

HOME

FORT LAUDERDALE

ART OR BUILDINGS? YOU DECIDE

An Interview With Rising-Star Margi Nothard

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VISIONARY DESIGNER MARGI NOTHARD of Glavovic Studio in Fort Lauderdale is in the limelight these days, having recently completed some amazing architectural works, including the ArtsPark conversion at Young Circle in Hollywood and renovations to the Museum of Art and the Girls' Club, both in downtown Fort Lauderdale. Raised in South Africa and educated there and in Los Angeles, Nothard moved to Fort Lauderdale 11 years ago, opened her firm and quickly earned a reputation for elegant, innovative work.

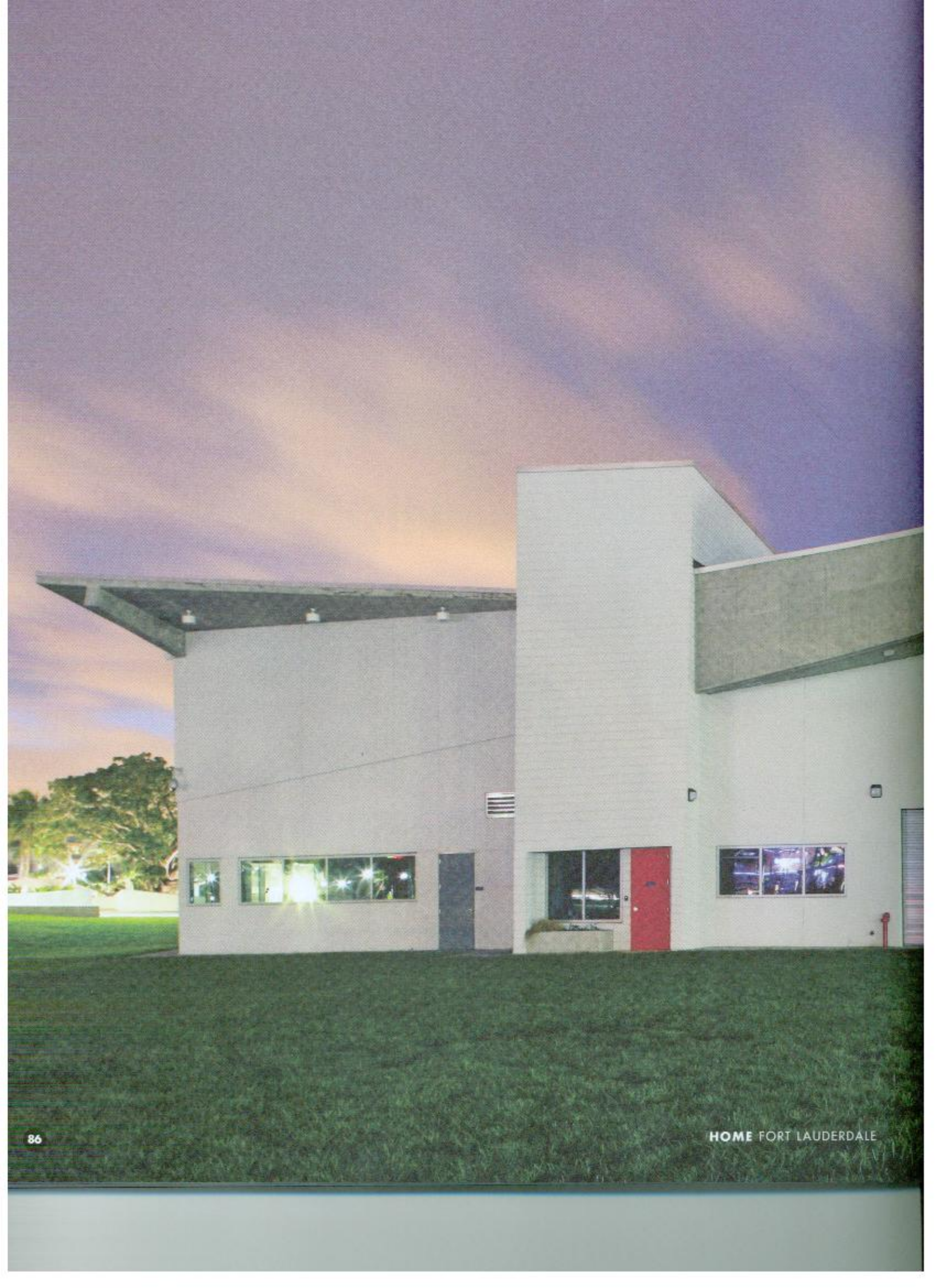
The ArtsPark at Young Circle turned an underused public space into a destination for discovery, education, entertainment and contemplation. Its new building houses studios for painting, sculpture, glassblowing and metalwork, as well as a performing arts venue. Nothard's interventions at Fort

