

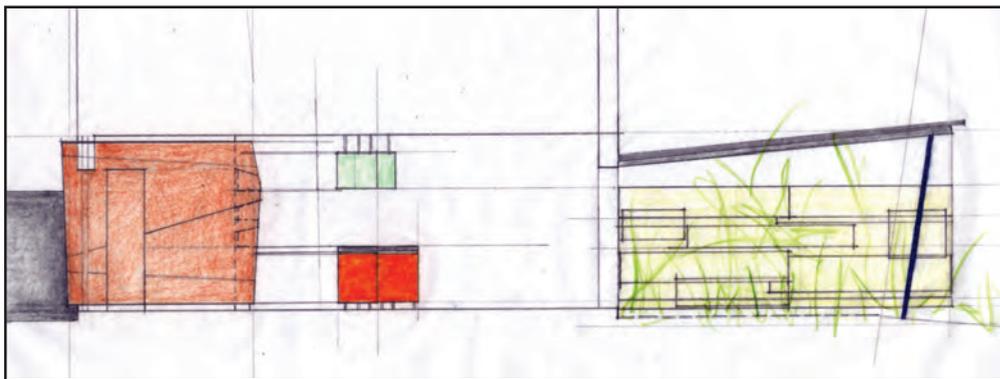
# Tropic

LAUDERDALE LIVING & DESIGN

OCTOBER, 2011



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# Tropic

LAUDERDALE LIVING & DESIGN

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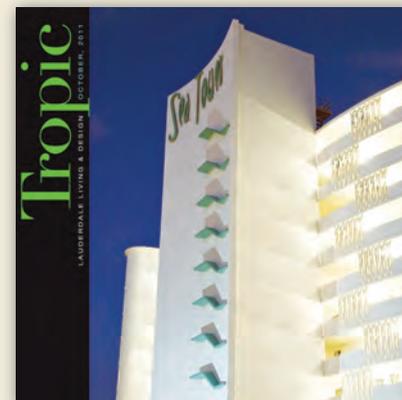
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## ON THE COVER:

One of Fort Lauderdale's most architecturally significant structures, Sea Tower reflects a regional take on Modernism in its highest form. See page 21 to learn more.

Photo: Myro Rosky

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## Connecting the dots... once again.

To say that Fort Lauderdale is an enigma is an understatement. This land, with its 200 miles of idyllic waterfront on the one hand and 300 miles of painfully slow traffic on the other, is very hard to explain to an outsider. Quite often it is misunderstood by the very people who call it home. As we rush through our days of work, appointments or errands, we often race past the very things that make this city exceptional, without even giving them a passing glance.

*Tropic Magazine* hopes to change all that. For its dedicated readers, *Tropic* is going to open doors for you – doors you never dreamed existed and doors you've forgotten altogether. All this without leaving your own back yard. You see, the Fort Lauderdale we know of is one full of good design, great food, wonderful nature and fantastic architecture. Unlike other cities, it is not always obvious and is in many cases undervalued or unappreciated. The thrill of discovery here is half

the fun. In Fort Lauderdale, when you find an incredible detail in a building or a wonderfully prepared meal, it's a find. And for those of us who value these experiences, the city becomes one great big treasure hunt. We celebrate these things that make Lauderdale special and guard them fiercely.

*Tropic* intends to be a guide to – once again – connect the dots for you. This sort of periodical has been missing for some time in Fort Lauderdale, and it is a source that is desperately needed. Planning on remodeling a house or building new? *Tropic* will steer you towards this city's smartest new architects and designers. Need to know the difference between the Harbor Beach and Bal Harbour neighborhoods before you settle on a house? *Tropic* will give you the low down. Want to keep up with what's happening in the arts? We'll be your faithful guide.



The editors and contributors sincerely hope you will make *Tropic* your go-to journal. We'll be publishing monthly, in season, from October through April. This magazine – we hope – will be dog-eared, talked about, passed along and tagged endlessly with Post-It notes, but hopefully, never thrown out. If we succeed in creating a publication that makes Fort Lauderdale a better place to live, a magazine that says in no uncertain terms – *this is my Fort Lauderdale* – then we will have succeeded. We look forward to having you join us for our inaugural season!

