The Bow

An Honors Thesis (ARCH 402)

By

Katie Brazeau

Thesis Advisor
Carlos Casasheilli

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

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Abstract

Throughout my architectural education, I have been exposed to a variety of building types. The building type I have chosen for this project is a luxury hotel on the banks of Biscayne Bay on the south side of Miami, Florida. This hotel is thoroughly inclusive as any four star hotel one might find pre-existing on the long stretches of oceanfront that Florida possesses. By studying these pre-existing hotels in their context, their historical significance, the designer’s intentions and concepts, and ultimately their final outcomes, I hope to gain knowledge into a portion of the field of architecture that I had not studied so specifically in the past. I hope to then be able to use this knowledge of existing hotels and apply it to a new development on Biscayne Bay. This development will give me the opportunity to explore the design process of a large program that I have not been involved in before and also a unique, yet distinctly appropriate area for such a development.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank Carlos Casuscelli for his guidance to help me get through such a large project.
AN INTRODUCTION

The art of architecture is subjective to scrutiny on many levels. There are many elements that can control a design for a building and in the end, those elements effect every person that comes in contract with the result. For every building type, whether it be an academic building, museum, theater, or hotel, there are infinite ways to develop the finished product. As infinite the ways to develop these varying building types, there are an equal or even greater number of architects that have developed theories and styles in order to achieve the best result. Measuring these results is then left up to the people that interact with the spaces that have been created.

Through my experience in the architectural program, I have come to learn and understand several of these different ways of exploring the process of design. While going through these different processes myself, I have only begun to develop my own theories and styles. Though developing these theories will be a continuous learning process, I believe that molding a strong foundation of what design is about will help guide me through a series of successful designs.

First and foremost I believe that a design and its finished product is about the people that will gain enjoyment and function in its spaces. These two elements create a core of what I believe to be a strong design. When you think of a building type that people can gain great enjoyment from, that is also functional, one of the first that pops into my mind is a hotel. A person could visit a hotel for several reasons, two of the primary being business and/or vacation. I challenge you to think of a handful of vacations that you have taken. What made those vacations memorable? With this creative project I am suggesting that not only your geographical location, but also your immediate surroundings can make or break your dream experience, as subjective as it may be.
A BRIEF HISTORY

When exploring the world of hotel design, one of the strongest influences comes from the city of Miami Beach, Florida. I was fortunate to spend a semester in Miami Beach studying the Miami Modern, better known as MiMO, style of architecture. MiMO is a recently developed term used to describe a variety of styles and types of architecture. These building types were being developed during the 50’s and 60’s in the prosperous aftermath of World War II. The middle-class was finally able to afford luxuries including automobiles, new kitchen appliances, and even lavish vacations. What better place to take a lavish vacation than sunny Miami Beach, Florida.

At the time, the Bauhaus theory, “less is more,” was dictating a great deal of architectural design. The, “less is more,” theory revolved around rectilinear forms made out of glass, steel, and concrete. The vision for the Bauhaus style was to give the middle-class enjoyable and functional spaces free of obstacles and ornamentation that held little, or no, value. However, the Bauhaus style failed in the United States after World War II. Though some college and universities adapted the Bauhaus way of thinking, most clients shifted their focus in a more modern direction. Miami architects shifted with this excitement of prosperity and developed their theories to a new level. This excitement shortly spurred designs including curvilinear forms, vibrant colors, and fun shapes incorporated into their structure. Miami Beach soon became a hot spot known for its enchanted vacations that took you out of the hustle and bustle of everyday life and into a dream.

Still today these magnificent dream vacations exist on the shores of Miami Beach. Morris Lapidus, one of the most innovative designers of MiMO architecture sums it up perfectly in his autobiography, Too Much is Never Enough. “Less is more. How stupid can you be. Less is not more. Less is nothing.”
"Is quality in architecture only that quality which can be seen from the outside, or by the camera's eye, or does quality in architecture also have to presuppose the emotions and feelings of the people who come to the hotel? The two, I am sure, are compatible. People want their architecture to give them pleasure both on the outside of the building and in the interiors. When confronted with a problem where cost and many other factors make it almost impossible to create what seems to be quality in architecture, isn't it also that sense of quality which reduces itself to human comfort, human emotional satisfaction, and a sense of joy, and isn't that part of quality in architecture also?"
One of the most instrumental influences in retail and hotel design was Morris Lapidus. Though his new and innovative ideas were strongly criticized throughout his career, his concepts and his ability to follow through with his ideas formed some of the most successful buildings that have stood the test of time. Lapidus was able to reinvent the concept for a hotel and design some of the most luxurious hotels still in high demand to this day.

