtyard, as well as solving site problems. The courtyard feature provides access to both ends of a typical building bay, permitting it to be split and accommodate double loading of tenants within the same bay.

Initially conceived as concrete block and stucco, it was determined that tilt-up concrete slab construction would reduce the construction cost by \$80,000 and facilitate construction of the cantilevered panels required at the stepped glass corners. Constructed with an R 8 roof insulation system, the six-inch concrete wall panels are finished, upon leasing, with foil-faced insulation and gypsum board. Interior finishes are specified when bays are leased, or the area can be used strictly as a warehouse.

Stepped, tinted glass in blue aluminum frames create "chiseled" corners and pedestrian entry access points at the end of each building module. They also characterize the exterior perimeter of the facility. Two-inch wide, blue ceramic tile rustication bands run horizontally, aligning with the horizontal members in the aluminum storefront. Entry doors, corner tube columns,



*Eastwood Business Commons, main entry, above, and courtyard on facing page, photographed by Burg Photography. Site plan courtesy of the Zimmerman Design Group.*



and the "diamond" shaped steel tube and canvas canopy, which highlights entry into the courtyard, are finished in bright terra cotta. Overhead doors, used for delivery and service purposes, are recessed from the building facade and turned 90 degrees to conceal their appearance.

Eastwood Business Commons was completed in January of 1986; construction costs for the 25,000 s.f. complex were \$375,000 or \$21.00 per square foot.

*Anne Schissman*

*The author is an administrative assistant to the Zimmerman Design Group.*



## It's Boca . . . and the living is easy

### The Charlse Residence Boca Raton, Florida

**Architect:** Angles, Esteban Associates, Inc., South Miami, Florida

**Landscape Architect:** Kent Wicklund Designs, Inc., Boca Raton

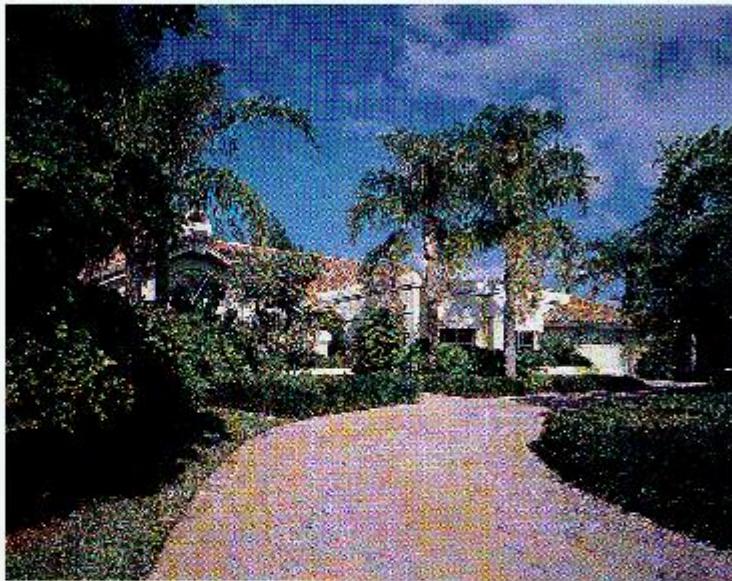
**Owner:** Mr. & Mrs. Stanley Charlse

**Contractor:** Housing Adventures, Boca Raton

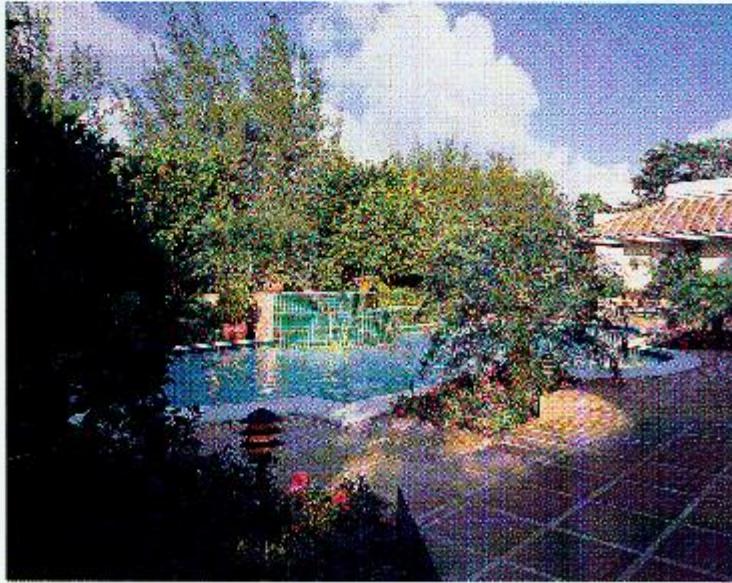
From the firm's beginning four years ago, principals Manuel Angles, AIA, and Jorge Esteban, AIA, have equipped themselves to create attention-getting designs for a broad range of clients including high end developers of luxury residential communities, builders of zero lot line homes and an array of townhome, villa and patio home projects. Recently, Angles and Esteban have begun to assemble a crack team of highly talented individuals with the skills necessary to provide a complete package of architectural and landscape services for both custom homebuyers and builders and developers of residential and commercial properties.

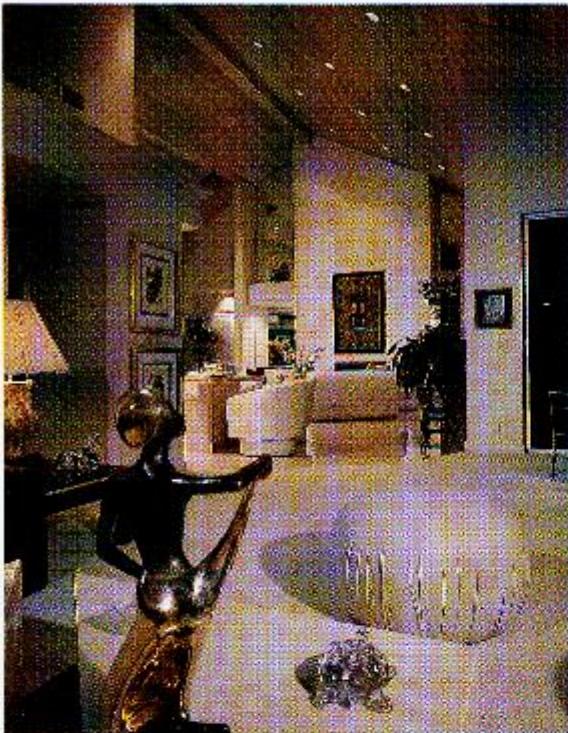
Angles and Esteban were asked by a couple accustomed to entertaining on a grand scale to design a residence for them that would fulfill their new roles as "empty nesters." The architects designed a 3900 s.f. house on a half acre site that is reminiscent of a villa in Italy that the clients admired.

Construction of the single-story house was accomplished with conventional construction techniques despite its extremely luxurious appearance. The painted stucco structure has a traditional concrete barrel tile roof, alluding to the home's Mediterranean origins.



Main entrance to house, above, and pool and patio, below, were photographed by Robert Stein, 1986.





Interior photos by Robert Stein, 1986.

The concrete foundation has stem wall footing. There are precast lintels over the windows and corbeling on the parapet walls which are capped with U-blocks. Square masonry columns and arches were used for support in the rear of the house and the patio area is so large that a steel fished plate was used to span the whole area. Ground surfaces here are brick. There is a greenhouse with glass ceiling behind the family room.