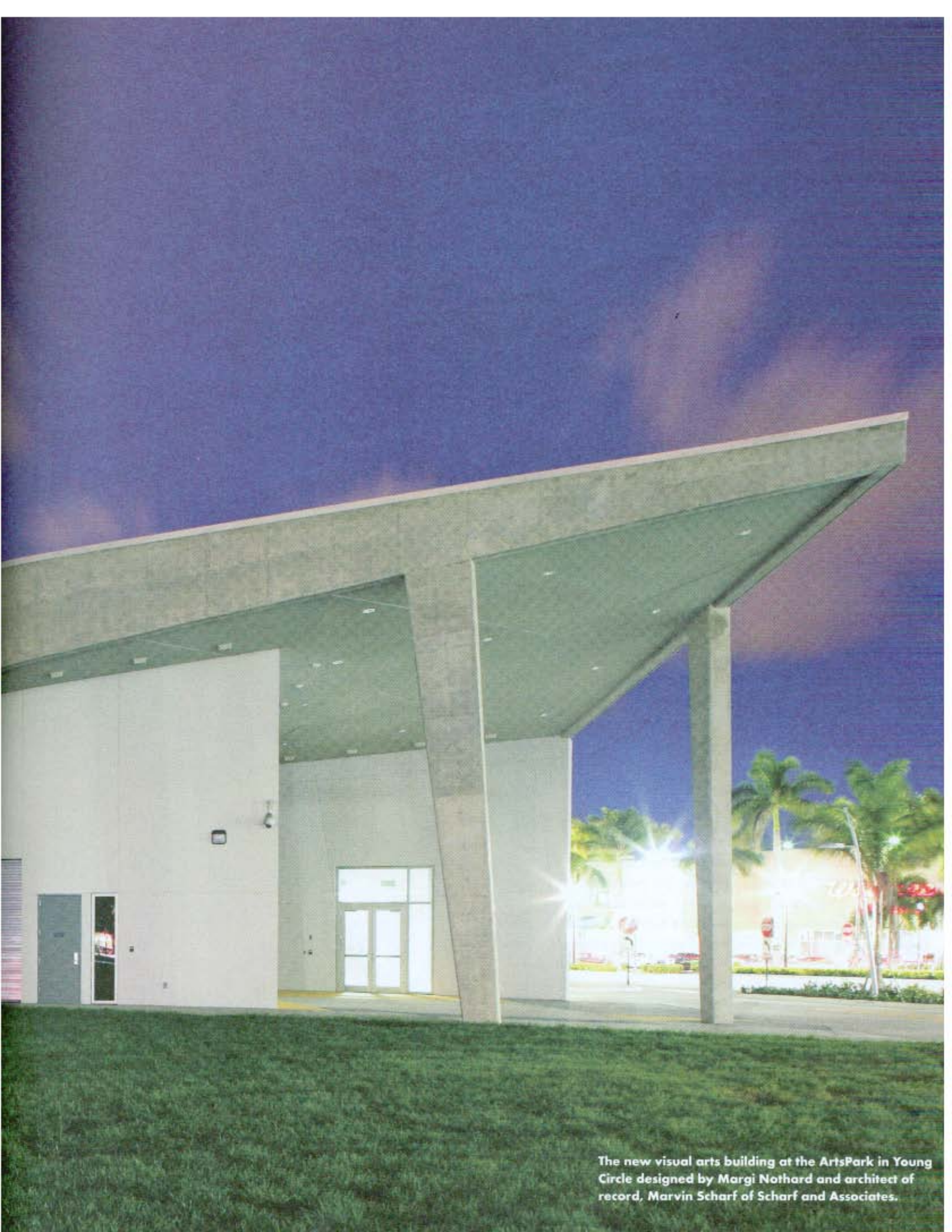
Lauderdale's Museum of Art – a sculptural staircase, a redo of the lobby and bathrooms and the extension of the Oscar Vagi-designed Glackens Wing – infused new life into the original building by Edward Larrabee Barnes that had in some ways reached its limits. The Girls' Club, which features an adaptive reuse of a storage facility into a multipurpose arts complex, provides community outreach for the arts in Broward County, with opportunities for independent scholars interested in the Francie Bishop Good/David Horvitz collection to study there. Bishop Good's studio and gallery space are in the building. Nothard gave the structure a luminous new façade and an intriguing yet adaptable interior.

With Glavovic Studio's rising prominence, we asked Nothard about these projects.



The sharp lines of the new visual arts building at the ArtsPark in Hollywood give credence to the art in architecture.





