

PressRelease



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TRAILBLAZING MIAMI-BASED ARCHITECTURE OFFICE ARQUITECTONICA'S LAURINDA SPEAR AND BERNARDO FORT-BRESCIA WIN THE PRESTIGIOUS 2019 AMERICAN PRIZE FOR ARCHITECTURE

*The Firm that Produced Milestone Icons in the 1980s through Today for their
Trendsetting Modernist Miami Style of Architecture are Celebrated for Four Decades of Challenging
and Visionary Achievements at a Gala Reception/Dinner on October 10, 2019*

MIAMI, FLORIDA (September 18, 2019) — The architecture office that has stylistically defined one of America's fastest growing and popular upbeat America Cities—Miami, Florida—has been selected as this year's Laureates for the American Prize for Architecture.

Launched by Laurinda Spear and Bernardo Fort-Brescia in 1977, together with Andrés Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Hervin Romney, Arquitectonica built its first project in 1978; and within five years, the firm had completed a series of major Miami projects under its belt that helped delineate a mainstream contemporary architecture for a whole generation of architects around the world.

For more than 40 years, the groundbreaking architectural firm has been advancing a design philosophy of simply designing beautiful buildings.

Based in Miami's Coral Gables and with offices in New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Manila, Lima and Sao Paulo, Arquitectonica is a major presence on the world architectural stage.

"We are elated," states Christian Narkiewicz-Laine, President/CEO of The Chicago Athenaeum, "to honor this firm that has put Miami, as well as an advanced, sympathetic contemporary design, on the map for the cool, hip, very populist architecture that has defined Florida and other burgeoning US and international cities for several decades."

"The firm's early, legacy buildings became immediate media sensations, lauded in the U.S. and international press and used as shooting locations for fashion labels and photographers and TV shows.

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"In the early 1980s, Fort-Brescia and Spear (who are married) rejected the formalist "Postmodern Style" with an architectural style representing an ebullient, hopeful, confident, and creative version of a Postmodernism, which had become auspiciously reactionary—regressive, classicizing, and heavy in many of its more northerly manifestations."

"Like the legendary, flamboyant Neo-baroque work of Florida architect, Morris Lapidus from the 1950s and 1960s," states Narkiewicz-Laine, "this was the rigid *zeitgeist* on a magic carpet ride."

"The firm is known for sophisticated surface patterning and facade articulation."

"Arquitectonica's structures are bold in color and graphic in form and the firm has become famous for its own signature style—a dramatic, expressive 'high tech' modernism."

"This firm for all its achievements and for several decades now is laudable for its fresh approach, its visionary attitude, its forward-thinking with the invention of an architectural style that is publically popular and one that celebrates, embraces, and enhances the city, its citizenry, and its urban landscape."

"Rarely, if even ever, has an architect or an architecture office ever set an established tone, temperament, veracity, or over-all urban aesthetic that has come to define an entire city."

"Their stylized buildings redefined the city's aesthetic, elevating Miami to the modern design metropolis it is today," Narkiewicz-Laine continues.

Established in 1994, The American Prize for Architecture, also known as The Louis H. Sullivan Award, is given to outstanding office and/or practitioner in the United States that have emblazoned a new direction in the history of American Architecture with talent, vision, and commitment and has demonstrated consistent contributions to humanity through the built environment and through the art of architecture.

The award, organized jointly by two public institutions, The Chicago Athenaeum and The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies, honors American architects, as well as other global architects practicing on those continents, whose body of architectural work, over time, exemplifies superior design and humanist ideals.

The American Prize for Architecture pays tribute to the spirit of the founder of modernism, Louis Sullivan, and the subsequent generations of Chicago practitioners as Frank Lloyd Wright, Daniel H. Burnham, and Holabird & Root. It also broadcasts globally the significant contributions of America's rich and inspiring architecture practice and its living legacy to the world at large.

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Previous American Prize Laureates include: Sir Norman Foster, Michael Graves, the General Services Administration, Richard Meier, and, most recently, Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture, Form4Architecture, and Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates.

