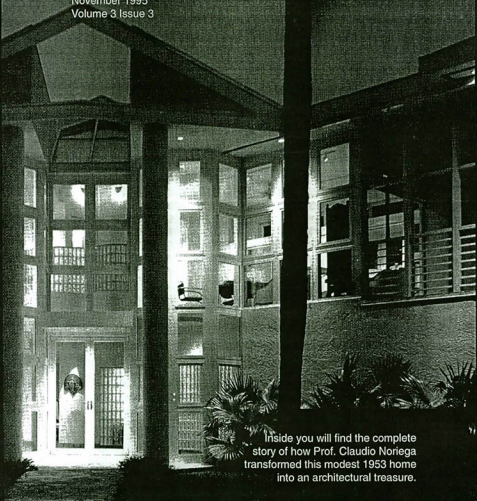


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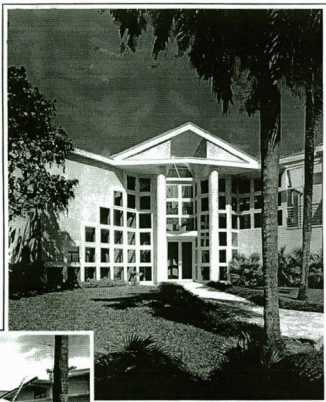
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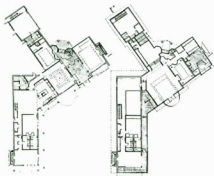


Inside you will find the complete story of how Prof. Claudio Noriega transformed this modest 1953 home into an architectural treasure.

I t is almost impossible to imagine that both pictures (right) are of the same house. The 40 year old home now depicts everything that is classic about contemporary architecture.



T o the right are the first and second floor plans





words of wisdom

A Yale grad, a noted architect, a BCC professor: Claudio Noriega explores his *Battersea House* project, now on display at Yale University.

by Prof. Claudio Noriega

The *Battersea* house embodies the architectural principles I believe in. The first principle applied requires an open expression of the interior spaces on the exterior forms; the second, an appropriate reaction to the site; the third, a conceptual or symbolic meaning for shapes and forms; and the last, an overall pleasant composition of the masses of the building based on hierarchical order. These aesthetic principles allow independence from architectural style

and were applied to formulate the design. The architecture was the result of applying sound principles of architectural beauty.

The owner initially approached me with some design ideas in mind, for the redesign of the house existing on the site. Her primary directive was that she wanted the house to be identified readily from anywhere on Biscayne Bay. She also wanted the house to have an impressive entrance, but to be inviting

as well. She wanted the house to have its own unique style but to keep a connection with past traditional architecture, the "Key West" style. The house needed to have an extremely large master bedroom and bath, which would be spatially continuous with the study. The living room, dining room and kitchen had to be open towards the pool, and Biscayne Bay. Between the living room and the dining room, we created an indoor atrium with an interior balcony coming from the

master bedroom, and opening into this interior atrium, transforming it into a "small venetian street." Over the garage, the owners wanted a studio apartment for the maid's quarters. Next to the garage, an open carport with a fabric canopy was created. Due to the year-round pleasant weather of South Florida, garages are seldom used. From all of these needs, ▶

The strong lines and bold shapes give the master bath as solid of a feel as the blue murano-pearl granite on the tub, wall, and counter.



The dynamic interiors shows this house is visually striking inside and out.

aspirations, ideas and emotional responses the three-dimensional reality of the Battersea house was created as an expression of a true architecture for a home.

All the exterior forms of the house are expressions of the spaces inside. Uniquely shaped windows and carved out ceilings are done to interrelate the interior and exterior. The prominent master bedroom window gives hierarchical order to the facade, captures the magnificent view of Biscayne Bay and is comprised of a circle, a triangle and a square. The inside space of this circular window becomes a semi-circular vault, a half cylinder. The circle, being the most "perfect" shape, represents the "perfection of home." The combination of these shapes also have other symbolic meanings since ancient times. The circle represents the "monad" which transforms the three parts of the triangle and the four parts of the square into the "squaring of the circle" of the ancient alchemists, a most auspicious symbol. This combination of shapes and symbol was located at the most noticeable mass of the volumetric composition of the whole house, establishing the hierarchical order.