Foyer, dining, living and family rooms and kitchen and eating nook have very high sloping ceilings with exposed wood trusses. Ceilings are bleached oak and floors are travertine marble. Light floods the home through wall to wall windows with clerestory above.

The entire mood and feeling of the house and decor is one of elegance and luxury. The house also has a light, airy quality. In the

kitchen, for example, the walls end at the top of the cabinets so that light can saturate the eating and food preparation areas.

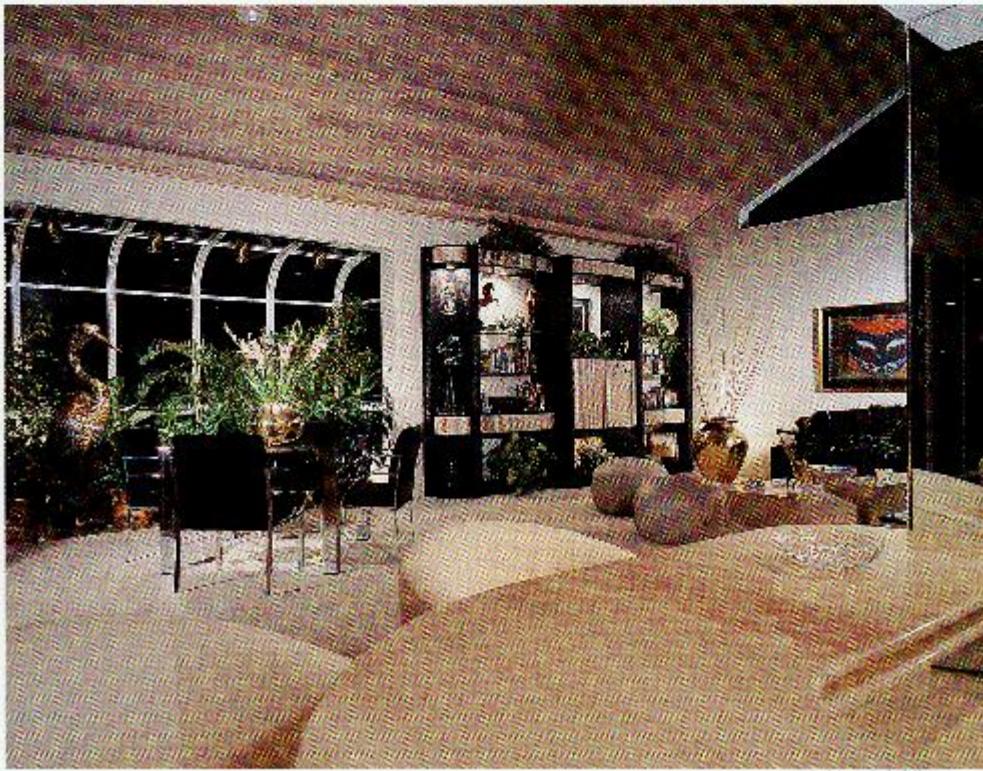
The dramatic outdoor patio is replete with Roman columns, classic archways and covered ground surfaces. This outdoor entertainment area is a virtual extension of the home's interior.

In contrast to the open feeling which the architects sought in the house's public areas, is the intimacy and elegance of the master bedroom suite. Black marble and mirrors were used in dressing and bathing areas, in addition to a vaulted ceiling, Roman tub and skylight.

The contemporary mood of the house is appropriate, not only to the clients' lifestyle, but to the climate of the region as well.

*Susan Bishopric*

*The author is a writer for Susan Gilbert & Co. in Coral Gables.*



## Greenleaf and Crosby Restored

### Greenleaf and Crosby Building Additions & Renovations Jacksonville, Florida

**Architect:** Kenneth R. Smith,  
AIA Architects

**Consulting Engineers:**

**Structural**—Gomer E. Kraus  
& Associates, Inc.; **Mechanical**  
**and Electrical**—Van Wagenen &  
Beavers, Inc.; **Office Space**

**Planning**—Design Environment  
Corporation

**Interior Design:** Catlin  
Interiors, Inc.

**Lobby Interior Design:**

Covington-Young Designers,  
Inc.

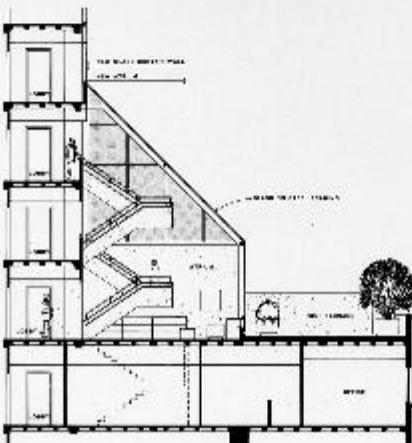
**Owner:** Greenleaf Associates,  
Ltd.

