



Window



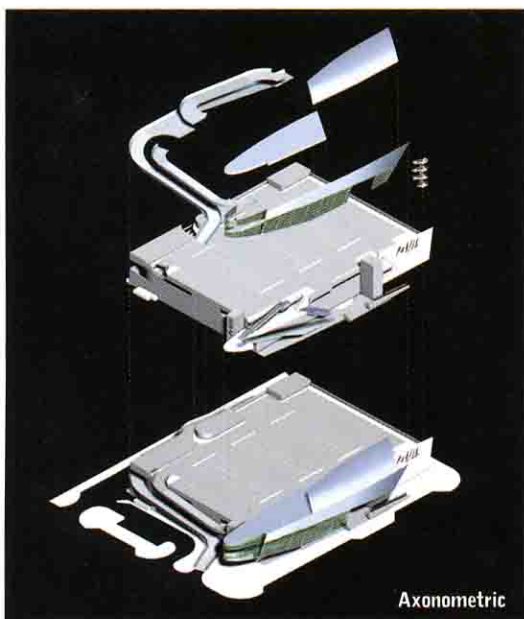
Shopping

In image-conscious Miami Beach, customers are the commodity in a new supermarket by Wood and Zapata. By Raul A. Barreneche

Miami Beach thrives on novelty. Throughout its history, the city has consciously turned architectural convention on its ear. To list the architects who helped build the city is to cite some of modernism's greatest iconoclasts—art deco masters such as Henry Hohauser and L. Murray Dixon, Morris Lapidus, Arquitectonica, and Philippe Starck. Since beginning its design-savvy urban revival in the 1990s (*Architecture*, April 1996, pages 98-107), Miami Beach has intensified its penchant for novelty. The question asked at the start of each and every winter tourist season is: What's new this year?

This season's most popular addition to the already edgy status quo is a supermarket, of all things. The flagship store for the Publix supermarket chain, designed by maverick modernist Carlos Zapata of Boston-based Wood and Zapata, is catching the eye of the novelty-seekers—though it is hardly an architectural flash-in-the-pan. Zapata completely reconsidered the supermarket typology, discarding the most basic conventions and assumptions about its image and function and letting his newly reconfigured circulation dictate the design.

The 50,000-square-foot store sits on a 1.92-acre site formerly owned by Florida Power & Light, just a few blocks away from the hubbub of Morris Lapidus's newly resplendent Lincoln Road promenade. Light-industrial buildings and mid- and high-rise apartment blocks enclose the cramped parcel. The city, not Publix, targeted the site for developing a supermarket and ultimately selected Zapata's scheme. Publix has been quick to point out that it views its South Beach outpost as a flagship store, not a prototype, given its high cost.



Although the city wanted a full-scale supermarket, it would have been impossible to fit the required sea of parking on the site. Zapata's solution to the problem is startlingly simple, despite its theatricality. He stacked two levels of parking above the basic box of the store (Publix didn't let the architect touch the interiors) and added elevators, stairs, and ramps along the street face to connect the parking decks to the market. Zapata wrapped these elements in a sleek, aerodynamic shell of steel and glass that encloses a soaring, three-story-high vestibule grafted onto the street front. The architect completely breaks the traditional supermarket box, yet respects its purity as a typological form enough to keep his manipulations distinct from it. "We wanted to show the space as an addition to the basic box, making it obvious that our piece was not connected," explains Zapata. Even the sweeping concrete ramps that lead to the parking levels cantilever from the rectangular container to emphasize their additive nature.

The circuit of shoppers' movements generated the form of the entrance hall: Customers descend to the store from the parking levels by elevators or by stairs that scissor down through the three-story space. Later, they return to their parked cars—shopping carts in tow—along moving electric ramps tucked just behind the thin glass facade. The ramps pause at a bullnose-shaped landing, then open to the sky, with a panoramic view of the deco baubles and chevrons that crown beachfront hotels on the opposite side of the island. Despite its brusque intrusion into the landscape, the building makes an effort to integrate itself with the city.

Zapata's supermarket is a beautiful object—it hums with kinetic energy, sweeping along and up the street like an elegant, silvery comet. But it is more compelling as the crystallization of a series of movements and circulation systems. Indeed, what animates the facade is not simply its graceful arc and the play of light on its skin; tracing the motion of shoppers as they glide upward with their carts just behind the surface brings the building to life. "I have always had an interest in fluidity and time as threads you follow," maintains Zapata. "This project was a chance to deal with motion in a concrete way: We made an event out of moving up."

Thanks to Zapata, shopping at Publix has become an event in itself. Tourists now leave their beach chairs and barstools to gaze at a supermarket; South Beach's legion fashion photographers are featuring the building in photo shoots; and residents from all over Miami brag about grocery shopping at the beach. As Zapata's building demonstrates, the city's love of novelty is thriving, as is its tradition of serious architectural invention. ■

Constant stream of shoppers on moving ramps animates supermarket's street face (previous pages). Streamlined aluminum and glass curtain wall (facing page, center left) creates diaphanous enclosure. Viewed obliquely, facade (facing page, right) reveals itself as thin veil grafted onto neutral box. Tubular steel structure that supports skin was prefabricated and assembled on site in three weeks. Sweeping lines of cantilevered parking ramps (facing page, bottom) complement curves of facade while emphasizing boxy quality of supermarket typology. Cantilevered, bullnose-shaped prow (facing page, top left) shelters open-air landing between ramps.





Soaring volume that encloses circuit of ramps and stairs (facing page and left) creates urban-scaled anteroom to supermarket. Open landing (above), Zapata's nod to window detailing by Morris Lapidus, provides panoramic views of art deco towers.

**PUBLIX ON THE BAY,
MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA**

CLIENT: Publix Supermarkets

ARCHITECT: Wood and Zapata, Boston—Carlos Zapata, Benjamin T. Wood (principals-in-charge), Wyatt Porter-Brown, Victoria Steven (project architects), Fred Botelho, Eric Klingler, Rolando Mendoza, Anthony Montalto, Pamela Torres (design team), Melissa Koff (project coordinator)

LANDSCAPE

ARCHITECT: Rosenberg Design Group

ENGINEERS: Leslie E. Robertson Associates (structural); Thoms Engineering (mechanical, electrical); Bermello, Ajamil & Partners (civil)

CONSULTANTS: Werner Dietel & Associates (lighting)

GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Keene Construction

COST: Withheld at owners' request

PHOTOGRAPHER: Jeff Goldberg / Esto



SHOPPING
CARTS
TO RAMP