Lapidus was born into a Jewish family in Odessa, Russia in 1902. During that time, there was great poverty in Russia and Jews were being singled out and slaughtered. Lapidus’ mother did not want her children growing up in that environment and hence she pleaded with his father to leave Russia and immigrate to America. After some resistance they packed up their belongings and made the trip. They were the first members of their families to come to the new world and vowed that they would save money in hopes that they could pay for the passage of other family members to America.

The Lapidus family came into port at Ellis Island, on the tip of Manhattan in New York harbor in July of 1903. Though the streets were not paved with gold as was rumored in Russia, America gave them the promise of a new start. Morris’ parents had friends that had come over from Russia a year prior and they were able to stay with them until his father found a job. Morris’ father had been an accomplished coppersmith in Russia and quickly climbed his way to a position as partner in a lighting company. Their first home was an apartment in the ghetto of the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

As promised, the Lapidus family was able to save enough money in order to help several relatives immigrate to America. The first relative was Uncle Elya, the younger brother of Morris’ mother. Uncle Elya was roughly eighteen when he made the trip and he was a vibrant, curious young man. His curiosity lead him to try and learn as much about this new world as
possible. Morris credits Uncle Elya for giving him his first taste of architecture when he set out to show Morris the world. He took him first to see the ships anchored in the docks that had come from all over the world, and then he hurried him along to Coney Island. Morris had never seen anything like it before, merry-go-rounds, roller coasters, and theaters. To Morris, the entire experience was magical.

Morris' family was able to move to a different apartment in the Bronx when he was eight years old. While he was there he befriended a young boy named Mikey. Mikey would tell Morris stories about all the fascinating things he did with his friends. These stories frequently including his favorite spot, a field, past the railroad tracks, that had every kind of flower imaginable. Morris' mother would not allow him to go and play by the railroad tracks for fear of him getting hurt; however, like every young child, his fascination got the better of him. Morris and Mikey made a trip past the railroad tracks to a field where Morris first encountered a variety of fascinating colors in all different kinds of flowers. These colors would later influence Morris in a great deal of his designs.

Another thing that Morris took an interest in during his childhood was poetry. He convinced his father to invest in a series of books and would read them cover to cover once they arrived. He came to memorize and recite many of these poems to family and friends, teachers and classmates. He found a certain comfort in public speaking which eventually led him to be referred to as an actor. When choosing a career path for college, Morris took his excitement for acting into consideration; however, he had always loved to draw and at times envisioned himself as a painter.

When the time came for Morris to make a decision on a college, he chose Washington Square College of New York University. The college had an excellent drama program and his
father's partnership in the lamp company helped the family to pay his tuition. After a short time at NYU, Morris began to lose his enthusiasm for acting; however, his interested stayed invested in the stage. He realized that his passion for acting came from the illusions that it created of another world. Growing up in the ghetto's of New York, he found refuge in this world of dreams. He decided that instead of being a part of this dream world, he wanted to create it through scenic design. He quickly made the shift and began looking for an apprenticeship among local set designs, all of which asked him if he had had any architectural experience. Realizing he needed a different type of training, Morris left NYU and enrolled in the School of Architecture at Columbia University.

Morris' artistic abilities and dream like perspective helped him to excel in Columbia's School of Architecture. He displayed an obvious passion for detail and a steady patience in creating his drawings. His abilities brought him to the top of his class. When Morris graduated from Columbia he went searching for a job in scenic design. Each designer informed him that he would be foolish to go into set design when he could work for an architectural firm and eventually became an architect himself one day. Thus, his dream of scenic design passed and he went to work for a firm designing ornament and detailing buildings. The architecture market was slow at the time and thus, Morris found himself out of work a short time after.

