

# SHADES OF

*Plans for a revamp of Sydney's fabled beach are in the pipeline. Outspoken urban*



Across the road from the beach, the streetscape of Campbell Parade as it looks today. How to colour it in? Not all the buildings have



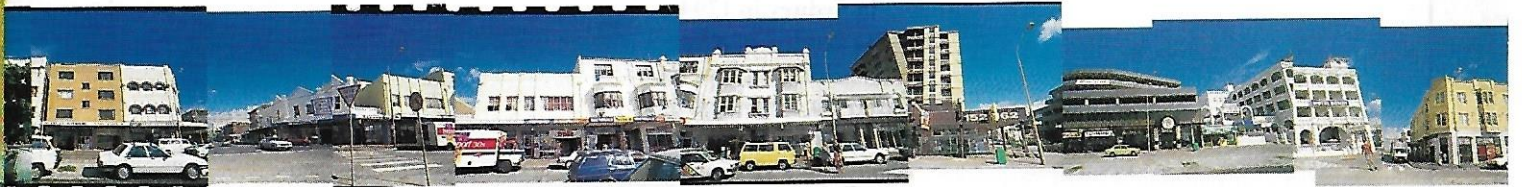
The official Conybeare Morrison scheme: inspiration came from the history and environment of Bondi — the sun, sand and surf. The An alternative scheme by designers George Freedman and Sam Marshall: inspiration here comes from the vitality of the beach and the