**General Contractor:** Wesley of  
Florida, Inc.

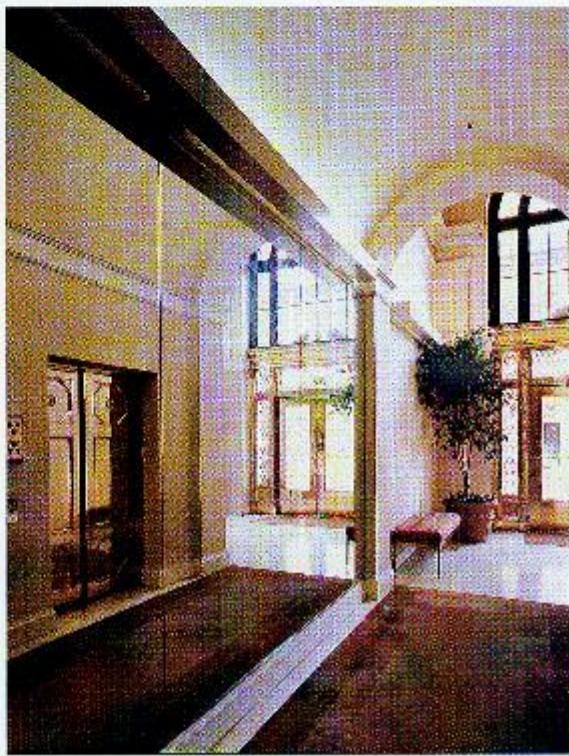
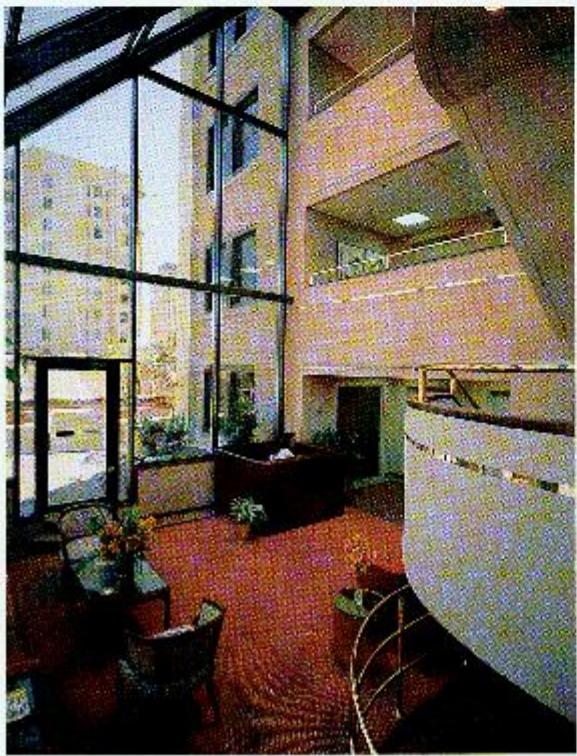
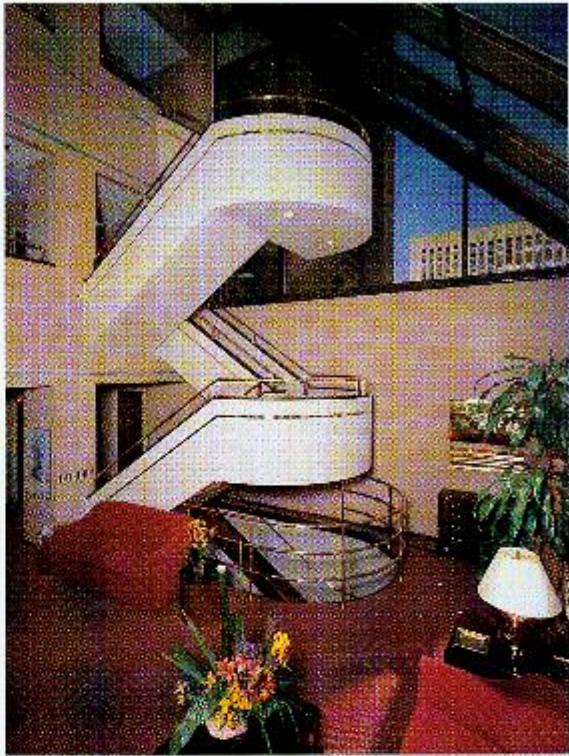
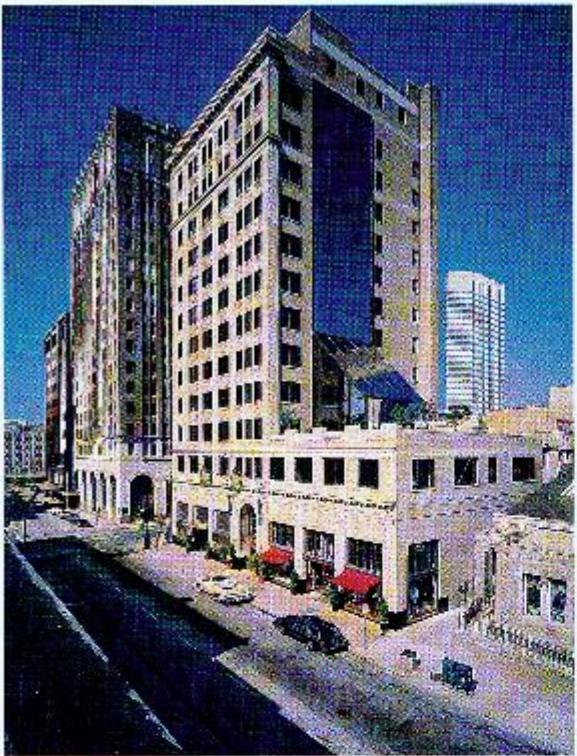
The Greenleaf & Crosby Building, originally constructed in 1926, was completely renovated and a new glass enclosed atrium was added on the former third floor roof area. The atrium physically and visually connects the second through the fifth floors, occupied by the Commander Legler law firm, and serves as the reception area for the law firm while offering a common circulation path and means of communication between the various floors.

The original building, designed by Marsh & Saxelby Architects, was designed to permit the twelve-story tower to be expanded over the entire three-story base. The new atrium addition bears on columns designed for the future tower. The elevator lobby on each floor was opened up by the new glass curtain wall and provides excellent views of Hemming Plaza to the north.

The entire project was completed in ten months and the owners were able to take advantage of tax credits for historic buildings.



Above, photo of Greenleaf Building as it looked in 1926. Photo courtesy of Kenneth R. Smith, AIA. Pictures on facing page, top left, building as it looks following restoration; top right, new atrium view; lower left, new atrium and roof terrace beyond; and lower right, original entrance and elevator lobby. Photos by Davis & Vedas Photographers.



## Ideal proportions of form and void

### Beaches Branch Library Neptune Beach, Florida

**Architect:** Pappas Associates  
Architects

**Engineer:** Evans and Hammond,  
Engineering, Inc.

**Landscape Architect:** Jacksonville Landscape Company

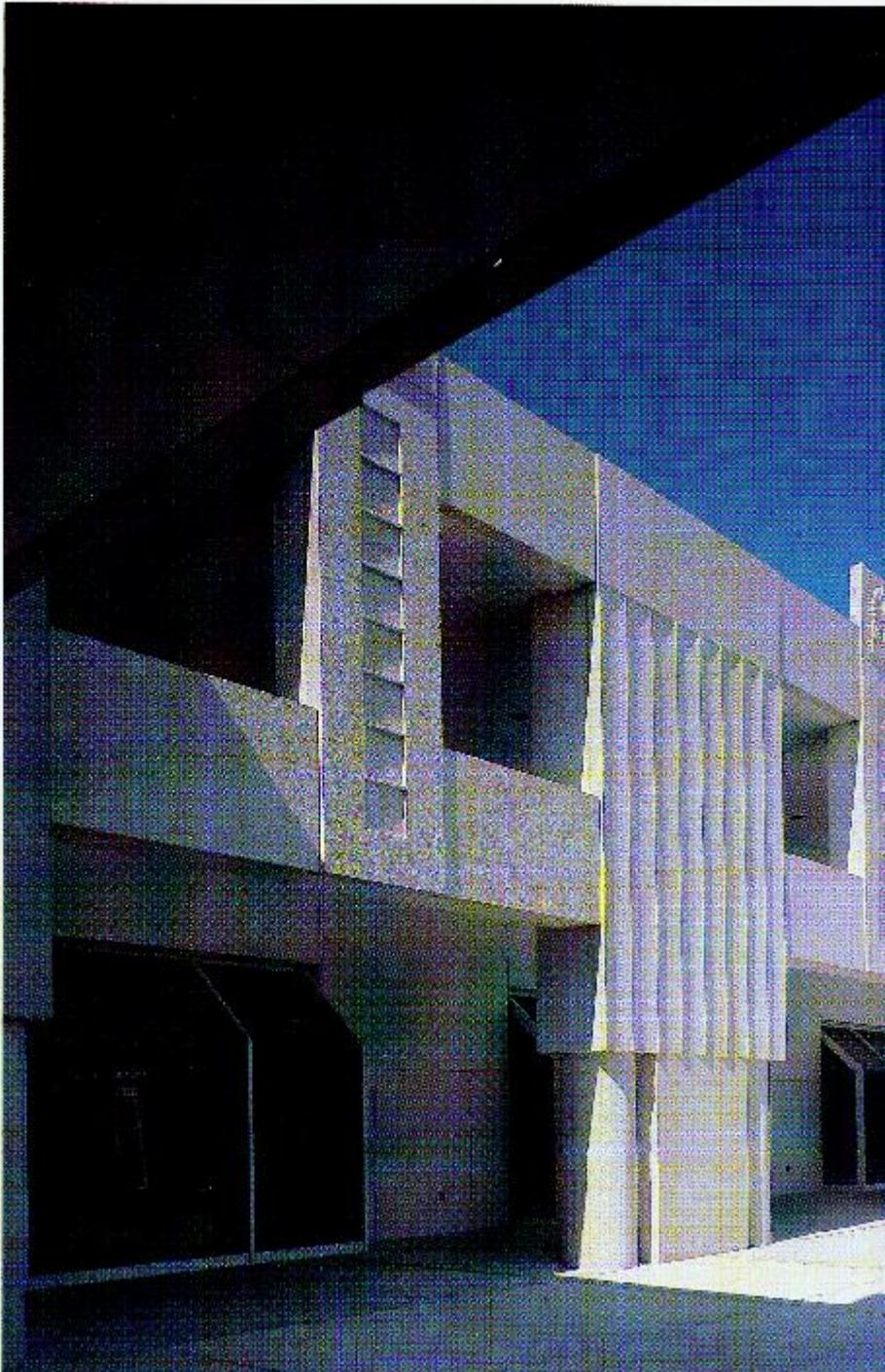
**Contractor:** Mel Smith Inc.

