

# SNAP

**S** THE MAGAZINE OF SWEETS



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## Connecting with Rene Gonzalez

Principal, Rene Gonzalez Architect, Miami

### HAS LIVING IN SOUTH FLORIDA MOST OF YOUR LIFE INFORMED YOUR WORK?

It has made me interested in making connections to the environment, **interpreting the essence of place**, and having **materials flow from the inside to the outside**. When I can't have the same material for both, I look for ones with similarities.

### WHAT'S YOUR APPROACH, THEN, TO MATERIAL SELECTION?

We're interested in connecting with a specific quality of a project, like the place it sits in. For example, our Alchemist store [right] sits five stories off the ground in an open-air parking structure. We wanted to **emphasize light and airy qualities**, so we utilized reflective surfaces like **glass and steel** to bounce the sky and views around.



### WHAT TRENDS ARE YOU SEEING IN ARCHITECTURAL PRODUCT DESIGN?

In design in general, there seems to be an interest in things that are **crafted**, with details that are expressive of what is **happening between two materials or elements**. I think it may be a response to a certain globalization, if you will.

### WHAT IS A SPECIFIC PRODUCT THAT ILLUSTRATES THIS?

**Roman and Williams** launched a new furniture line [below], and the pieces feel very much about craft. They have a story to tell about how they're made and that's what I'm getting at. It seems like the making of things is being explicitly shown in the objects themselves.



### ARE THERE ANY MATERIALS YOU TURN TO AGAIN AND AGAIN BECAUSE YOU LOVE TO WORK WITH THEM?

Glass is one we use in many different ways, whether it's etched or reflective, or has a film that creates illusion. We're currently using a **fritted glass** [right] that we developed with **Viracon** for a high-rise building project.



PHOTO CREDITS: JEFFERY ALLAN SALTER

**RENE GONZALEZ** founded his namesake firm in 1997. The multiple award-winning practice specializes in the design of museum and gallery spaces, exhibitions, and hospitality, retail, and residential projects. The firm's work often strives to blur the line between interior and exterior to create a harmonious link between building and site or landscape.

**1** Number of Miami architects who have received a national American Institute of Architects Honor Award in the past decade. Rene Gonzalez received two (one in 2006, the other in 2011).

**Gonzalez** (above) stands in front of his AIA Award-winning Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO) in downtown Miami. Designed to "humanize" the harsh concrete landscape of the warehouse district it's located in, the museum features a facade tiled with more than 1 million Bisazza mosaics in a lush, jungle-inspired color palette.