John T. O'Connor  
**Editor-In-Chief**

FLORIDA IS A STRANGE AND (SOMETIMES) WONDERFUL PLACE. Due to the throwaway culture nurtured in the 70s and 80s, a lot of what made this region so special has been quite literally demolished and paved over. But with the growing recognition of what makes Florida, and Fort Lauderdale in particular an interesting place to live; regional design, waterfront living and so on, renovations and transformations are now often seen as the best use for existing structures. Don't demolish – just polish it all up, rearrange the parts and add to it to create something of our time.

While interiors may morph and change, extraordinary neighborhoods in Fort Lauderdale like Victoria Park, Colee Hammock and Rio Vista

# THE TRANSFORMERS

**Reworking outdated buildings: A change for the better.**

often ask us to develop a long-term bond with the façades behind which we live our lives.

Time, however, has a way of interjecting itself into this relationship, corroding concrete, rusting away pipes and fraying electrical wires until our 60-year-old homes fail to retain the properties of a solid, no matter how much tape and glue we use. At some point, deferred maintenance leads to the equivalent of emergency open-heart surgery. But what can emerge on the other side is a fresh, crisp home ready for sixty more years of vibrant life, and a dramatic, new way of living.

Renovation and its highbrow cousin, restoration, offer wonderful opportunities to take a building that no longer works and give it new life. They also offer the opportunity for the savvy owner or developer to revive period detail that could be often lacking in the 21st century, all without having to apply for a grant from the Gates Foundation.

In this issue we look at three renovation/restoration projects. In Wilton Manors, a townhouse off Wilton Drive gets a full facelift, transforming a 1970s cookie-cutter into a jaw-dropping beauty. In the case of a North Beach hotel that took over a dilapidated set of properties, a revamp has stoked the rebirth of the neighborhood. And lastly, a tired 1950s era Las Olas co-op is given a complete overhaul and a new lease on life.

Join *Tropic* as it takes a closer look at these three projects and see how it's all done.

# OUTSIDE-IN



Glavovic Studio  
explodes a  
70s era townhome  
in Wilton Manors

**Text** Hilary Lewis

**Photos** Robin Hill

When Patrea St. John looked for an architect to transform her 1970s townhouse, she was seeking someone who would share her love of architecture and landscape – someone who could make a fairly ordinary townhouse into a showcase for St. John’s own well-known talent in landscape. She didn’t have to look far. Margi Nothard of Glavovic Studio was already well known to her. The two had met when Nothard served on the Public Art & Design committee and St. John was a public arts administrator. Later the two would share studio space where St. John could admire firsthand Nothard’s striking and thorough approach to design.

The choice of Nothard was obvious in 2006 when St. John decided to begin renovations on the townhouse. Located just off Wilton Drive, this 1,200-square foot townhouse is part of a cluster of homes typical of their time. An innovative approach would be necessary in order to transform such

**RIGHT: Looking a bit like a German Expressionist movie set, the new facade uses a few tricks like deep window frames and eyebrows creating an almost chiaroscuro effect with light and shadow.**

