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From the fight to save an iconic stadium in Miami to the rebirth of historic military barracks in Savannah, our four of new and noteworthy projects begins here.

OBSERVED

DECEMBER 2009



Photo: Stephen



Closed since Hurricane Andrew, Miami Marine Stadium has just been added to the World Monuments Fund's influential list of endangered places. (See story on following page.)

OBSERVED

WRITTEN BY
David Sokol

ARCHITECT
Hilario Candela

PROJECT
Marine Stadium
3507 Rickenbacker Causeway
www.marinestadium.org

Key Biscayne,
Florida

A Stadium Comeback

The debate over restoring one of Miami's most iconic venues heats up.

"Not many places have the endorsement of the World Monuments Fund and Jimmy Buffett," Don Worth says. The cofounder of Friends of Miami Marine Stadium is referring to the building designed in 1963 by the Cuban-born architect Hilario Candela. In October the World Monuments Fund named the stadium to its 2010 Watch List of endangered places. Three and a half weeks before that, a video of Buffett stumping for the poured-concrete structure appeared on YouTube.

With a jaunty folded-plate roof that points toward Biscayne Bay, Marine Stadium was originally designed to host motorboat-racing spectators. Later it became the site of Easter services and pop concerts, including a particularly boisterous event that Buffett presided over in 1985. "Everybody loves this building," says Amy Freitag, WMF's director for U.S. programs. "It has been known as an iconic feature in the skyline. It was a popular destination—this is where Richard Nixon hugged Sammy Davis Jr. in 1972—and there has been a groundswell of support from the Cuban community."

The city shuttered Marine Stadium in 1992 after Hurricane Andrew, even though an insurance assessment by the engineering firm Simpson Gumpertz & Heger (SGH) determined that the structure had suffered little damage. It sat idly as a graffiti canvas until June 2007, when the planning firm EDSA revealed a master plan for Virginia Key, commissioned by the City of Miami, that erased the stadium. The public outcry was swift, and that winter Worth, together with Jorge Hernandez, a local

"This is where Richard Nixon hugged Sammy Davis Jr. in 1972."



architect, founded Friends of Miami Marine Stadium (FMMS). By late 2008 the group had obtained a landmark designation from the city, and it got the National Trust for Historic Preservation to include the stadium on its America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places list last April. EDSA's revised proposal, released in October, reinserts the stadium and moves some visually intrusive garages and docks out of close range.

Now that demolition seems unlikely, the challenge is raising funds. SGH is completing another assessment to determine whether restoration would cost the \$30 million estimated last year by the city. "While the damage has gotten worse, it's not dramatic," says Michael Brainerd, a senior principal at SGH. In the meantime, FMMS is courting building

operators that could oversee the desired diversity of events. F1 ChampBoat Series has already expressed interest in staging its Grand Prix boat race at the stadium next February. "It's one thing to save historic landmarks," Freitag says, "but it's much more difficult to bring Modernist structures back into use."

But just before WMF announced its biennial Watch List, the Miami City Commission voted to hold off a decision about EDSA's proposal until May 2010. Worth plays down the postponement, noting that Tomás Regalado, the front-runner in this month's mayoral race, is sympathetic to the stadium. Taking stock of FMMS's progress so far, Worth is upbeat. "We've had some victories," he says. "We're now credible and serious, and we've been given some breathing space." ○/✱



In the 1960s, spectators gathered to watch boat races (left), but today the picturesquely located stadium sits empty while advocates search for renovation funds.

Top, Rick Bravo; bottom, courtesy Friends of Miami Marine Stadium