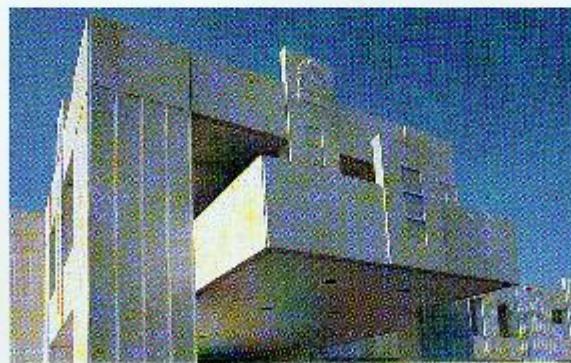
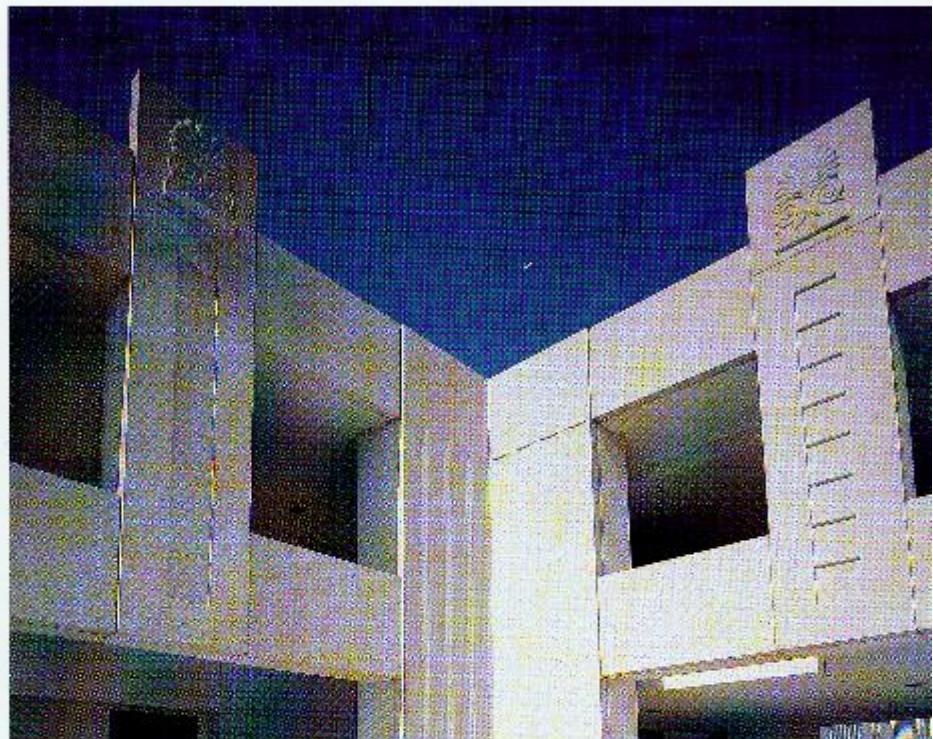
**Owner:** City of Jacksonville

The Beaches Branch Library was designed with an understanding of the inherent geometry of the "Golden Section," considered by the ancient Greeks to be the classically ideal proportion of form and void. The sides of the "Golden Section" rectangle are in the proportion of 1 to 1.618. If one looks closely at the library in elevation, plan and section, the classical proportion of the forms and voids is clearly recognizable.

The symbol of the Beaches Branch Library, the classic antefix, is seen as a flower-shaped design on the cast-stone facade. It was taken from the Greek ornamental blocks found on the edge of a roof used to conceal the ends of the roofing tiles.

The building was designed to make the most of light and shadow. The facade is constructed of cast stone which allows for maximum sculpting of the surface. The light sand color of the exterior allows for maximum contrast of light and shadow. The bright interior colors were chosen for two reasons. First, color is used to identify and separate large open spaces such as the circulation boulevard, the reading areas, the community room and the workroom and staff areas. Second, the bright colors are used to contrast the monotony of the stacks of books and to emphasize the open, airy, cheerful atmosphere.





Photos these two pages by Bob Braun Photography.

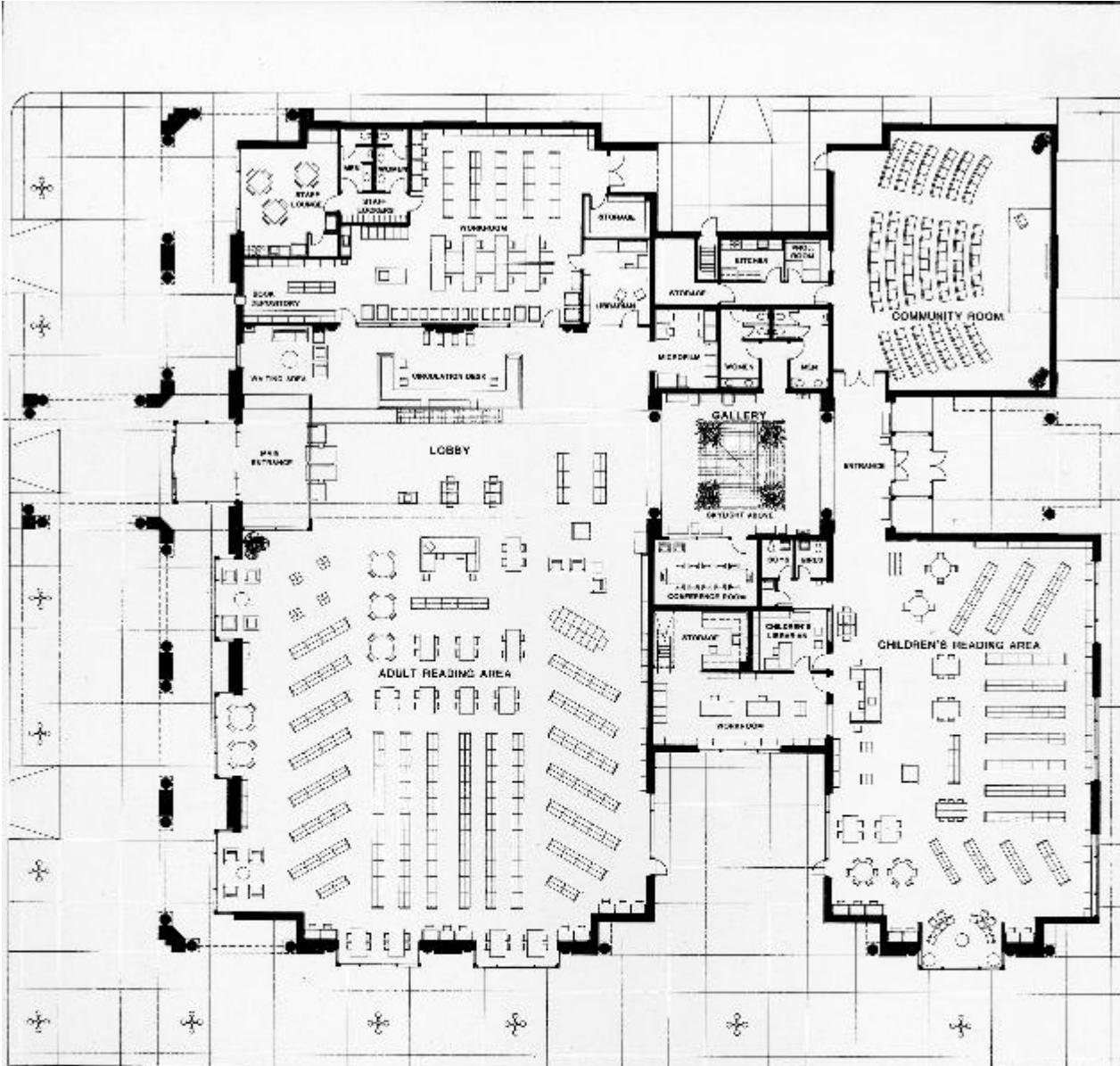
The library was built with steel frame supporting precast concrete wall panels. Longspan steel bar joists support a single ply roof membrane on light-weight concrete on a structural steel deck. The building features an energy-efficient mechanical system that utilizes an underground storage of hot and cold water during peak use. The lighting is a combination of natural, recessed fluorescent and incandescent light.