Principals Bernardo Fort-Brescia and Laurinda Spear have continued exploring and pushing the limits of their innovative use of geometry, pattern, and color to introduce a new brand of humanistic modern design to the world.

Today their practice spans the globe, with projects in 59 countries on five continents.

Over the years, Arquitectonica has received hundreds of design awards, and the firm's groundbreaking work has been the subject of exhibitions at numerous museums and institutions.

The firm's work includes projects on several continents, from projects such as mixed-use developments, schools and universities, resorts and casinos, hotels, luxury condominium towers, retail centers and office buildings to specialized projects such as a U.S. Embassy, opera house/symphony halls, museums, courthouses, multipurpose arenas and convention centers, airports and transportation centers, television studios and several bank headquarters. Projects by the firm are located in the United States, Portugal, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Holland, Czech Republic, United Arab Emirates, India, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines, Hong Kong, China, Korea and Japan as well as Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Bermuda, and the Caribbean.

Born in Peru in 1951, Bernardo Fort Brescia graduated from Princeton University where he studied architecture and urban planning and earned a master of architecture from Harvard University. He taught architecture at the University of Miami in 1975.

Laurinda Spear, born in 1950 in Rochester, Minnesota, is both architect and landscape architect. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1972 from Brown University and a Master of Architecture from Columbia University in 1975. In 2006, she finished a Master of Landscape Architecture from Florida International University. She has designed products for firms such as Dune, Wolf Gordon, and Hickory Business Furniture.

Though she has largely remained out of the spotlight, Laurinda Spear has been a driving force in both architecture and landscape architecture for decades as the co-founder and principal of both Arquitectonica and ArquitectonicaGEO.

"Laurinda Spear, while still a student at Columbia," states Narkiewicz-Laine, "worked with Rem Koolhaas on the concept of the Pink House."

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“Koolhaas was at the same time theorizing the surreal, irrational nature of modern architecture and urbanism, and the wild and evocative possibilities that present themselves when we build high, that resulted in his book *Delirious New York*.”

“Nowhere was this notion of thrilling unexpected contrasts summarized as perfectly as in the Arquitectonica’s first icon project, The Atlantis, the 20 story, 96-unit condominium apartment building on Biscayne Bay south of downtown Miami (1980-1982), with its famous void that went on to be part of the title sequence, and a filming location, for that other mythologizing vehicle for the city, the TV show *Miami Vice*.”

“The Atlantis,” continues Narkiewicz-Laine, “was immediately inspirational to every architecture student during the decade, including myself.”

In Miami, Arquitectonica took up these newfound freedoms with gusto, and did it differently than almost anyone else, deploying architectural elements in evocative, surreal, and highly charismatic ways that might have had little to do with the threadbare functionalist arguments of late Modernism, but functioned brilliantly upon the imagination of the press, Miamians, and clients alike.

The firm’s first commission, the Pink House (1976-1978), combined the dreamlike abstractions of Giorgio Di Chirico and the hot and sensual colors of Mexico’s Luis Barragán. It had surreal moments, like the central feature of the facade being a brilliant blue porthole revealing the dalliances of swimmers in the pool behind—a direct reference back to Lapidus, who did the same for his underwater bar at Miami’s Eden Roc Hotel (1955-1956).

The mirror-faced, primary-color-adorned Atlantis was the first of the practice’s large projects. It was finished in the same year as the Portland Building by Michael Graves, another icon of the period, and even the briefest of comparisons between the two reveals just how radical and refreshing was Spear and Fort-Brescia’s divergence from the mainstream currents of the time.

The Atlantis set the stage as the future aesthetic for the next decades of Arquitectonica buildings with its hot-pink walls *à la* Barragán, voyeuristic portholes, architectural palm trees, and glass-brick partitions in the baking sun. It is symmetrical and massive, and “plays” with quotations, such as by including the bases, middles, and tops of classical columns, as well as swags and keystones, but blown up in scale and flattened.

The Barragán inspiration is also prevalent in the design of the ziggurat-inspired Babylon (1982). The apartment building with its distinctive stepped, fire-truck-red facade, made an immediate splash when it was completed and helped propel Arquitectonica on toward larger projects.