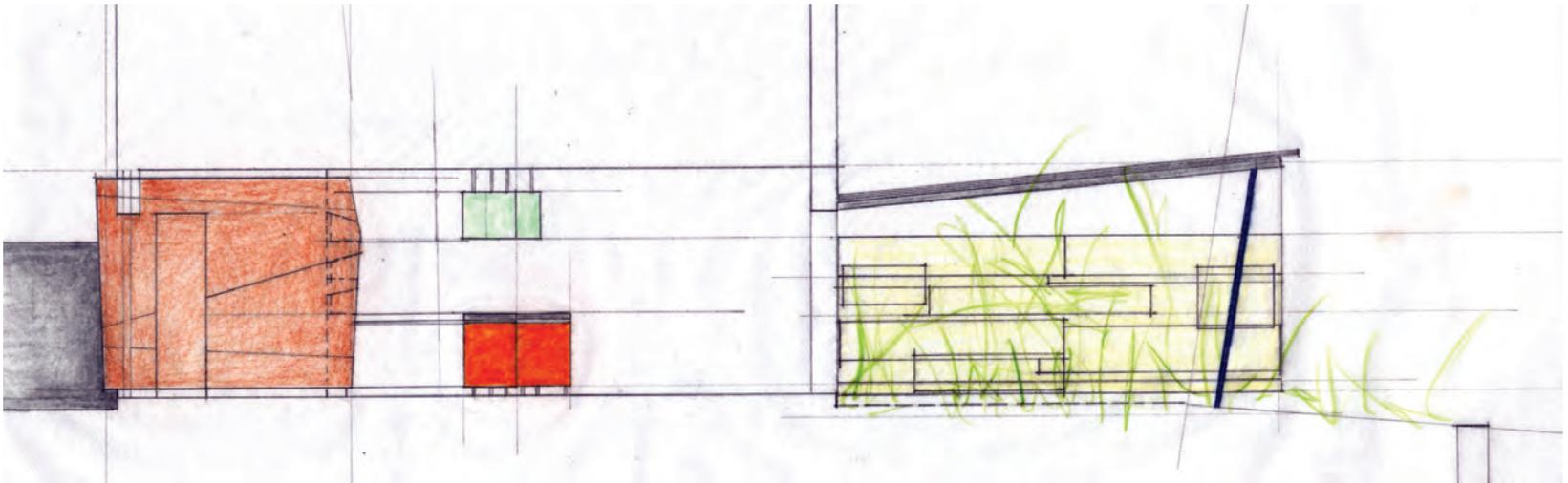


basic material into something extraordinary. Working together, Nothard and St. John married indoor and outdoor spaces that combine landscape, light, natural materials and graceful lines that produce a thoughtful, serene whole – fully reflective of its owner.

**Working together, Nothard and her client married indoor and outdoor spaces that combine landscape, light, natural materials and graceful lines to produce a thoughtful, serene whole.**

Florida living has at its core the glorious capacity to connect the beauty of nature, fine weather and gracious homes. These need not be huge spaces, as this project elegantly proves.

Space can feel ample even when modest in size. Unfortu-



**ABOVE:** Cutaway elevation drawing shows the townhouse from front entry to the Prodema-clad powder room, through the kitchen & dining to a canal-side terrace.

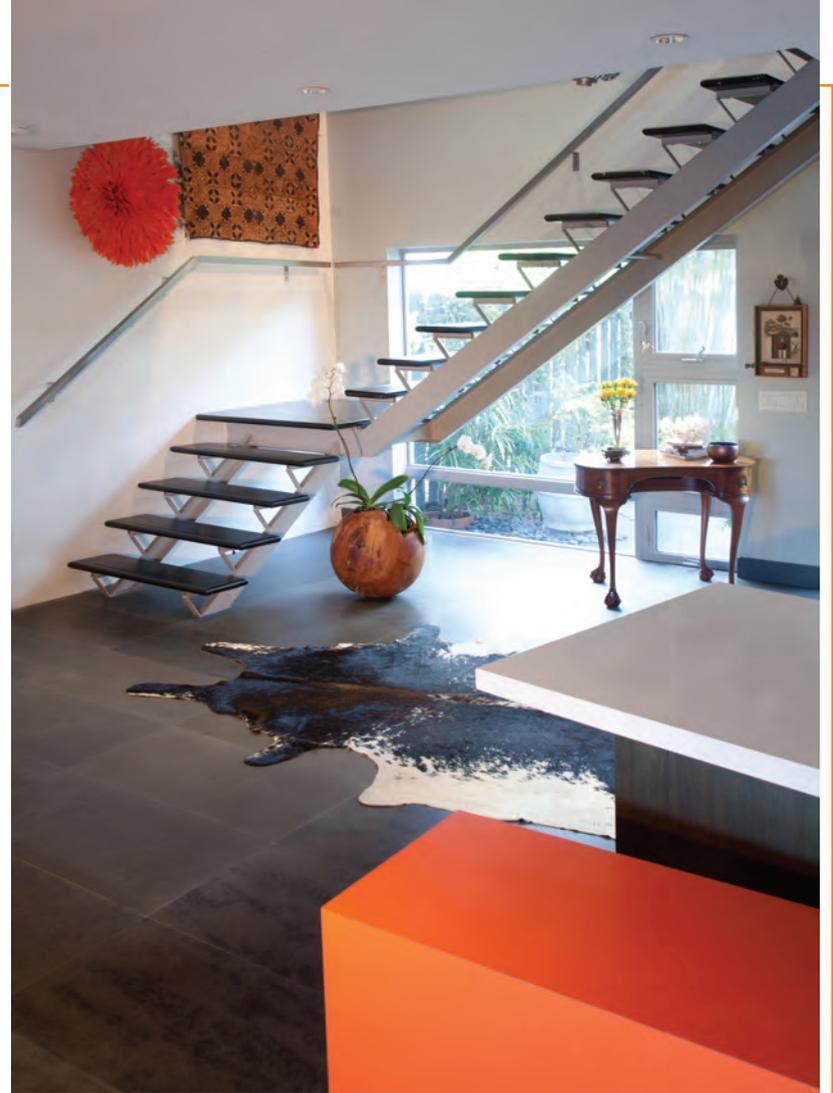
nately, many homes built in prior decades did not have that vision. This townhouse renovation definitively proves that with some well-considered re-imagining the average can be transformed into the delightful – and it doesn't even have to cost that much.

