

Tropic

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Transforming From Opaque to Crystal Clear:



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Miami Beach Evolves at Terra Group's Glass

Architecture in Miami Beach has never had a reputation as minimalist and reserved. Quite the contrary, from the Spanish-Moorish fantasies that sprang up in the early 1920s, to the rich color and lavish ornamentation that characterized South Beach and its tropical brand of Art Deco, Miami Beach has often been associated with show and glamour. This was even true of Miami's special take on the severity of International Style Modernism. Clean lines and rectilinear forms were pushed aside for a version with punch and pizzazz now known as MiMo. So to find a new project, due to rise in the much sought-after South Of Fifth neighborhood that leans toward restraint is quite refreshing. Glass, as the condominium project is called, is truly a celebration of transparency. Although designed by Rene Gonzalez as only ten residences, this jewel-like, boutique building could quite plausibly be seen as the dream of Modernists like Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius come to life — by way of technologies that did not exist in their time.

We had the opportunity to interview David Martin, one of the developers of Glass, in his office overlooking the construction of another

of Terra Group's design-driven projects, the two-towered Grove at Grand Bay by Bjarke Ingels. We asked Martin about what we can expect as Glass rises on Ocean Drive.

Tropic: Terra has established a reputation for working with some phenomenal architects on their projects. How did you choose Rene Gonzalez to design Glass?

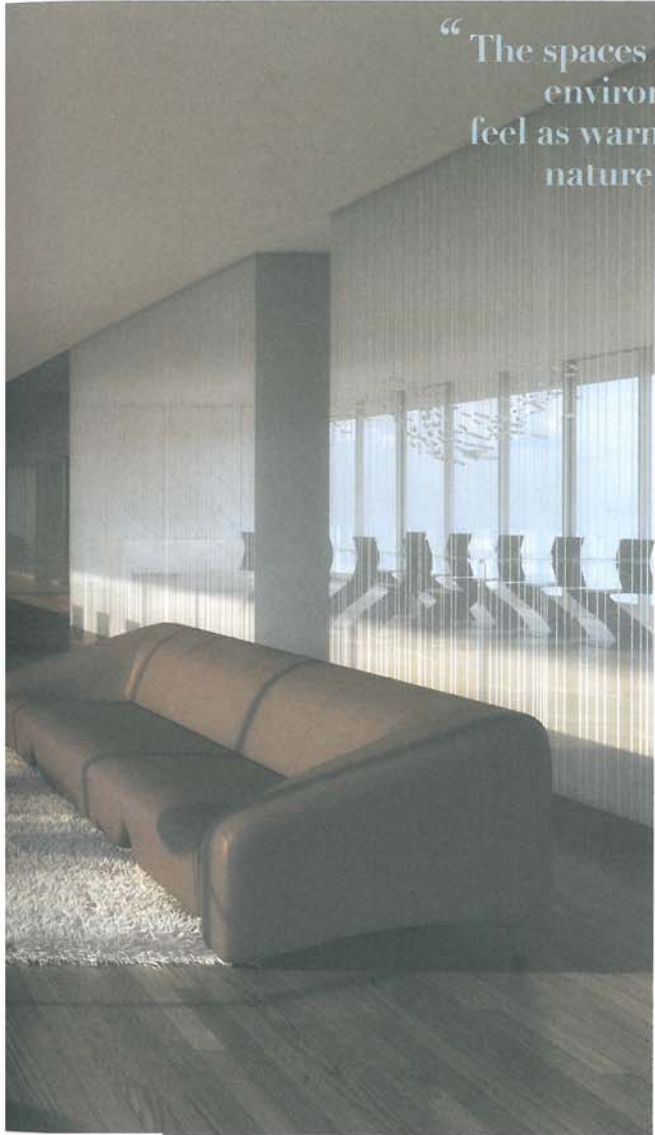
David Martin: Terra's goal is to create products that enhance people's lives. In order to do that, we not only have to find great architects who can build amazing sculptures as part of a beautiful skyline, but we also have to search out architects who understand how people really live.