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Arquitectonica's high-style modern architecture appeals to private and public clients alike, and has resulted in large retail projects in Hong Kong, a performing arts center in Dijon, France, and hotels in New York City and Asia as well as a variety of work in South America.

The Dijon Performing Arts Center in Dijon, France (1998) became a striking visual symbol as well as a practical design. The building did not intend to stand out: the center's exterior facades are covered with pale Chassagne stone as well as gray metallic panels and glass. A long curving window in the entrance lobby and a picture window beside the road enable passers-by to sense the excitement of the crowds inside. One deft touch is an elliptical void in the bridge-like entrance lobby that allows daylight—or artificial light at night—to brighten the road below and avoid the impression of entering a tunnel.

In the Banque de Luxembourg Headquarters in Luxembourg (1994), geometry is at conspicuous play in the façade, featuring a pure geometric shape facing onto the boulevard and a glass tower to the North facing the Hôtel Royal. The construction has a quarter-ellipse shape, which bears a resemblance to a slightly tilted ship's prow, nested in a cubic element made from Chassagne beige limestone shot through with black granite.

The design for the Landmark East Office Development in Hong Kong (2008) derived from the long narrow site, where the rectilinear slab towers are formed into a dynamic composition of slim, interlocking planes, slanted at varying angles to create a sense of movement and play. The cores and floor zones are arranged to maximize harbor views. The broad south elevations combined with the intersecting volumes provide valuable office space and corner units maximizing harbor exposure at the upper levels.

In the Wilkie D. Ferguson Jr. United States Federal Courthouse in Miami (2008), designed together with HOK, the building's profile is characterized by the layering of different forms and details while the building expresses openness, with exterior and interior engaging each other as if in dialogue. With its prow pointed south, this volume is defined by an expansive blue-green curtain-wall highlighted with slender horizontal sunscreens in various lengths and locations.

Regalia Condominiums in Sunny Isles Beach, Florida (2014) is a 46-story luxury condominium project in Sunny Isles Beach. The building features 39 exclusive full-floor units with 360 degree views. An undulating terrace wraps each floor in a shady walk-around veranda that protects the glass from the sun as in traditional Florida homes. Glass balustrades form horizontal bands, which change from floor to floor, thus creating a sculpture that embodies the feeling of ocean waves and breezes coming toward the beach.

The building's transparent surfaces connect inside and outside, linking the occupants with the surrounding environment. Its orthogonal geometry creates elegant, serene, classical, zen-like spaces. Each floor is

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is wrapped by a sensuously undulating terrace. The resulting walk-around veranda protects the glass surfaces from the sun, as in traditional Florida homes. It is this veranda that shapes the architecture.

Icon Bay in Miami (2015) is a thin elongated tower that floats over a new 122-meter waterfront park. The building balconies fold playfully along the facades and create a pattern of light and shadow, reflection and opacity. They appear to flutter in the wind or responding to the ripples of the bay waters. The textured façade breaks the tradition of vertical extrusions in high-rise design.

From within the balcony, varying depth create dramatic vantage points at their tips, creating an experience as if standing on the prow of a ship. They also create deep areas for furnishable terraces and shallower verandas that allow light into the spaces beyond.

One of the firm's most pivotal projects is the Brickell City Centre (2016) in the heart of Miami.

The massive mixed-use project multi-level environment integrally woven with a lush native and adapted tropical landscape that sets a new standard for urban lifestyle landscapes. Virtually all horizontal surfaces within a 9-acre area extending over more than three city blocks are enrobed in a lively plant palette, sophisticated hardscapes or the clear blue waters of stylish pools. From streetscapes and internal retail concourses, to residential and hotel amenity decks, open air restaurants and 40th floor sky lounge, and planted bridges that span the blocks, the landscape is designed to enhance the spare elegance of 5.4 million square feet of office, residential, hotel, retail and entertainment space.

