

HOME

FORT LAUDERDALE

ART OR BUILDINGS? YOU DECIDE

An Interview With Rising-Star Margi Nothard

Text John T. O'Connor **Photos** Robin Hill

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 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. **H**