The new visual arts building at the ArtsPark in Young Circle designed by Margi Nothard and architect of record, Marvin Scharf of Scharf and Associates.

HOME FORT LAUDERDALE: Can you elaborate on the individual territories within the ArtsPark at Young Circle?

MARGI NOTHARD: I was conscious that the park had been a “passing-through” space and needed to become a respite and a destination. This could be experienced by seasons and by activities. We have seasons of colors, so different parts of the gardens flower at different times of the year, and with changes in elevation – a rare experience in Florida – I provided outdoor rooms with glimpses of places to hide and be hidden to give a sense of being on one’s own.

HOME: Did you carry over this concept of individual rooms to the new visual arts building in the park?

NOTHARD: It has a series of small rooms for specific activities, just like the park, each creating a different type of art. The expansiveness of the roof elements is to extend the sky and embrace the landscape and, literally, emerge from and into the earth. We located the windows at eye level so that the public can see into all of the studios. A second story – a community space for dance rehearsals, gatherings, classes, etc. – overlooks the park and has a northern terrace for parties and a double-height space with a small classroom and administrative offices below.

HOME: How did your past affect the final design of the visual arts building, or the park itself?

NOTHARD: I’ve brought with me from South Africa a deep love of the landscape and concern for the relationship of a building to the ground. When I started designing the ArtsPark, I started with the trees and earth and sky. The pavilion is oriented to the southeast to capture the breezes that can be funneled through the entrance as the heat is generated from the furnaces. The ceilings are raised and deep overhangs protect the audience and provide shade. We also used natural concrete, an earthbound and monolithic material that lasts forever and emerges from the ground.

HOME: Does any one moment stand out in your mind about the whole ArtsPark project?

NOTHARD: The night of the opening, there were thunderclouds. It was dark and threatening. I remember the moment before I started speaking, there was absolute silence. I spoke about the journey of creating the ArtsPark, how we had come together to have this amazing place that we could all touch and feel and enjoy together as families. It wasn’t about architecture or art, it was about human beings engaging the world together and making connections. This was truly a transformational moment. Afterwards, a family came up to me – two kids and a father and a mother. They said that they wanted to thank me, that they had lived in Hollywood their whole lives and that they now came to the park every day, and they wanted to tell me that I had changed their lives, as before this park was changed, they had never gone anywhere before. We all just stood there and hugged each other. That was the most amazing moment in my architectural experience so far.



Margi Nothard is the design principal of Glavovic Studio in Fort Lauderdale. OPPOSITE (clockwise from top left): An architectural detail of the new visual arts building at Young Circle in Hollywood; The renovated ArtsPark has become a community gathering space for local families and residents; The multistory arts building allows spaces to interact while keeping their purposes defined; A studio space overlooks the green space.





The projection surface of The Girls' Club in downtown Fort Lauderdale consists of polyester resin panels. OPPOSITE: The Bridge Stair at Fort Lauderdale's Museum of Art adds concept and context to the existing building



HOME: The Girls' Club in Fort Lauderdale is now another multipurpose facility containing separate spaces. What went into that design?

NOTHARD: I am conscious of the architecture not dominating the space of the art, about also for the need to provide or anticipate many different options as yet unknown in a less-than-2,000-square-foot space. The main element that provides flexibility is the central flexible pivoting wall that allows the space to be divided into multiple zones. This gives the curator a lot of options. Also we have the ability to have an additional show because a second pivoting wall opens the space below the mezzanine and links a third space.

HOME: The building now has a sort of exoskeleton with a translucent covering that "hovers" a foot or so from the concrete structure. Is this purely decorative?

NOTHARD: The façade is an exploration on many levels. The existing building lacked any presence on the street, and we were interested in tweaking the public's interest in representing this new gallery. It's a projection surface, turning the entire front of the building into a performance/plaza space, engaging the street and also connecting

Francie's early resin paintings with her current video explorations. We used four-by-six-foot polyester resin panels that are used in the local boat-building industry here as a cladding for the façade and lit them from behind so they transform from solid to scrim. When they are scrim, they appear as a bamboo forest, as a landscape. When they are solid, the building seems almost museum-like, institutional.

HOME: How did the design evolve for the stairs at the Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art?

NOTHARD: My goal was to respect the building by using it as a canvas and perching the stair — what we call the Bridge Stair — as a sculpture in the middle of the plaza, animating it and bringing life to the street. It creates a place under which to gather, a place to see and be seen, and it also activates another quiet part of the museum: the terrace on the second floor. Each opportunity presents itself with ways to make connections. I am always looking for that part of the picture. How does this small piece of the puzzle fit with the next piece? I also constantly look at the individual element in relation to the whole and beyond itself, the city, so it is a challenge, but what a wonderful place to rise to the challenge. ■