The Thomas P. Murphy Design Studio University of Miami School of Architecture (2018) is a one-of-a-kind laboratory and collaborative space for the next generation of architects. The exposed structure of glass and concrete serves as a teaching tool by illustrating some of the basic tenets of modern architecture, construction and sustainability.

The roof itself, a thin-shell concrete structure, is a moment of high visual drama. The slab warps slightly, seemingly melting in the Miami heat, to form a gentle arc that adds complexity to the silhouette of the structure.

The project won a 2019 International Architecture Award from The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies and The Chicago Athenaeum.

The three-tier residential tower Elysee (2018), the tallest structure in Miami's Edgewater District, is a 57-story boutique high-rise with a multi-tiered silhouette derived from the city's glamorous midcentury heyday. Inspired by Modernist aesthetics and designed in collaboration with Jean-Louis Deniot, Elysee expands as it grows

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higher, “creating a multi-tiered exterior structure.” In this sense, the tower is meant to become three vertical neighborhoods.

For the Miami Beach Convention Center in Miami (2018) Arquitectonica and Fentress Architects collaborated on a context driven design that incorporates the structures of "natural elements of the ocean, beach, and underwater life," such as waves, manta rays, and coral reefs. The exterior envelope is designed with more than 500 “fins,” angled aluminum linear forms that create a curvilinear undulation inspired by the nearby ocean waves. The colors and patterns of the interior design finishes emulate receding water, sea foam, and varying types of local coral.

Arquitectonica’s latest project, Pershing Square in Los Angeles (2020), a 784-foot-tall-glass-and steel tower, is a dramatic design composed of a series of stacked boxes that soar majestically upward into the sky. The resulting tower is highlighted by a collection of cantilevered, glass-bottom pools for residents on the building's upper levels. While some of the protrusions would extend over the Pershing Square Building, none would hover above the public right-of-way.

“For over four decades,” continues Narkiewicz-Laine, “Arquitectonica remains as the most influential office in Miami and one of the most prominent design firms in the United States.”

"The office continues to focus exclusively on ecologically sensitive, yet commercially viable design and is widely recognized for its ability to create unique urban forms of memorable imagery in close harmony with the environment and forward-thinking interior environments that enhance user comfort and productivity.”

“With an astute aesthetic prowess, the firm successfully explores the complex challenges of contemporary built and natural environments, developing solutions that balance a modern aesthetic with an ecologically sensitive practice to create value, identity and a sustainable environment.”

The official ceremony for The American Prize for Architecture takes place at a Gala Reception/Dinner that also honors the recipients of 2019 American Architecture Awards on Thursday, October 10 at Arquitectonica’s most recent hotel Mr. C Coconut Grove (2988 Mcfarlane Road, Miami, Florida).

Tickets are available by calling The Chicago Athenaeum at +815/777-4444 or by email at jennifer@chicagoathenaeum.org.

Arquitectonica’s recent work and over 100 winning projects from the 2019 American Architecture Awards are published as a catalogue for *Global Design + Urbanism XIX* (“New American Architecture”) edited by Christian Narkiewicz-Laine for Metropolitan Arts Press Ltd.

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The catalogue is available through The European Centre and www.metropolitanartspress.com.

For more information, contact Jennifer Nyholm, Director of Communications, The Chicago Athenaeum at +815/777-4444 or by email at jennifer@chicagoathenaeum.org.

NOTE TO REPORTERS AND EDITORS: Photographs of Arquitectonica are available for download. For more details on the award and previous winners, visit The Chicago Athenaeum's website at www.chi-athenaeum.org.

About The Chicago Athenaeum (www.chi-athenaeum.org) is a global nonprofit education and research institute supported by its members. Its mission is to provide public education about the significance of architecture and design and how those disciplines can have a positive effect on the human environment.

About The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies (www.europeanarch.eu) is dedicated to public education concerning all aspects of the built environment - from entire cities to individual buildings - including the philosophical issues of arts and culture that ultimately give the final shape to design. A high emphasis exists on contemporary values and aesthetics, conservation and sustainability, and the theoretical exploration and advancement of art and design as the highest expression of culture and urbanism.

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