The library contains an adult reading area and a children's reading room with a combined shelf capacity of 130,000 volumes. The large meeting room seats 120 people and has audio-visual capabilities. The conference room seats fourteen. There is a two story atrium with quarry tile floor for use as an art display area. There are offices for librarians and workrooms for sorting returned books and processing new books. The library will operate with a computer assisted referencing system.

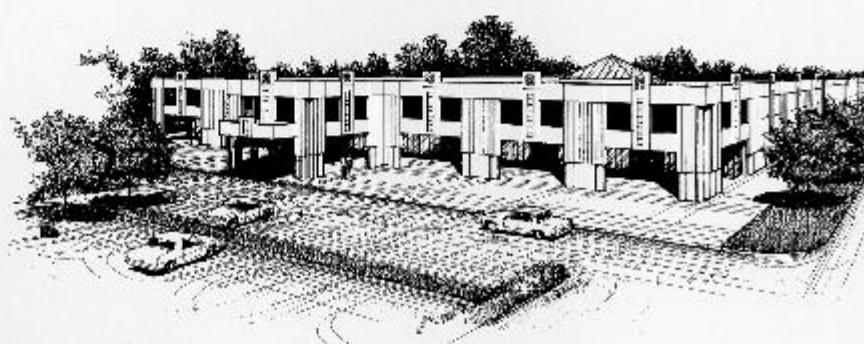
*Diane D. Greer*



Opposite page, top photo by Judy Davis, Davis & Vadas Photography. Lower photo of the circulation desk and lobby area by Bob Brain Photography.



This page, plan and elevation  
courtesy of Pappas Associates,  
Architects.



## South Florida Evaluation & Treatment Center

South Florida Evaluation & Treatment Center  
Miami, Florida

**Architect:** Wolfberg/Alvarez & Associates

**Principal in Charge:** David A. Wolfberg, AIA

**Project Manager:** Donald L. Slager, AIA

**Health Care Design Consultants:** Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson & Abbott

**Engineer:** Wolfberg/Alvarez & Associates

**Landscape Architecture:** The Ted Baker Group

**Interior Design:** Wolfberg/Alvarez & Associates

**Contractor:** Harrison/CM

**Security Consultant:** Carter-Goble Associates, Inc.

**Food Service Consultant:** Joseph D. Antonell, F.S.E.C.

**Owner:** State of Florida,  
Department of General Services

**User Agency:** Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services

This 200 bed maximum security forensic hospital is uniquely situated on a 6-acre urban site and required a vertical solution to satisfy circulation, as well as security, requirements. The facility provides both outpatient and extended care services including medical and psychiatric evaluation and counseling, educational and physical rehabilitation. It also has complete recreational facilities. Due to its location in a residential area near downtown Miami, careful attention and sensitivity was required to address the distinct contrast between a positive treatment environment and a maximum security enclosure.

As the first forensic hospital to be built in an urban area of the state, a design solution was required which would avoid negative community reaction to a prison, and instead, present a positive and safe image. Due to the court ordered closing of the existing state hospital, both design and construction of the