When we purchased the land on Ocean Drive, we knew it was a special property. We needed to be sensitive to the Ocean Beach Historic District. As part of the process, we met with Miami Design Preservation League, the South of Fifth Neighborhood Association as well as community leaders. What we found was that Rene Gonzales was known as a "home-grown" star. A lot of his design work

“Both artistically and urbanistically, it is important for this building to appear to dematerialize as it rises to be in harmony with its surroundings — both natural and constructed.”

Rene Gonzalez, architect





“The spaces will reflect the natural environment and by default will feel as warm as the sunrises and nature that surround the site.”

Rene Gonzalez, architect

had been for museums like the Wolfsonian and Cisneros Fontanals Foundation... and a portion of his work had been focused on private homes. His ability to understand how people live, his ability to be design-driven from total concept to each tiny detail were part of that decision. His ability to create a project for us that was A.) world-class and B.) sensitive to its surroundings was key. Rene's background, his time as a member of the Historic Preservation board in the City of Miami Beach all came into play. Having an architect for this project who has roots in Miami Beach was a critical piece in order to make everyone comfortable that we would create something sensitive to its surroundings as well as a building that was going to be really special.

With all the building going on or proposed in greater Miami, somewhere around 150 at last count, we find that there are a lot more “look at me” designs popping up – and getting approved at the city level. Mr. Gonzalez’s design for Glass on the other hand, is breathtaking in a more subtle, elegant manner, not to mention its perfect scale. Was this minimalist approach an intentional break from the flash of other buildings?

It was an intentional break, but also had to do with its location. In one respect, from a developer's point of view, the program, direction and design brief we gave Rene was to build just one unit per floor. We had the ability to do up to 33 units, but we decided to create a product you don't see much of, and that's one unit per floor.

South of Fifth has a diversity of architecture, from Deco to MiMo to Modern... The design here creates a kind of glass jewel in the neighborhood, and incorporates a design that “dissipates,” a building that is not intrusive. So this design had to do with the neighborhood's historic character as well as cater to the potential end user or buyer we are looking to speak to and touch.

“Sensorial” is a word used by Terra Group in the descriptive materials on GLASS. Can you explain that a little for the readers?

Discrete, floor-to-ceiling sliders alternate with fixed pane, super-clear impact glass exterior walls, creating an incredible vista over South Beach and the Atlantic.

“The three-level penthouse has 360 degree views and all of the living spaces are on the same level as the private pool and outdoor terrace.”

Rene Gonzalez, architect

You know, real estate is created in some respects, as either people's homes, or as a commodity. We want to build homes, so for us, we have a very sensitive approach during pre-construction. There are a lot of promises that are made at that point relating to how the final product is going to feel. We ask ourselves the question: if there was one place you would like to live the rest of your life, where would it be and what would it feel like? The word feel is an important element of this project. One of the ideas we collaborated on with Rene and a branding firm on was to develop the building's scent. It gives this residents a kind of pride and connection with this building. On that same note, we hired Raymond Jungles to join us on this project to bring inspirational landscapes to the gardens and pool level at Glass.

Touching people's senses with sight in the building's world-class architecture, with sound, with a special scent, these are the things that touch their soul, bring a connection to the building and in turn, bring a connection to the community. This is all easier done when the building is actually delivered, so we have to do our best to communicate now what that building is going to feel like - what it's going to be. Today, the market is very sophisticated. We believe in educating buyers about the product in order for them to make the ultimate decision. You'll find that at this price point and level of luxury, what people are looking for right now is intelligent luxury. It's not about *having* more, it's about *being* more.

Looking directly at any of the façades for Glass, you can see the striated glass slowly dissolve from its base to its crown, almost disappearing completely at the top. Will this fritted glass affect the views from the inside or the exterior appearance of the residences?