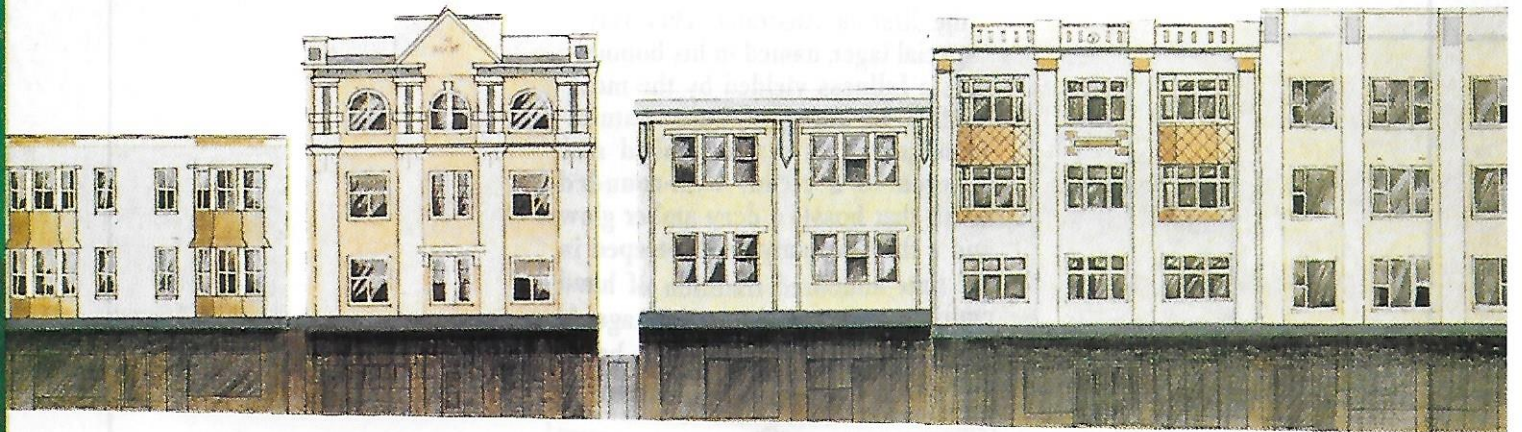


# BONDI

*aesthete LEO SCHOFIELD looks at these and a fanciful alternative.*

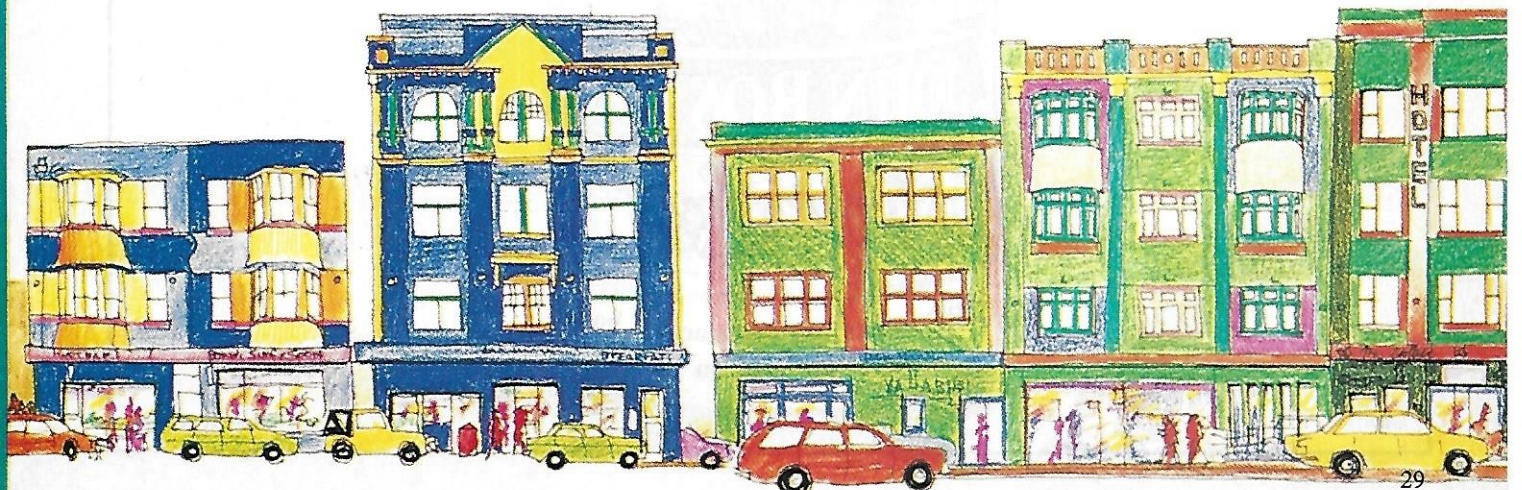


architectural merit, but all would respond to a painted facelift using multiple cool colours, with awnings all of a hue.



suggested colours are pale, creamy ones (basically white, but with pinks, blues and yellows). All the awnings are a uniform dark blue.

living colours of bikinis and Speedos. Bright background colours, from violet at one end to red at the other, give a rainbow effect.





**T REALLY** only needs colouring in. True, Bondi's Campbell Parade looks pretty messy now — a jumble of restaurants and surfboard shops, Federation facades dressed in peeling paint, 1950s blond brick and awful awnings. But prepare for a scene change. On the previous pages we show the official sand and surf colours that will soon wash over Bondi, if property owners make the effort, and a wilder alternative scheme, just to prove that there are many ways to transform a superficially drab streetscape.

Imagine all of the buildings on Campbell Parade — the street running north to south along Bondi Beach — repainted. Not in random fashion but in a series of complementary colours. An attempt at this sort of co-ordinated upgrading has already been made in Sydney's Oxford Street, through Paddington and Darlinghurst, where a number of buildings, mainly on the

northern side of the street, have been done over in what are described as "heritage colours". A form of gentle persuasion was used by the NSW Department of Environment and Planning to get owners to co-operate. And paint was made available at a discount. It worked.

Campbell Parade doesn't call for the sombre Victorian palette of Oxford Street. What it needs are the cool colours that have been applied to many of the historic Art Deco buildings at Miami Beach. These can be gutsy lollipop tones or cooler aqueous pastels. It doesn't really matter. What *does* matter is that the streetscape is viewed as a whole, not piecemeal. Okay, not all buildings at Bondi are architecturally distinguished. But we're looking at an ensemble, not at individual bits.