At this time in his life, Morris had been courting a wonderful young woman named Beatrice for approximately four years. He was prepared to ask her to marry him but did not feel right doing so until he had a steady job and an income that could support a family. Due to the scarcity of work at the time, Morris took it upon himself to create an opportunity for an interview. Though he was a young architect he applied for a chief's draftsman position and won
the job only after proving he could take control of a project by getting a set of plans approved by the city, a set that had been rejected several times prior.

With this new job, Morris was given his first opportunity to design a building entirely on his own, a hotel in Connecticut. His enthusiasm kept him working on the preliminary designs for several days. When he presented them to his boss, Morris was complimented on his incredible design abilities. At the time, the demand for architecture had increased a great deal and therefore, engineers were also busy and hence, scarce. Morris ended up designing the entire building, through structure and mechanical systems by himself. Though he was required to take related classes during school, he had not paid much attention and therefore, it took him a great deal of time to work out all of the details for the hotel. Eventually his design was under construction and became a success. Though Morris considered it a great learning experience to have designed the entire building to completion, he was taught a great lesson about who and when to ask for help.

Morris' next big opportunity came when he was offered the chance to work on retail design during nights and weekends to earn some extra money. His designs were unlike anything anyone had seen before. He opened up the front of the store with large windows that displayed merchandise to catch shopper’s eye as they were passing by. He also used curved glass to draw people into the store. This combination caused people to window shop themselves right into the store. He then used various lighting features to draw them through. Morris had always been a people watcher, and he realized people are drawn towards light. He would often put the most significant lighting features towards the rear of the store to draw shopper’s all the way through, he called this the “moth effect.” Another feature Morris liked to play with was paint color. He again would watch people and take notice of their reactions to different colors and then recreate
that feeling in his designs. A final feature Morris used was bold graphics. Though his boss, and more importantly, the clients, was often skeptical of his designs at first, they took a chance on them. The chance they took was greatly rewarded; Morris helped improve sales in almost all of the retail establishments that he had a hand in.

One of his greatest retail designs can be found on the south shores of Miami Beach at Lincoln Road. Morris' original proposal consisted of a 14 block stretch of pedestrian mall with a variety of stores and pleasant landscapes. Though the pedestrian portion of his design now only stretches six blocks, it is incredibly successful. Morris was able to incorporate his design theories regarding retail while also including features of the MiMO style that were not appreciated until much later. While in Miami, I lived four blocks from Lincoln Road and I can say from personal experience that the space Morris created was not only functional but very comfortable. Morris’ design features became increasingly obvious the more time I took to observe the space.

As Morris evolved with retail designs, he quit his day job and went to work full time designing retail establishments. Naturally, as he became more popular he was also offered larger jobs and began to travel a great deal. Morris’ travels led him to many luxurious destinations staying in a variety of hotels. Spending so much time in hotels, Morris became intrigued by the idea of designing such a large, luxuries structure. He began to think about the kind of people who would come to these hotels and the reasons for which they would come. Growing up in the Bronx with an interest in the stage, Morris had a great appreciation for the idea of getting away or escaping the real world for something more like the movies. Morris used his time in these hotels to mentally study, note, and develop his own idea of what a luxury hotel might be. It did not take him long before he was designing these luxury hotels himself.
Hotel design is obviously a significantly different building type from retail. Lapidus, however, had the ability to take hold of the differences and capitalize on them. As stated before, Morris was a dreamer and thought that hotels should be a place for people to come and escape into a fantasy. In each of his hotels he was able to create a whimsical paradise that offered not only the luxury that vacationers were looking for but also an opportunity for their imaginations to run wild.

Though hotels were different, Morris used a great deal of his same theories and ideas concerning design that he had used when working on retail buildings. There were several forms that Morris had begun to notice that he used over and over again and eventually these forms became his signature. The three forms Morris became known for were, “woggles, cheese holes, and bean poles.” Woggles was the term used by critics to describe Morris’ use of amebic shaped objects. Cheese holes categorized the slabs of concrete that he used which looked like Swiss cheese due to their circular punched openings. Bean pole was deemed due to the slender poles that appeared in many of Morris’ designs. All of these elements helped to create a building clearly designed by Morris Lapidus.