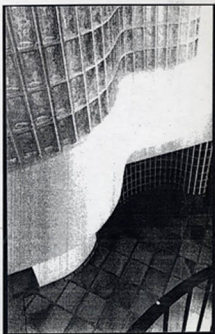
The second window, in hierarchical order, is the one of the master bath. It is a diamond shape to contrast the circle of the master bedroom window. This diamond shape is a rotated square. It also represents perfection because the square is a "perfect" shape. It has four identical sides and four identical angles at each corner. Behind the diamond, the hydromassage tub was located. From this tub, all of Biscayne Bay can be seen during the day. At night, the stars can be enjoyed while the warmth from the fire place, located in the center of the wall opposite to the tub, fills, psychologically and sometimes literally, the space. The literal fulfillment happening only during the few weeks of

cold climate that South Florida relishes.

Symbolically, the bathroom combines the basic four elements of nature of the ancient Greeks: water (the bay and the tub), the air (the sky), earth (the granite floor) and fire (the fireplace). This combination makes this room an ideal place for resting, relaxing, and getting reintegrated again into the natural essence of our being by relating to the earth's basic elements.

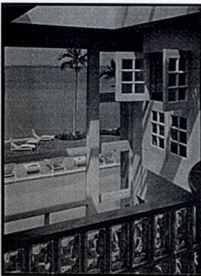
The third large window in the composition is in the shape of an elongated diamond. This diamond marks the end of the bedroom wing. It adds visual velocity to the length of this wing, which is the longest of the house. It also works in counterpoint to the diamond at the opposite end of the house, unifying all of the waterfront elevation. This elevation, although it is to the "back" of the house, becomes the "main" elevation. Under the diamond window is the oldest son bedroom. The tall diamond window creates inside the perfect space for an adolescent to climb up and "hide" from the world while watching the movement of the water of Biscayne Bay.

To the front of the house, the main entrance is a derivation of the classical pediment front, but "cut open" in the center to produce a more open and welcoming entrance. This "cut" on the pediment front is produced by a skylight that comes from the roof to



the main entrance door. This door is made out of glass in order to further visually open the house to the exterior. The pediment is reminiscent of the past, of the Greeks, the renaissance and the neo-classical periods that came afterwards. It links the house to some periods of American architectural styles following the initial colonial architecture of the northeast.

Residential architecture in South Florida has been recently influenced strongly by the so called "Mediterranean" style but it also has been influenced by the Caribbean. As we know, the "Mediterranean" style started with the Roman Empire, over 2,000 years ago. It is very romantic due to the scale and size of the arches, railings, small windows, divided lights in the windows and doors, warm earthy colors, etc. all of which can be created through good design, independent of style. The houses of the Caribbean, which are known in ▶



The dramatic structural and cosmetic changes to the rear facade allowed for the need of very little change to the back yard and patio.

South Florida as the "Key West" style, are derived from the American colonial styles that developed in New England, mixed with Victorian architecture. This Key West style is very popular in islands like Bermudas, Bahamas, Cayman, and many others. This style was the starting base for the Battersea house, as was requested by the owners. A house, at the edge of the Bay and in South Florida, should reflect the Caribbean. The "purity" of the style was transformed to one which reflected the true aspirations of the owners, which a style alone could not provide.

These aspirations included the dramatics of the elevation which faces the water, and it also

included the use of architectural elements, materials, forms and shapes corresponding to the Key West style. Elements such as metal roofs, white verandas and railings, wood details, all are applied but transformed and re-interpreted in a contemporary way. This reinterpretation is not a copy and it does not lose a direct connection with the traditional style. The result is an architecture with its own culture, reflecting the ideas and expressions that come from the aspirations and needs of the owners, which are interpreted and applied by the architect, based on sound design principles. The most important purpose being the creation of beauty through architecture. Beauty not only of spaces but also through the expression of principles which will be enjoyed by the owners throughout their life in the house, and by their children, growing up in a truthful cultural expression.

Architecture is not about copying styles, because architecture gives at every iteration the opportunity of creating, along with the owners, an individual expression, even if it is based originally on a traditional style. In the process of transforming the style, the house becomes unique and distinguishes itself from dozens of other houses. The building becomes an individual expression of the owners, unlike many stylistic copies which obviously tried hard to "belong" but did not succeed in belonging neither to the owners nor to the place. When architecture is created based on the feelings and emotional responses of the owners, which are reflected in the spaces, walls, windows, balconies, and other parts of the building, a home is created which is more than just a house, it becomes a sanctuary, relaxation and repose for the body and the mind.