Imagine, then, this whole strip of buildings north to south — freshly repainted. I can imagine quirky Art Deco

elements picked out in snappy contrasting paint. Some of the infill buildings are ugly but their textured brick brutishness could be mitigated by applied decoration.

Imagine, too, all the awnings painted a uniform darker colour so that the buildings seemed to float elegantly above. Chaos is thereby kept at street level.

Then imagine this fresh and quirky streetscape as a background for a revitalised park. Not one filled with urban tat, bubblers, garbage cans, skateboard pits and the like, but rather filled with green and growing things.

Hard to imagine? Not really. In fact, the NSW Government is presently working on plans, commissioned under the former State Government, for a revamp of the Bondi beachfront.

Think of Sydney's Macquarie Street before it was given a facelift, all haphazard planting, unco-ordinated

## LOCAL COLOUR

"WE SET out to create a sense of freshness, lightness and unity in this urban beachside environment," explains Beverley Atkinson of Conybear Morrison, the planning firm commissioned by the previous NSW State Government to evolve a scheme for the Bondi beachfront.

Atkinson used two points of reference in drawing up a colour scheme: historical and environmental.

Bondi was originally a place of cream and green paint and exposed brickwork. She and her colleagues made a slight nod in the direction of history by opting for pale creamy colours but she frankly admits that they made no attempt to "recreate" an original palette. More inspiring was the environment of sand, sea and surf.

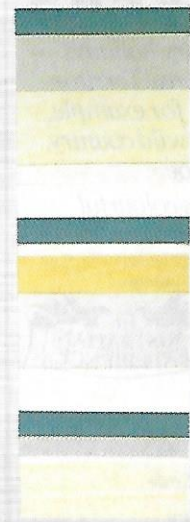
"I think we've come up with a unified shimmering facade that's basically white but flavoured with shell pink, pale and dark sea blues and some stormy weather blues and yellow cream, the colour of sand," she says.

In her scheme, window frames and mullions are light coloured to show off their character and lend texture and diversity to the facades. Existing parapet lines are retained and, where absent, are simulated.

But perhaps her brightest notion has been to colour all the awnings a uniform dark blue, a neat way of separating the new harmonious colour scheme of the facades from the technicolour fruit salad of the signage below. This scheme was unveiled by Bob Carr, former Minister for Planning and Environment and now NSW Opposition Leader, just before the March State election. But somehow it got lost in the pre-election media shuffle.

Bondi Pavilion has already been repainted according to the scheme and Pascol Paints is offering a 35 per cent discount to owners who want to use the suggested colours. Included in the plan are guidelines for street paving, landscaping, street furniture and signs. Another proposal covers roadworks, including a wider pedestrian promenade. Conybear Morrison was involved in the upgrading of Macquarie Street and Circular Quay, both widely admired projects.

Now it is over to the landlords of Bondi. The plan won't work unless they go out and buy their paint. And, of course, Waverley Council must follow through with the broader plan. Then they can all feel proud to be the champions of our most famous beach. □



## THE RAINBOW

DESIGNER George Freedman, one of our most adventurous colourists, takes a dramatic and fanciful view of the Campbell Parade streetscape.

Freedman's colour schemes for the executive offices of the State Bank in Martin Place, for the new Powerhouse museum, the old chapel at Kinselas and a striking small building at the corner of Crown and Liverpool streets in Darlinghurst shock some but delight many.

In these alternative plans for Bondi, Freedman and his partner Sam Marshall (of Marsh Freedman Associates) sought to "respond to the variety and vitality of Bondi Beach".

Their approach is the antithesis of Atkinson's polite pastels, a series of bright background colours ranging from violet at the south end of Campbell Parade to red at the northern end so that, when viewed as a whole, the streetscape would have the effect of a rainbow. "Not a conventional rainbow," Marshall explains. He shuns such a corny approach. "But we would like to treat each block in a range of tones within a particular colour."

In the Marshall and Freedman scheme, individual buildings in each block would be picked out in "bright but close-toned contrasting colours".

