



Photo by Scott Barfield

## The Interview

# MARGI GLAVOVIC NOTHARD

by Patsy Mennuti

**She's a designer. She's a university professor. She's a writer. She's an artist. She's creative. She's an explorer. She's a visionary. She loves the outdoors. She's a self-described soccer mom. She's a wife. And she's brilliant and successful. She is Margi Glavovic Nothard.**

Nothard came to Fort Lauderdale in 1997 via a most circuitous route. Born in Zimbabwe, she spent most of her childhood years into young adulthood in South Africa, the daughter of a prominent environmental lawyer, middle child in the family of five. After marrying Kim Nothard in South Africa, Margi (and Kim) came to the United States to broaden their horizons and explore the world. Because you can't take money out of South Africa, they arrived in the states with their backpacks, working odd jobs and traveling around the United States looking for graduate schools in an old VW van for about a year. Nothard laughed, "We had two rules: wake up every day with a beautiful view, and limit expenses to \$10 a day, including fuel."

Nothard was eventually accepted into the prestigious Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) in Los Angeles, one of the world's leading design programs, attended mostly by foreigners in the late '80s when she arrived. As a student, she had the pleasure and good fortune to work for architect Frank Gehry. She ultimately graduated with honors with a masters degree in architecture in 1992—the world her oyster. Landing at the firm of Smith-Miller and Hawkinson Architects in Los Angeles, Nothard still kept one foot in the academic door, teaching at SCI-Arc and at University of California (UCLA). "I've always enjoyed teaching and working," explained Nothard.

Margi's husband was subsequently offered a position at the advertising firm, Hill Holiday,

in Fort Lauderdale to start the advertising agency that would handle the AutoNation account. The couple had just had their first son, Digby, and Margi still determinedly demanded, "Let's go out and try something new!" In 1999, Nothard was asked to teach at Florida Atlantic University (FAU) as an adjunct professor in the new architecture department. After the birth of her second son, Devon, in 1998, Nothard started up her own firm, Glavovic Studios with partner Terence O'Connor. Rather than developing rapidly into a large, commercial firm, Nothard and O'Connor focused on clients really interested in architecture and design.

Nothard's concentration on both architecture and design is reflected both in her professional and academic interests. Already teaching in the architecture school, in 2000, Nothard was invited by FAU's Department of Urban and Regional Planning to teach urban design. "For me, it's interesting working in the fields of architecture and design to teach full-time in the

planning department. I teach the architecture students urban design and the urban design students, architecture," she noted, "and I am sort of a bridge between the two." With an active practice, she is uniquely poised to incorporate both, and she is able to present her students with real life situations. "I urge a very creative outlook to problem solving. I don't believe that real life or academia precludes you from being creative in terms of problem-solving," she said.



Sky Lofts. Rendering by Pascal Campi of Glavovic Studio. Project Design: Anthony Abbate and Margi Nothard.

Nothard holds a deep respect for her students, knowing that these individuals will ultimately make a contribution to our world, enjoying the engaging discourse that comes from the student teacher interaction. "I don't feel like I am out there giving them information. I feel that I am directing their brains. I prefer to teach them how to think. It's more about harnessing their intelligence and creativity rather than imposing knowledge on them," she explained. The discourse and curiosity encouraged in academia allow Nothard to continually question her work and the way that she goes about her own problem solving. She noted, "It's a shared exercise for me; it's why I teach. It keeps me on my toes."

Through her involvement with FAU, she has also become active on numerous boards and committees, further incorporating and enhancing her dual role of practitioner and academic. "Working with city leaders on the City of Fort Lauderdale Downtown Master Plan Steering Committee was a great opportunity to engage in some of the challenges of the city and how it has to grow," she explained. She also served for several years on Broward County's Public Art and Design Committee, encouraging and examining the role of public art in urban spaces, and still serves on the City of Fort Lauderdale's Historic Preservation Board. "My profession-

al and academic work both involve solving the challenges of creating good city form and good city spaces," Nothard said.

Her projects are numerous and diverse—from private home renovations in quaint neighborhoods to her selection as the design/architecture firm for the Hollywood Arts Park. She was chosen last year, along with Aron Temkin, to design a wayfinding element and signage program for the Riverwalk Park through a Broward County Design Arts Program grant. "It was a small but important project, as it brought together so many components and elements into one feature in an urban space," she said. Nothard also partnered with Tony Abbate and Murray Bryntessen as developers/designers on the Sky Lofts project in Flagler Village. She is currently working with Scott Strawbridge and Fort Lauderdale newcomer Bill Burrington on a redevelopment firm, Urban Blue.

After renovating the lobby at the Museum of Art/Fort Lauderdale last year, her firm was more recently invited back to design a new exterior staircase leading up to the second floor terrace at the front of the museum, among other museum improvements for the upcoming King Tut exhibit. Nothard described, "The staircase perches as close as it can to Las Olas Boulevard, reaching out towards Huizenga Plaza, the Riverwalk and

the New River, heightening people's awareness that something is going on here." Just across the street, she is working with Bill Saunders and Bill Kroll on a Dean & DeLuca-type establishment, B & B Gourmet Food Emporium, on the ground floor of Las Olas River House condominium. Nothard is clearly excited about the opportunity to work on a space that will ultimately bring people together in a community and to a service that will be in increasing demand as people continue to move here.

Nothard, her husband and two sons live in Bill Bigoney's original house—Bill Bigoney was one of Fort Lauderdale's most notable Modernist architects in the 1950s—in Sailboat Bend on the New River. "In looking for our ultimate place to live, we sought out a place with a strong cultural environment and strong cultural lifestyle, a place that was growing (in complexity, opportunity and variety) and a physical environment that we felt good about," Nothard described. They found this in Fort Lauderdale, as well as a place to put down roots and give back to the place they now call home. Nothard also enjoys urban life and city living and takes advantage of South Florida's easy accessibility to the world. "You can go out or stay in and enjoy your local environment," she said. Nothard enjoys the outdoor Fort Lauderdale lifestyle with her family—fishing, surfing or just beaching it.

Nothard believes that there is a genuine interest on many fronts to create a good Downtown. "I think there's a long way to go, but I think we've reached a threshold in the city, and people are ready to do what needs to be done," she stated. Her primary concerns are creating a pedestrian realm that is shaded and interesting, with a strong, active street life. The pedestrian aspects must then be incorporated and interconnected with public transportation.

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## Museum of Art/Fort Lauderdale Stair

"The stair is designed for the Museum of Art South Plaza. The primary motivation for the stair was to provide access to the second floor terrace for the King Tut show. However, due to the vision and support of Director Irvin Lippman, Glavovic Studio Inc. was directed to create a sculptural and permanent stair that will serve to animate the entrance to the museum and plaza. The stair perches on the sloped plaza like a mangrove—whimsical and expressive. It is designed out of structural steel, woven stainless steel mesh, aluminum grating and glass. It allows not just for access up to the terrace, but also for viewing the city. It is located in the canopy of the Royal Palms, allowing the viewer to enjoy being in this unique green frond environment. On the ground, the bridge element of the stairs is a place to gather under, to be in the plaza and to direct you into the museum entrance. The shadows of the stairs dance on the concave wall of the museum like lines in a changing drawing, complementing the existing building." **Margi Glavovic Nothard**