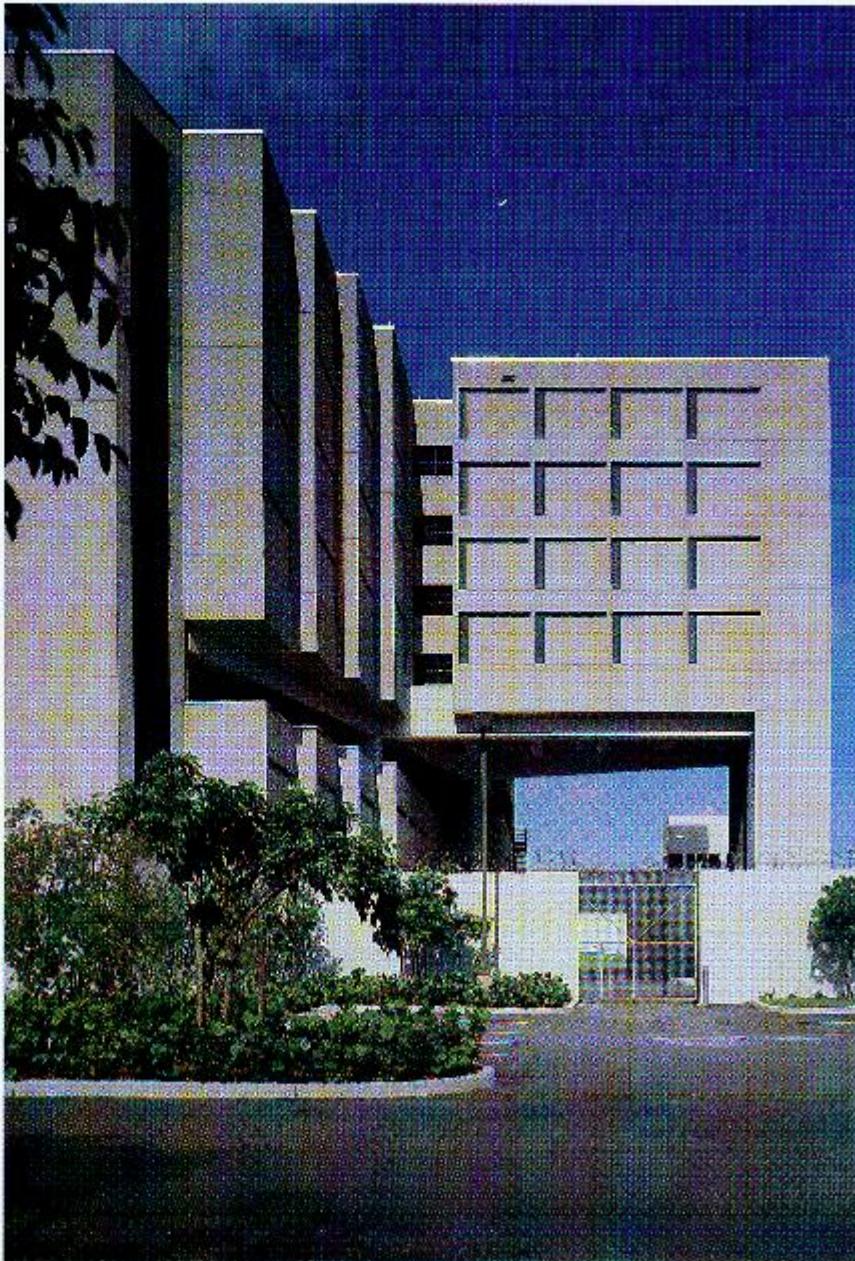
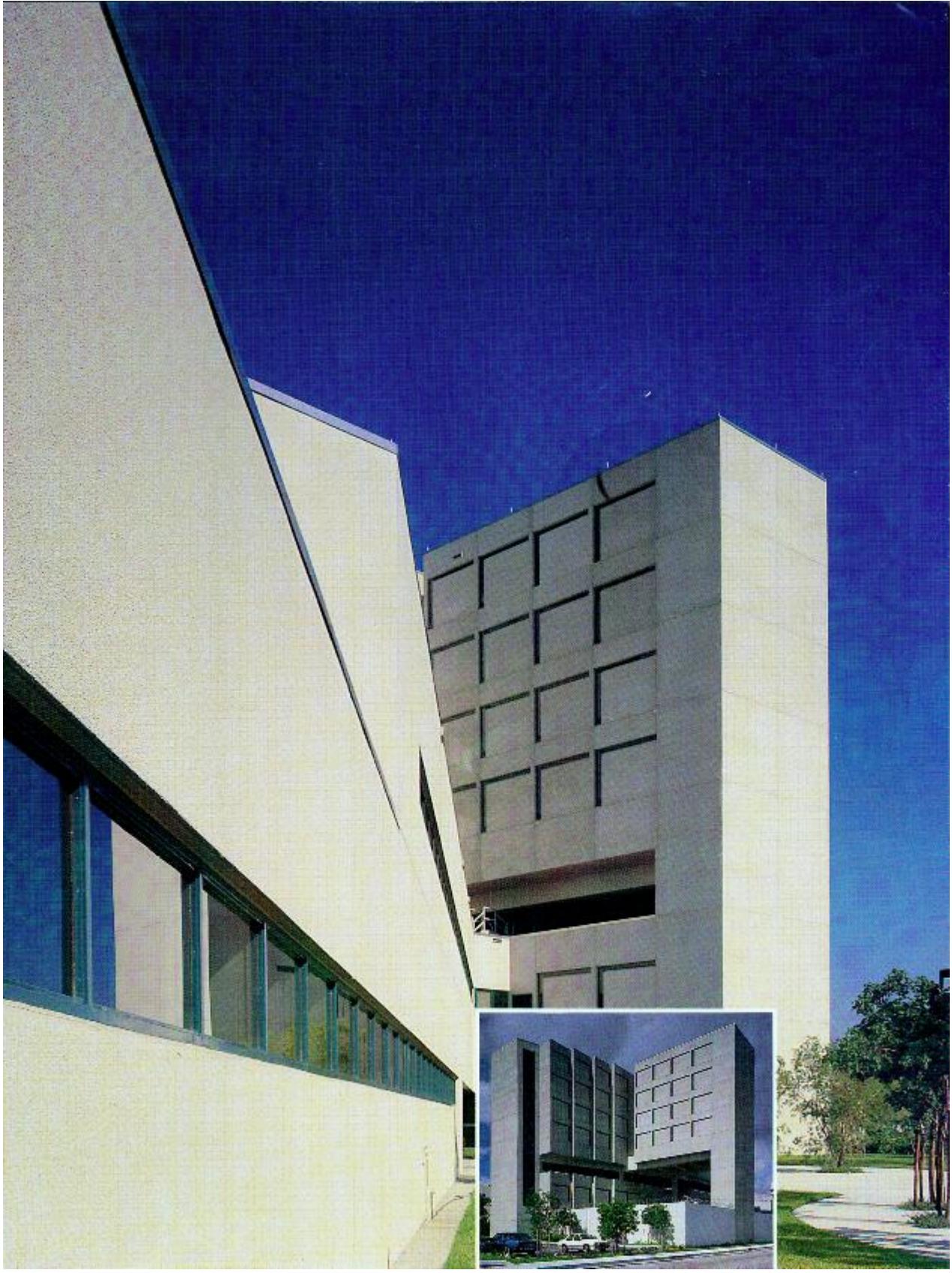
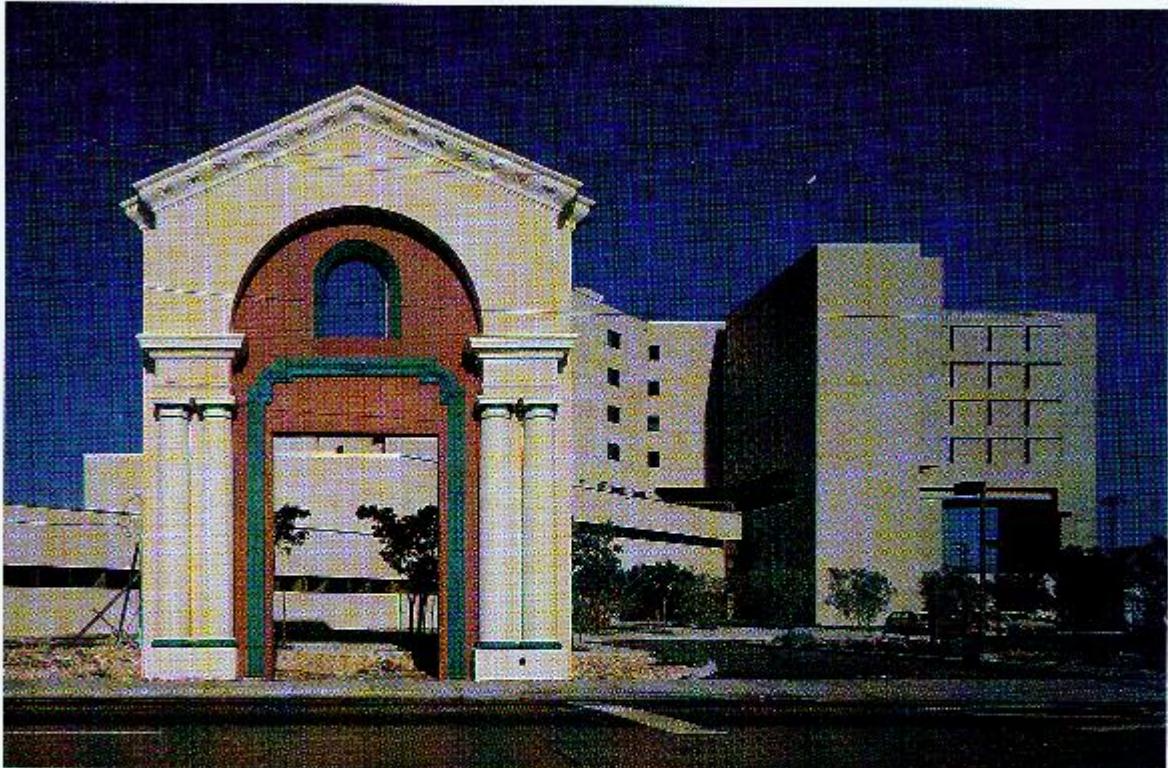


Photo by Steven Brooke.