During the same time, Morris had started designing hotels, he was thinking about breaking off from the firm he was working with to work for himself. As it would almost anyone, Morris was worried about his ability to succeed. He was skeptic about his capability to manage an entire practice by himself and was curious where he would find his clientele. Up to this point, the firm Morris was with had made it very clear that the projects coming out of the office were credited to the office and not just to the individual that was responsible for the design. Granted, Morris’ clients knew who was responsible for their designs; however, that then became a political debate of taking clients from the firm if he were to leave. It took him three attempts at
resigning before he was able to finally put his foot down and not be persuaded back into the company. Morris was finally able to practice for himself.

Throughout the remainder of his career Morris became very successful as a hotel designer. Two of his most prominent hotels, the Fontainebleau and the Eden Roc, exist on the shores of Miami Beach. The Fontainebleau was Morris first opportunity at an extremely large hotel design. The developer looking to build the project was already a client of Morris’; however, he originally had only wanted Morris to design the interiors. After much convincing and an agreement of an unspeakably low fee, Morris was awarded the entire project.

Morris developed multiple schematic designs for the Fontainebleau. Each time he would present his ideas, the client changed the scope of what he was looking for. Though the client claimed to want an innovative new hotel, when Morris brought him just that, he became nervous of the repercussions. The discussions revolved around the worries of how people would react to a new idea for hotel design. Eventually Morris found a way to convince him that he wanted exactly what Morris was giving. Thus a hotel was built that broke many of the boundaries set for the time. The Fontainebleau had sweeping curves, used multiple colors, created dramatic views, and in true Lapidus style, contained his three signature elements.

When the Fontainebleau was open, the critics had plenty to say about Morris’ dramatically different style. Many criticized him for his sweeping forms and use of materiality. Others just called it silly; there was no need for such non-practical and ornamental architecture. The guests, however, loved every minute of it. People flocked to the hotel to enjoy its whimsical, open, airy spaces.

Not to long after the completion of the Fontainebleau, Lapidus was commissioned to do another large hotel project, the Eden Roc. The site for the Eden Roc was right next door to the
Fontainebleau. With any architectural project there were political issues; however, Morris was concerned a great deal about the politics that might follow this project. Despite hesitations, Morris proceeded with the design.

Due to the fact that the Eden Roc was to be right next door to the Fontainebleau, the owner had special requests for the design. His major concern, that the design be distinctly different, on the inside and out. Morris understood his concern and was able to carry most of his design theories through the Eden Roc while still making it drastically different. He accomplished this by creating a linear exterior appearance that meets an extremely vibrant and luxurious interior. Ultimately, the Eden Roc was a success, perhaps even more so than the Fontainebleau.

Morris went on to create a multitude of successful hotels all over the world. His theories still remain obvious and appreciated today for their luxurious atmospheres and their ability to transcend guests into a fantasy. The fantasy that came from a boy growing up in the Bronx, fascinated by Coney Island and the vibrant colors found in a field of flowers. That same boy found excitement in reciting a piece of poetry to whoever would listen and found a passion in the stories of the stage. Everyone is molded into the person they become by the experiences that they encounter along the way. Morris Lapidus was molded into the Architect of the American Dream.
Fontainebleau

Designed by Morris Lapidus
Eden Roc

Designed by Morris Lapidus
Let's Take A Vacation

The Design
Your vacation destination is Biscayne Bay, Florida, just to the south of Miami Beach. As one usually does when going on a trip, you have checked out the area and have discovered several intriguing things. Biscayne Bay is an area with some of the most gorgeous beaches in Florida and it has been overlooked by developers up to this time. However, there is a new five star, luxury hotel that was just completed that sits close to the beach with amazing, wide open views in every direction. You have done your research on the internet and the opportunity for serenity and clear blue waters while still being close to the shopping and entertainment that Miami offers is exactly what you needed in a vacation! You book your trip: three days, four nights at the new luxury hotel, The Bow.

