

Fulcrum

Check Out Time

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New Age Architecture

The Bank of America Tower

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Vinyl Group

From Bytes to Buildings

Asymptote

Hi. I'm Stephen Burks.

I'm the post editor of this issue.

This is Marcel Wanders at his best, telling the ultimate fairy tale, by taking us back to the hotel as a place of dreaming and fantasy. For visual peace and quiet, book a room elsewhere.

Fulcrum

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Strategy

ArtsPark

Words Marisa Bartolucci
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How Margi Glavovic Nothard turned a wedding gazebo commission into an arts-themed park, sparking the renewal of Hollywood, Florida's downtown.

Hollywood, Florida, may be only a half hour's drive north of Miami, but it has always felt as if it were a world away. It lacks Miami's cosmopolitan vibe. Its population is whiter and more conservative. It is a staid place. The city was built in the '20s by the developer John Young, who planned it according to the principles of the City Beautiful movement—a philosophy of urban planning that was already then verging on obsolescence. Yet it is here in Hollywood that a long neglected park in the blighted business district has been transformed into a vibrant arts-themed destination with cutting-edge architecture and landscape design. Clichéd as it sounds, ArtsPark has reinvigorated the community and revived the neighborhood. Credit for this act of urban renewal goes largely to ArtsPark's designer, who was also its organizing dynamo, Margi Glavovic Nothard of the Fort Lauderdale-based architecture firm Glavovic Studio. How this South African transplant accomplished this feat of progressive urban thinking is a story of imagination, determination and stealth.

The park in question was the neglected Young Circle, a 10-acre common in the middle of a traffic rotary, encircled by U.S. Highway 1. When it was first built, the roadway was no busier than the main street of any small American city. Over the years, however, the increasing rush of traffic, expanding to four lanes in some places, cut residents off from the park, and the island became a haunt of the homeless. Without visitors, street life around the park's perimeter diminished. To salvage Young Circle, in 2000 the community's redevelopment agency hired a landscape architecture firm to "beautify" it in Beaux-Arts style. Nothard, who was devising a master plan for Hollywood's Arts and Culture Center, was invited to



Margi Glavovic Nothard's landscape design drew on the exuberant play of plantings and pavement found in the tropical gardens of Roberto Burle Marx.

design the park's wedding gazebo. "What I was paid for was a three-day project that ended up taking years to complete," she says, laughing.

"What I was paid for was a three-day project that ended up taking years to complete," says Nothard.

After taking the gazebo gig, Nothard remarked to Cynthia Berman Miller, the director of the Arts and Culture Center, that "what the park needed was a forward-looking design with arts programming to attract residents and revitalize the community." Miller agreed and introduced her to the city's mayor, Mara Giuliani, who saw an opportunity to rebrand Hollywood as "The City of the Arts," using the new park as impetus.

Giulianti knew too that the arts could mean money. Hollywood is part of Broward County, which had just inaugurated a competitive cultural grant program to match up to \$5 million of what funds any city in the county had

allotted for an urban renewal scheme, if it included cultural/arts programming. With the support of the mayor, the city manager Cameron Benson took control of Young Circle's renewal from the community redevelopment agency, enabling Nothard to conceive a new scheme and write a grant proposal.

Nothard had never before designed a park. In planning which events and elements should go where, she drew on theories of spatial complexity from sources as diverse as Frederick Law Olmstead and Christopher Alexander; for the design, she turned to the exuberant, freewheeling tropical parks of Roberto Burle Marx. Her scheme included a visual arts pavilion with studios for professional artists and metalworking and glassblowing facilities for use by the public, a performing arts pavilion and an outdoor amphitheater.

In her proposal Nothard characterized her design "as an integrated artwork that transforms from an organic landscape into a constructed landscape, [with] the architecture as landscape and sculpture." She was careful not to explicitly describe the buildings. She knew that any real talk of contemporary design would turn off some reactionary, and vocal, members of the community and committees.

But these individuals found other aspects of the plan to attack, such as the



In planning which events and elements would go where, Nothard drew on the spatial theories of Frederick Law Olmsted and Christopher Alexander.

curving berm she suggested inserting into the landscape to add interest and layering, so that the passersby would not look directly at the highway on the other side of the park. They complained it would block “the view.” There were also objections to the sculptural European playground equipment she proposed, with residents demanding conventional equipment and calling Nothard, whose two sons were then playground goers, a “bad mother.” Ultimately a hundred local artists mobilized by Miller testified in support of ArtsPark, and the new scheme won approval.

While Nothard admits to being cagey in her public presentation of ArtsPark, she is quick to assert that she believed “we were offering the community something that they would love. We showed them renderings but did not focus on the architecture, talking instead about the experiences they would have in the park and how it would bring the community together, something architects don’t always do. This was an essential strategy in a very fractured community.” Broward County awarded Hollywood a grant of \$5 million for ArtsPark. With more fund-raising the city ultimately amassed some \$30 million to construct the park.

Although the performing arts pavilion has not yet been built—the city is still raising money—ArtsPark, which opened last fall, is already a success. “The park is used by young families *and* teenagers,” says Nothard. “There are tai chi sessions and drumming performances. The visual arts pavilion is fully programmed. The eateries along the park’s urban perimeter are livelier, and new residential highrises are now going up nearby.”

Hollywood may still not be Miami, but Miami doesn’t have an ArtsPark.



The raised pavement in the children’s playground is covered in a colorful soft rubber compound, so that children can run about with getting hurt. The pavement also features lighting along its sides for nighttime illumination.



Nothard’s cutting-edge visual arts pavilion features glassblowing and metalworking facilities, artists’ studios, and a small exhibition space.



The children’s play area features fountains and a lively multicolored geometric surface made out of a soft rubber compound.