*Historic arch which originally marked the entrance to the Seaboard Coastline Railroad Station on the same site was preserved. Photo by Steven Brooke.*

177,000 square foot facility were fast-tracked.

The design solution focuses around three structural elements including a two story support base, a raised, secured four-story residential and treatment tower, and an outdoor recreational area with green space. Eight-man residential pods form a pinwheel around a central nurses' station and connect to the treatment and security core, forming an efficient and positive interior space while presenting a strong, dynamic form to the exterior. The exterior is further enhanced by L-shaped windows which add a strong, repetitive graphic design element and lessen the institutional character of

the facility. The facility is enhanced by the preservation of an historic arch which served as the entry to the Seaboard Coastline Railroad Station, formerly located on this site.

The hospital is constructed of poured-in-place, precast concrete joists and reinforced masonry. In order to meet security requirements as well as offer an efficient structural system, the tower was designed utilizing reinforced masonry. The tower module straddles the lower base with a transfer slab at the fourth level. Directly below the transfer slab and separating the base and tower, the third level serves as mechanical space while adding another level of security.

The mechanical system employs a computerized smoke detection and evacuation system consisting of three pressure zones per patient floor. In the event of an emergency, a pressure system channels smoke from the section on fire, thereby eliminating the possibility of smoke entering another section of the facility. The mechanical room, located between the ancillary base and the secured patient tower, supplies high velocity air down to the base and up to the tower through VAV distribution. A dryvit exterior insulation system and heat recovery system serve as energy conservation measures.

Completed in 1986, this medical center employs three functional elements. First, the center is a hospital which provides medical and psychological assistance for a variety of mental, physical and emotional disorders. Second, it serves as a maximum security detention center for those patients awaiting adjudication in the court system. Finally, it stands as a facility where patients who are capable of rehabilitation are in an environment which is conducive to treatment.

*Mark H. South*

*The author is Director of Public Relations for Wolfberg Alvarez and Associates.*

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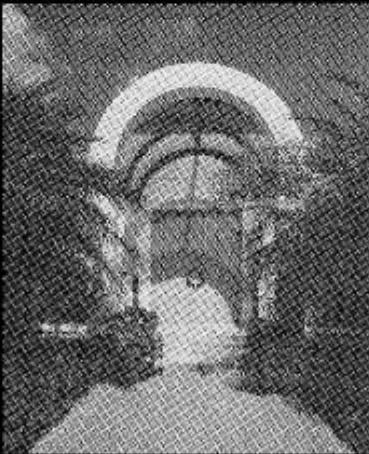
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## Architecture: A rationalist approach

by J. Robert Hillier, FAIA

I would like to talk about *architects* and *stylists*. On a national level, architecture today is in the grip of a professional debate that is more lively, and yet loaded with more animosity, than has previously existed in its history.

It is a philosophical tug of war between what I call the *stylists* and the *rationalists*. It is probably similar to design debates of old, except that in the 1980s, the media is a new player — even a new referee — and is taking the debate to the public.

At a time when the profession is faced with the onslaught of a computer technology, new systems, new economics, social responsibility, and possibly a diminishing role, architecture is caught in a nostalgic throwback to reminiscences of earlier styles steeped in romanticism and humanism. This throwback is best known as the Post-Modern movement.

It is a reaction to the glass, steel, chrome, and concrete high technology that was dictated to us with such high-handed glibness in the 50s, 60s, and 70s by the architectural community. It is the reaction to Park Avenue's glass skyscrapers. In fact, those skyscrapers are the shining antithesis of post-modernism.

Style, fashion, handicraft have reappeared in architecture under the high profile leadership of such superstars as Robert Venturi, Frank Gehry, Charles Moore, Don Lyndon, Michael Graves, and the original trend-setter of all, Philip Johnson of AT&T-Chippendale fame.

The counterpart of the postmodern stylists are what I call the rationalists — a group of architects that might seem traditional with their pragmatic, problem/solution directed work, represented by such firms as Kevin Roche, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Mitchell-Giargola, and The Architects Collaborative.

Tom Wolf's book, *Bauhaus to OverHouse*, addresses the dynamics of how these styles are conceived, born, nurtured, propa-

gated, and then discarded — stylistic tidal waves orchestrated by various elite artistic establishment groups, including the Bauhaus, the International School, the New York Five, the New York Press, and Philip Johnson himself.

With each new generation there are bound to be new styles but, as the media identifies, promotes and eventually discards each style at an ever-increasing rate, the bulk of the profession, in fear of being left behind, is forced to create something they do not necessarily understand, do not necessarily like, and, in fact, do not always do very well . . . all in an effort to respond to a media-sensitive clientele that demands "the latest thing."

In today's world of instant communication, *style* and its normal life-cycle are short-lived phenomena . . . it's "life in the fast lane."

*"With trends now coming almost as strong and as fast as those in cosmetics, music, and jeans, cornice lines rise and fall as fast as hem-lines and some buildings are being designed with about the same short-term commitment."*

But building is not a short-lived news story. Buildings are permanent structures, constantly influencing us. Unlike last year's dress, we cannot hang last year's building at the back of the closet.

The turquoise green art deco McGraw Building in New York is a wonderful example of a great building that was left behind in the real estate market because of that "hideous color."

The later, more classic but less "stylish" Seagram's building continues to soar in value and command one of the highest rents in Manhattan.

With all of this emphasis on style and its constant and rapid revision, the architectural profession finds itself under unpre-

cedented pressure to perform or respond. But the profession is confused about its mission, a mission which really should transcend issues of style.

*Time Magazine* has lamented the blurred difference between design and fashion. *"Design* is supposed to combine the practical and economical with a dash of artistic flare so that the result is pleasant, perhaps even a joy to use and behold."

Architecture produced by design should express reasoned resolution of all client needs. It should be the balanced result of all the forces at work on it, not merely an acquiescence to "style." Those forces are very simple and at the same time very complex. They have varying strengths and priorities. A good architect is able to identify all these forces and weigh each one of them. They include such basic elements as site, gravity, heat, cold, the budget and more complex issues involving sociology, economics, demographics, and even politics. Many forces such as these latter four, are quite transient, yet the architecture they mold is permanent.

So one can take the view that architecture is a solution to client needs in the context of all of the forces at work in a "universe" that includes the client, his architect, and the solution itself.

This is the rationalists' approach: identify the priorities, the controlling and influencing forces and organize and balance them in their proper and effective place in a design.

I recall with great fondness my former architectural professor, Jean Labatut, who taught that a design was valid only if there were ten good reasons for it being so . . . and one of those reasons could not be, "I like it that way."

However, at the end of all those rational arguments, he always pushed you and your design to a point beyond the simple intellectual solution to a programmed need. He asked your intellectual and rational design to elicit emotional "after-burners." That was

the ultimate "home run": ten good reasons why and an eleventh one that said that it would be great for mankind.

