



April 13, 2008

Ms. Becky Roper Matkov
Chief Executive Officer
Dade Heritage Trust
190 Southeast 12th Terrace
Miami, FL 33131

Dear Ms. Matkov:

This letter is in support of the nomination of the grandstand at Miami Marine Stadium (here discussed as Miami Marine Stadium) as a Historic Structure. Part of the Marine Stadium, itself a unique and outstanding example of tropical landscape architecture in the country, the grandstand should be preserved as an icon of postwar concrete and sport architecture in Florida and in the United States. Its significance is very high, not only for the local community but also as a great achievement of the Modern Movement in the United States.

1. The grandstand of the Marine Stadium is the most remarkable poured-in-place concrete building in Florida, and one of the most significant nationally. The 6,566-seat grandstand of the Commodore Munroe Stadium, named for Coconut Grove pioneer and boating enthusiast Ralph Munroe, was completed in 1964. Poured entirely in concrete, it consists of a dramatically cantilevered folded plate roof supported by eight big slanted columns anchored in the ground through the grandstand. From the top of the columns, each section of the six-inch-thin roof – a feat of craftsmanship in Miami – developed as four folds. Seen from the causeway, the folds suggest “the romance of the water” and the structure expressed the movement of the waves gently bathing the stadium’s shoreline as well as those of the sailboats that cruise the bay and the stadium. Together, the straight and inverted triangles of the structure create an elegant and mineral façade that alludes to the complex geometry of marine life.
2. Because of its specific concrete technology and design, the Miami Stadium grandstand belongs to the first generation of modern sport facilities initiated in Europe and Latin America, using the plastic qualities of poured-in-place concrete for efficiency and spectacular visual effect. Pier Luigi Nervi’s Florence Stadium (1929-32) and Palazzo dello Sport (1958-59) in Rome pioneered plastic concrete shell construction. In Nervi’s footsteps, Carlos Raúl Villanueva (University Stadium in Caracas, 1950-52), Oscar Niemeyer and especially Felix Candela, the Spanish-born architect who immigrated to Mexico, made concrete a genuine expression of modern Latin American architecture, whose sensuality and plasticity contrasted with the rationalist canons of the international style. The Miami Marine Stadium is definitely worthy of its international predecessors and should be given the same respectful treatment.

3. The grandstand was commissioned to the firm of Pancoast, Ferentino, Grafton, Skeels and Burnham. Hilario Candela, a young Cuban architect educated at Georgia Tech and recently arrived to Miami, was the main responsible for the project, along with Albert Ferentino. Candela, who worked along Felix Candela when he was in Cuba designing the Bacardi factory, also worked for Max Borges, a Cuban architect well known for his use of poured-in-place concrete at the Tropicana nightclub in Havana (1951). In that sense, I argue that the Marine Stadium was in fact the first building in Miami (and one of the few who were built along with the Miami Dade Community College complex, south and north campuses), which had strong roots in modern Latin American—and also Cuban—architecture. This filiation makes it historically significant as well for Miami and South Florida.
4. The final point regards the function of the Stadium from 1964 to 1992. It was used regularly for boat-racing events (a unique specialty of South Florida early in its history) as well as for entertainment, particularly concerts and other performances. Important politicians, sportmen and artists, including President Nixon, Sammy Davis Jr., Jimmy Buffett, Governor of New York Mario Cuomo, appeared at the Marine Stadium for important events and concerts.

For all these reasons, we urge the Dade Heritage Trust to do everything in its power to declare the Miami Marine Stadium a historical landmark in the history of Miami and South Florida.

Sincerely yours,



Enrique Madia
President
DOCOMOMO US/Florida



Jean Francois Lejeune
Vice President
DOCOMOMO US/Florida