Featuring PETER MARINO, BEN VAN BERKEL, KEN KELLOGG, R&SIE(N), WILLIAM KATAVOLOS, DAVID ADJAYE, and SAADABAD.

With a special tribute to HERBERT MUSCHAMP.

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lone sound of bay-side wave-lets. When it opened, in 1964, however, it was as a world-class venue for powerboat regattas, and later even landed a spot on the silver screen with a supporting role in the 1967 Elvis Presley movie Clambake.

Located on a thin causeway that tethers the barrier island of Virginia Key to downtown Miami, the 240-acre marine precinct com-

The underside of the stadium’s roof shows the seams of the concrete formwork that shapes its special curvature. © Kenneth Pietrobono

A view of the now dilapidated second-floor concourse that leads to the stadium’s seating area. © Kenneth Pietrobono

of Miami’s architectural is its secret story — is resurfacing from the shadows.

Once visitors could enter the stadium’s watery foyer by boat — a spectacular beginning to long-gone evenings of outdoor performances on a floating stage. © Kenneth Pietrobono

that, miraculously, is still public property and will remain so if the efforts of a preservation campaign are successful in obtaining historic designation. Besides aiming to improve access and preserve the natural and architectural setting, members of the campaign also recognize the stadium’s box-office potential as a spectacularly photogenic location. For Hilario Candela, the structure’s Cuban-born designer, this comes as no surprise. When he was assigned to the project, at age 26, he knew it had to be an icon.

Candela arrived in Miami in 1960 not expecting to stay. But the city proved too explosive to pass up, fueled by a post-war boom and grand municipal visions to which the stadium was integral. The stadium’s boat basin is, in Candela’s view, a dead ringer for the Circus Maximus in Rome. Indeed, Candela closely studied the classics, especially the modern ones: He worked briefly for Max Borges Jr., designer of the soaring Cabaret Tropicana in Havana (1952) and, while a student at Georgia Tech in the ’50s, encountered the likes of Felix Candela (with whom he shares distant origins), Eduardo Torroja (with whom he corresponded for some time), and Pier Luigi Nervi (who “spoke like a poet,” he says). The world had gone cuckoo for concrete, and these luminaries built careers with the material, which also lent its capacity for efficient structure and formidable plasticity to the Marine Stadium.

The stadium’s most outstanding feature is a series of three-armed supports projecting a vast concrete shell overhead. Pleated into accordion-like valleys and crests, the roof shell flattens above the water’s edge to a placid line just 6 inches thick. It derives its strength
The eight-bay sheltered grandstand of the Commodore Munroe Marine Stadium sits on the edge of Miami’s Virginia Key. ©Kenneth Pietrobono

from its special geometry, a double-curved surface called a hyper, which upon close inspection reveals a soft, belly-like warp. In recent times, the stadium’s expressive forms have been both a boon and an inspiration to enterprising trespassers. The roof has served as an airborne skatepark, and almost every available surface — from the bathroom walls to the seats — has become a showcase for Miami’s vibrant graffiti underworld.

Nowadays, you can spit on a piece of paper and get away with it in the art world, explains Pest, a retired graffiti artist who started writing at the stadium as a teenager in 1997. The building’s golden years as an internationally known palace of graffiti “bombers” were 1999–2003, he reports, before security stepped up, forcing um’s parallel legacy of street writing. One man’s work of art can be another’s act of delinquency.

— Pierre Alexandre de Looz is editor at large of PIN-UP.