So here we are with the call for style and fashion on one side, and the call for pragmatism — ten good reasons — on the other. What is today's architect to do?

I have always viewed architecture as a reflection of its time. Buildings have always been the permanent record of different societies. We reconstruct the picture of Egyptian life from its pyramids and its temples. Greek idealism, Roman imperialism, the dark mystery in the upper reaches of the Gothic cathedrals, the richness of the Renaissance, the dynamics of the Manhattan skyline: each architecture tells the story of its time.

Each architect responds to the forces as prioritized by his client and the changing social, technical, and economic conditions in which he was working. Is today's architecture confused because, perhaps, the times are confused? Are the trends and styles moving so quickly that there is little time left for deliberation or contemplation?

Surrounded by fickle public opinion, today's fashioners of brick and mortar risk the fate of the rock superstar or jeans designer, who are big news today until "styles" change. But buildings are not the essence of the "hit parade" or the latest denim-clad model peering out of the television tube.

If architecture is the balance of all forces at work on it, and if architecture is a reflection of its time, then I would say that the profession today is as responsive to today's society as in previous times. Today's society, the age of advertising, the age of media, the age of superstars and throw-away plastic containers, is telling us what it wants designed.

After the cacophony of current trends has moved on down the block to the next generation, today's buildings will still be standing, responding, serving, and perhaps even leading by

providing some social stability.

Put aside the drawings, the renderings, the colors and the calculations. It is the social formula expressed by Winston Churchill "We shape our houses, and our houses shape us" that will prevail and for which the

profession of architecture will be held accountable.

One would hope that the trends of style will soon settle down and architecture can get back to the business of architecture as rational problem solving, done with style.

*J. Robert Hillier, FAIA, is President and CEO of the Hillier Group, the sixth largest architecture firm in the nation with offices in Princeton, N.J., and Tampa, Fla.*

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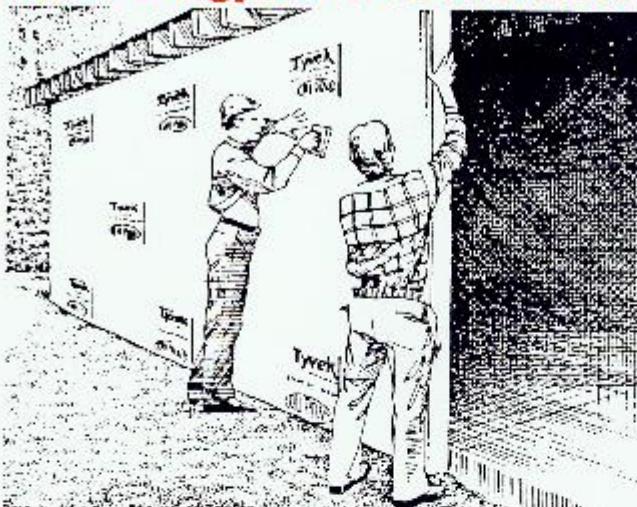
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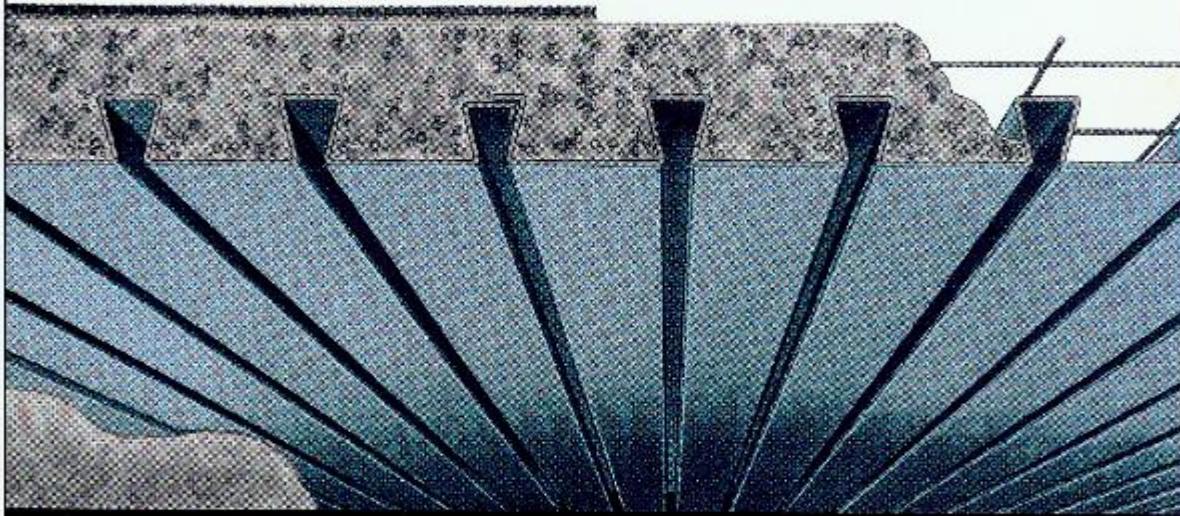
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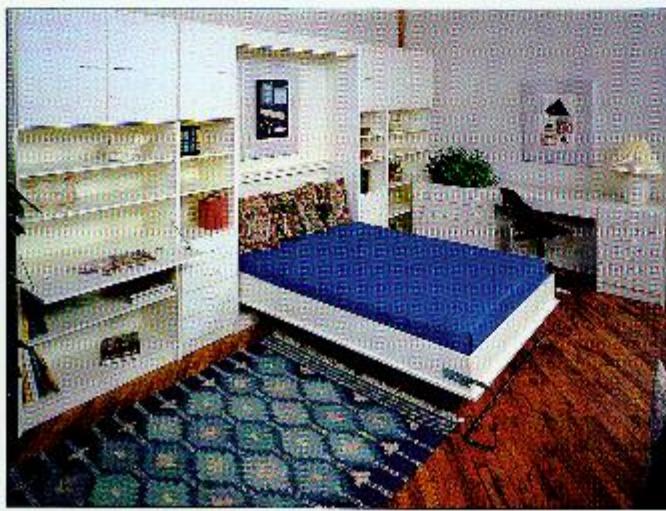
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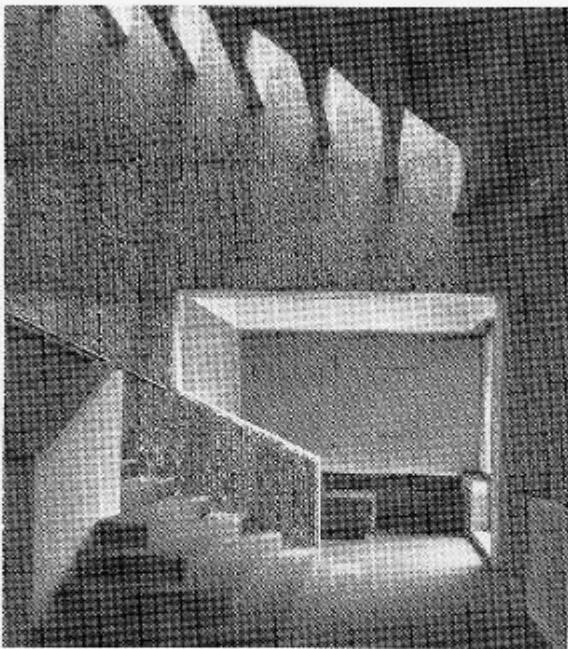
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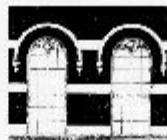


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