Glass is located in the Ocean Beach Historic District. There are certain heights of buildings around us, and we needed to be respectful of that. It's difficult to make a building of 200 feet 'disappear' but Rene's vision was to do everything in our power to make the building do just that. Like Jean Nouvel's Cartier Foundation building in Paris, we've chosen to use

The three-story penthouse residence at Glass includes an expansive terrace with lap pool and is surrounded by the building's signature fritted glass railings.





a very subtly reflective glass that helps achieve this idea of a building that disappears.

The look from the inside of the residences should be consistent. The insulated glass we are using is often referred to as an "E" glass. The gas inside the two panes mitigates the amount of heat that transfers into the building. It's insulated and impact resistant. Beyond that, we are wiring each window for blackout electrical shading so the look will be consistent from a color standpoint.

What made you choose the one-residence-per-floor model?

360 degree views in every unit. No other building offers that. Also, there is a certain element of privacy that the one-residence per floor model provides. In essence, it gives a level of exclusivity, privacy and uniqueness, separating this condominium from all the product South of Fifth.

We've also adopted a "less is more" approach and the psychographic that we are targeting do not want to live in buildings where they are surrounded by strangers or renters.

A knowledge of construction tells us that the more glass used in a building, the more expensive that building is to construct. I'm imagining with all impact glass this effect is multiplied.

Every project has a "big idea". In this building that big idea was transparency and the building's ability to "disappear." From a contextual standpoint, we wanted to have the building disappear, and not impose the characteristics of concrete, and block and masonry on the neighborhood. It is more expensive. It's dramatically more expensive.

I was intrigued by the rendering showing a typical kitchen. Because of the open floor plan here, these kitchens need to be a bit more formal and minimalist as they are open to the dining room. They are exquisite in their simplicity.

That was one of Rene's concepts and decisions. Because it is really part of the living room, we chose the book-matched stone. In a way, because of the simplicity, it becomes part of the furniture, really. But with our buyers, there have been two schools - some love the stone, and some choose our other option, which is all glass.



With a doorman and each unit having direct elevator access, Glass

is — to be sure — a boutique-style building with just ten apartments. What type of services and amenities can buyers expect?

One of the great things we did at GLASS is we developed a beach club. Directly across Ocean Drive we have 20 umbrellas, chairs and an attendant for residents. This will also have a restaurant tie to it so food will be available to them. Back at the building, the pool and amenities deck will not only have a beautiful pool and spa, but also a garden that Raymond Jungles is creating, allowing residents to grow their own herbs and vegetables. And lastly, although we have just ten residences, we have 30 garage parking spaces. As you know, there is a shortage of parking South of Fifth, so this excess gives residents and their guests a huge benefit.



The resident's amenities deck features lounging and sunning areas, swimming pool, spa and lush landscape designed by Raymond Jungles. Jungles has also created an urban gardening area for residents to grow their own herbs and vegetables.

Typically a building has a property manager who handles the common areas of the building, in this case, we will have a house manager which is a little more unique. Say one of the residents is in London for a period of time. They can call the house manager and make sure their unit is cleaned, the refrigerator is stocked and so forth. That house manager concept is new. Typically a new building with many units cannot afford to offer that level of service.

It seems we are right in the middle of one of those incredible, special moments that no one truly realizes until it's over. Why does it seem that all eyes are on Greater Miami right now?

I grew up in Miami. I believe Miami became a global city before it be-

came a national city. The offerings Miami puts forth today are the best we've ever had. That's true from a museum and arts point of view, from an educational and cultural point of view, even in terms of our parks and outdoor spaces. I think that we are poised for a huge amount of global interest. In our projects we have residents from Belgium, South Africa, Vancouver, Toronto... it's less the Latin American buyer, although they're still buying, but I think we have a really diverse group of interested people from around the world. Miami is very open to the foreign community. People who come here feel so welcomed and comfortable to be here, no matter what language they speak.

I think International cities are really the cities of the future. As technology continues to evolve, more and more people are going to want to live in places where there is a great quality of life, and live in places that are accessible to a great number of regions. I am a big believer in the future of Miami. We'll go through our cycles, but Terra is a long term player. I'll be here developing for the rest of my life. We feel that with GLASS we are in a perfect spot in a perfect city. ■■