First, Nothard knew that St. John was someone who appreciates the serene, so Nothard created open space and employed clean, simple materials such as lava stone. The lava stone works seamlessly in the front courtyard and within the building. Warm wood finishes, such as in the downstairs powder room (done in a wood-like laminate – Prodema) integrate nature with the interior spaces. She transformed the upstairs from two bedrooms to a single loft, office and open bathroom that all receive plentiful natural light. Situated at the water's edge, the house now has visual continuity from outside in and inside out. Nothard notes, "We floated cabinets so that no walls go to the ceiling—instead they work as partitions and pivot the orientation."





**LEFT:** In plan form, Nothard's use of a connecting axis and continuation of materials is clear. **RIGHT:** Nothard added an open, floating staircase with simple, brushed stainless steel rail. Underfoot is a basalt or lava stone flooring.



It helps when the client can act as co-designer. And when that patron is an experienced landscape architect with the ability to envision how to remake the grounds of the house to integrate structure and landscape, you really have a team. St. John's expertise led her to develop, "a garden that had year-round interest and would not require extensive water or maintenance." Instead of an automatic sprinkler system, St. John uses a rain barrel to collect water from the roof. She entirely remade the grounds, removing almost all existing plant material, except for a single guava tree, which had been planted as a memorial to her mother. She brought in blue bamboo at the end of the entry's path, which screens the path from the building's front windows. An Asian accent is achieved by the inclusion of Bauhinia flowers. Bromeliads and wart fern are used as under plantings.

Working with nature architecturally, St. John used a cabada palm to hide the view of the air-conditioning unit and also to give height to the visual composition (located next to the car-



**ABOVE:** The use of the laminate material Prodema continues from the facade right into the interior. The floor pattern in lava stone is established and leads through to the canal side.

port), which serves as the backdrop to the courtyard. Color is achieved through the use of tropicals: Alocasia, bromeliads, caltheas, and anthuriums add interest to the garden.

St. John is someone who adores entertaining. The structure had to work both as a beautiful retreat for its owner and also as the right container for social gatherings. Nothard stressed that the goal of the project was “to connect all of Patrea’s world and people into this particular place and then to make us all look out with renewed vigor – refreshed and peaceful.” The completed project, according to Nothard, “just exudes Patrea.”

1

**BELOW:** The master suite is quiet and spare, continuing the floating cabinetry and recessed baseboards from the ground floor. The flooring inside and outside the bedroom are the same, but in the dressing area the stone is ribbed for texture.