You arrive on a gorgeous afternoon, clear skies and 84 degrees. As you make your way from the airport to the hotel you become excited by all of the activity going on around you but as you get closer to your destination, you begin to see some of that activity fading away. Finally you arrive, down a tree lined street and there is your hotel; it almost looks like a cruise ship, very long and linear with open balconies blending into the side. It certainly looks like the type of building you would find in Florida with the terracotta colored stucco on the exterior and open, airy spaces.

You enter under a curved arch into the valet parking where you are met by the valet who helps you out of your car and attends to your luggage. As you walk through the open air lobby, you approach the check-in counter off to your side. The receptionist checks you in and tells you about all the features the hotel has to offer including a variety of tour information and then points you in the right direction to your room. As you continue through the lobby you notice the lounge at the end offering appetizers and cocktails with an absolutely amazing view of the pool and the ocean beyond. It looks even more magnificent than the pictures!
You take the elevator up to your room and once you step out you notice your views in the other direction, the beautiful city of Miami. You walk down the open air hallway and arrive at your room. As soon as you enter your breath is taken away by the absolutely amazing view. The ocean is the only thing you can see from the door and you quickly walk through the room and out onto the balcony where you can get a good look of the rest of the hotel and of the pools and restaurants below. You take notice of the almost rippling effect that the lounge that you first encountered has. It seems that it dips down and forms another restaurant. Then it dips down one more time and creates a dining patio that is on the same level as the pools. There are three pools, all rather uniquely shaped, with bar service from in the pool and plenty of comfortable lounge chairs around the perimeter. You are going to enjoy this; you throw on your swimming suit and head down to the pool.

On your way down you notice another portion of the building you had missed on your way in. After reading the sign marking the entrance you realize that it must be the business hot spot for the hotel. Down by the pool you relax with a few drinks before having dinner at the middle level patio restaurant. As you take a sunset stroll on the beach you start to feel the much needed relaxation beginning to take hold.

During the remainder of your stay you have the opportunity to explore the rest of the hotel. You discover the cozy shopping center on the second level right above the entrance lobby. As you move further up in that portion of the building you also discover the grand ballroom with its roof-top garden restaurant facing the city of Miami. One of your favorite places to go, however, becomes the luxurious day spa. This multi-level facility, centrally located within the hotel, helped you take that one step further towards relaxation.
As relaxing as it may have been to make this trip, your stay is over and now you must return home. As you are driving back to the airport you realize how calm and relaxed the past several days have helped you to become. It is almost as if you stepped out of your life for a while and into a fantasy of relaxing days by the pool and exciting downtown night life in the evenings. After which, you go to bed only to wake up the very next day to reds and oranges in the sky as the sun rising over the ocean and do it all over again. I hope you enjoyed your stay!
Program

Zone 1: Guest Services
A) Port Cochere and vehicle arrival. Valet parking made available and easily accessible.
B) Lobby and Reception areas and Lounges
C) Reception and Registration Desk (including small private administration and staff offices)
D) Tour Info and Car Rental Offices (including small private administration and staff offices)

Zone 2: Business Services
A) Congress and Special Meeting Rooms
B) Small Meeting Room(s)
C) Person Office(s)
D) Theater and Cinema
E) Male and Female Restrooms
F) Multi-Purpose Room
G) TV Studio

Zone 3: Hotel Services
A) Approximately 50 Rooms
B) Approximately 20 Suites
C) Approximately 20 Cabanas
D) Gym and Spa

Zone 4: Entertainment
A) Approximately 10 to 15 Retail Shops
B) Two Casual Dining Restaurants
C) One Fine Dining Restaurant
D) Cafeteria
The Bow
Biscayne Bay, Florida

Lower Level 1

Lower Level 2
The Bow
Biscayne Bay, Florida

4th Level

3rd Level
The Bow
Biscayne Bay, Florida

6th Floor

5th Floor
Project Resources


http://www.boston.com/travel/articles/2006/02/15/miami_modern.org

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http://www.southbeach-usa.com/features/features1/mimo/mimo.html