



# *Creating the next big thing*

Architects Falkanger, Snyder, Martineau & Yates expand the paradigm of architectural possibilities

BY LESLIE MCKERNS

Swiss architect and city planner, Le Corbusier once described architecture as a learned game of forms assembled in the light. This artistic expression by this modern movement functionalist is echoed by local architect Jiro Yates and his design team, Falkanger, Snyder, Martineau & Yates. To them, architecture is ever-evolving and they yearn to create the next big thing, to shape the very form of the world around them.

Founded in 1977, this design team is one of the ten largest architectural firms in the South. Design partner Jiro Yates regularly strips a building model of all material in order to study it. "We work within a fresher, more authentic vernacular," said Yates.

Is there a name for this newer streamlined architectural movement? "There has been no recognizable buzzword for architecture since Post-Modernism," said Yates. "Perhaps there will ultimately be a new name for what we are doing as a key to its understanding."

His technique dovetails the Fort Lauderdale mandate that buildings be authentic, stripped of all material and decoration such as cast foam and fake historical references. One freshly uncluttered building is the firm's Strada 315, as crisply tailored as a tuxedo, as streamlined as an Art Deco radiator grille and accented with sophisticated blue colorations. The project currently rises in the heart of Fort Lauderdale. The project

includes 138,000 square feet of residential space on 13 floors. The additional seven floors will include about 9,000 square feet of office space on the first floor, a five-story parking deck and the seventh-floor amenity deck.

"This project is typical of our firm's work and the intent of the master plan for the City of Fort Lauderdale—pedestrian-friendly structures with no exposed parking structures," said Yates. "Cielo Blu, another sister project, is planned for across the street."

In addition to LEED certification, or green building, Yates mentions CPTED planning, known as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, where good design is safe design. The CPTED concept uses physical design in harmony with the environment in a positive manner. Working with these design principles creates a vested interest in safety. The concepts give the occupants or users of the space a sense of ownership, eliminating negative activity through visibility and use. Used extensively in Strada 315, sight lines and angles provide psychologically and physically definable private space.

Strada 315, Cielo Blu and Ocean City Lofts in downtown Delray Beach have been conceived by Falkanger Snyder Martineau & Yates with the same developer, Northpoint/Southpoint Realty Development.

The Ocean City Loft interiors certainly call to mind Le Corbusier's forms assembled in the light. Designed for a chic urban downtown lifestyle, Ocean City Lofts is located in the heart of the dynamic town of Delray Beach. With its unique architectural details, expansive terraces and balconies, and with the offer of first floor office/retail space, a gym, shopping, restaurants and nightlife right outside, the lofts project is typical for this model city downtown with the same sort of livability as Fort Lauderdale but with more of a hometown feel.

Jiro Yates is making cities modern, vibrant and exceedingly livable. As in this project, Yates said the trend in loft living is evolving. "Lofts are starting to become less harsh and minimalist as people find noise and echo to be a problem. These new loft projects are known as "Soft Lofts"—still with soaring ceilings but with more softening finishes. Interestingly, the exposed look was very expensive, with the ducts needing to be round because they were exposed and all the electrical and plumbing needing to look good as well."

In New York's Times Square, advertisers are allowing passersby to interact with the brand by changing the message on a billboard, voting on issues or even sharing secrets through text messaging. And they are using the buildings as billboard space. What does Yates think of the potential for using bustling city buildings as interactive advertising?

"As a designer, I would readily agree to work on unusual projects, but I don't see this type of cutting edge being a reality for this area," said Yates. "The challenge for Fort Lauderdale is in managing the density and keeping the vibrancy in downtown. We are adapting to technological innovations when they are right and needed for the area. Our firm is working with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) on mass transit stops for light rail. The project is called Downtown Transit Circulator (DTC)—a modern, no noise, no pollution streetcar system, and Jeff Falkanger is leading our firm's design with our teaming partner, Parsons Brinckerhoff, one of the world's leading engineering firms. The project is funded and is on the fast track towards completion. What is unique is that this is a free transit system—the rider will pay no fare and the systems will run every seven minutes so that there will be no need for schedules."

Jeff Falkanger, founder of the namesake firm, has been instrumental in the development of Fort Lauderdale for thirty years. He is on the Board of Riverwalk, and both Falkanger and Yates are heavily involved in the creation of landmark projects such as Pelican Beach Hotel

and "Q" Club, now known as the Fort Lauderdale Hilton. The firm is fluid and dynamic in their process, sometimes completing just the active design phase of a project and handing the construction drawings and construction administration phases to another architect of the client's choice—at times, doing the reverse and accepting a project from the initial design phase forward.

"We use a 3D program, Sketch Up, that is more dynamic than an ordinary CAD system; it allows us to make changes to the building and see it immediately in three dimensions. We can quickly make adjustments such as height changes and this has opened up incredible design possibilities."

Fantasy is also not out of the realm of possibility, as witnessed in Pelican Beach Resort. Filled with fantasy and resort touches, Pelican Beach Resort is reminiscent of Cinderella's castle. Blue rooflines are trimmed out in white lights to enhance the nighttime effect. Wide porches, verandas, rocking chairs all in a row line wooden decks leading directly to the beach. Iconic resort touches are like an Atlantic City Boardwalk striped beach umbrella by the pool, the boardwalks, the Old Southern touches in the dining rooms, the striped candy cane wallpaper in the ice cream area—all spell resort in the minds of vacationers.

Pelican Beach Resort started out as a pure hotel and became a hotel condo along the way. Over a period of years, the developer had rolled up several mom and pop hotel/motel properties along the beach. After running them for many years, the requirements to keep them functional became too much. The developer had a vision for new development and when that proved to be too expensive, he actually started his own construction company and built the project himself.

"The design of Pelican Beach Resort was the creation of a genius developer, Stephan Kruse, and was modeled after the Hotel del Coronado in California, which was the inspiration for the Grand Floridian in Disney. Stephan Kruse is a very active, unique developer. Some of his more revolutionary touches are the reclamation of gray water. The water for sinks and showers goes into a holding tank and is used to irrigate the property. Another, is the use of mechanical underground parking; the building was raised and excavated to have no visible parking garage." □

Falkanger, Snyder, Martineau & Yates is located at 888 South Andrews Avenue in Fort Lauderdale. 954.764.6575. [www.falkanger.com](http://www.falkanger.com)



STRADA 315 (under construction)



OCEAN CITY LOFTS  
PHOTO BY MATT SILK



PELICAN GRAND BEACH RESORT