"When viewed at close range," says Marshall enthusiastically, "these highlights would float across the rainbow facade in the way that bikinis and Speedos zoom across the beach." □

Left, the colours suggested by Beverley Atkinson; above left, the south end of the rainbow effect by Marsh Freedman.



street furniture, crazy paving. Then think of it now. The changes have not been radical; no buildings were demolished. It was merely the subject of a thoughtful and extensive tidying up.

There is no need for anything to be demolished or altered at Bondi. An infill here and there to help scale and continuity. That's all.

The prime weapon of the developer is neglect. Let something get so rundown that no one worries too much when it's knocked over. That's the usual ploy. But it hasn't worked at Bondi.

In fact, the shabbier the Campbell Parade strip became the more intense became the push for conservation and

refurbishment. A couple of buildings have been lost but not enough to damage a remarkable survival, a lump of pre-war Sydney, preserved like flies in dusty amber.

When the paint goes on, people will wonder how we could have entertained, even for a moment, the thought of wholesale razing. The ludicrous call of the former Liberal mayor, Carolyn Markham, for a Camelot by the sea will, ironically, have been answered. But it will be a different kind of Camelot from the one the pro-development Markham had in mind. A proper Camelot with history and tradition and, above all else, a sense of rich Australian-ness about it. □

became both the largest and youngest district nominated to the National Register.

The success stories have been bitter-sweet. In 1979 Capitman's son, Andrew, purchased the Cardozo Hotel for \$30,000 and approached the Federal Government for funding. When the money was approved, however, no Miami bank would use the loan and it finally had to be placed in another county at a 21 per cent interest rate. Through a limited partnership Capitman also bought the Carlyle, the district's first completely renovated hotel. Word had begun to spread that Miami Beach was on the verge of a renaissance, and the annual Art Deco weekend attracted a wider interest in 1983 than in previous years. With many of the visitors staying at the newly opened hotel, the Carlyle proved a success in practical terms as well as being a flagship for the preservation league, although both hotels are now in less scrupulous hands.

Despite enormous cosmetic and social improvement, the district is still "red lined" — an unofficial real estate term for blackballing — by banks who designate it a high-risk proposition.

Even that has done little to dull the enthusiasm of maverick investors like the Kaye family of Chicago, Tony Goldman of NYC and Cuban-born ▶

## LESSONS FROM MIAMI

BY THE 1970s the classic Art Deco buildings of Miami Beach, Florida, had fallen into neglect and abandonment, housing poor Jewish people and an influx of Cuban refugees. Cocaine and crime, as depicted in the Brian de Palma film *Scarface*, further debilitated the area, creating a scenario that seemed ripe for a wholesale razing and the development of giant ocean-fronted condominiums.

But in 1976 the design journalist Barbara Baer Capitman set up the Miami Beach Preservation League. Realising the area's potential, she roused

the interests of a group of like-minded people from a network of contacts in her profession who declared the beach the world's largest living design museum and petitioned the National Register of Historic Places for official designation as a conservation area. "Until then," Capitman recalls, "buildings that were less than 50 years old were not even allowed to be registered. There was no recognition of Art Deco as a major American style."

The campaign, with the preservation league attracting some 400 members, paid off when the 650-plus buildings



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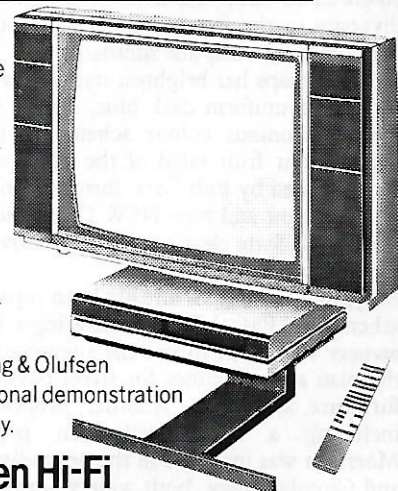
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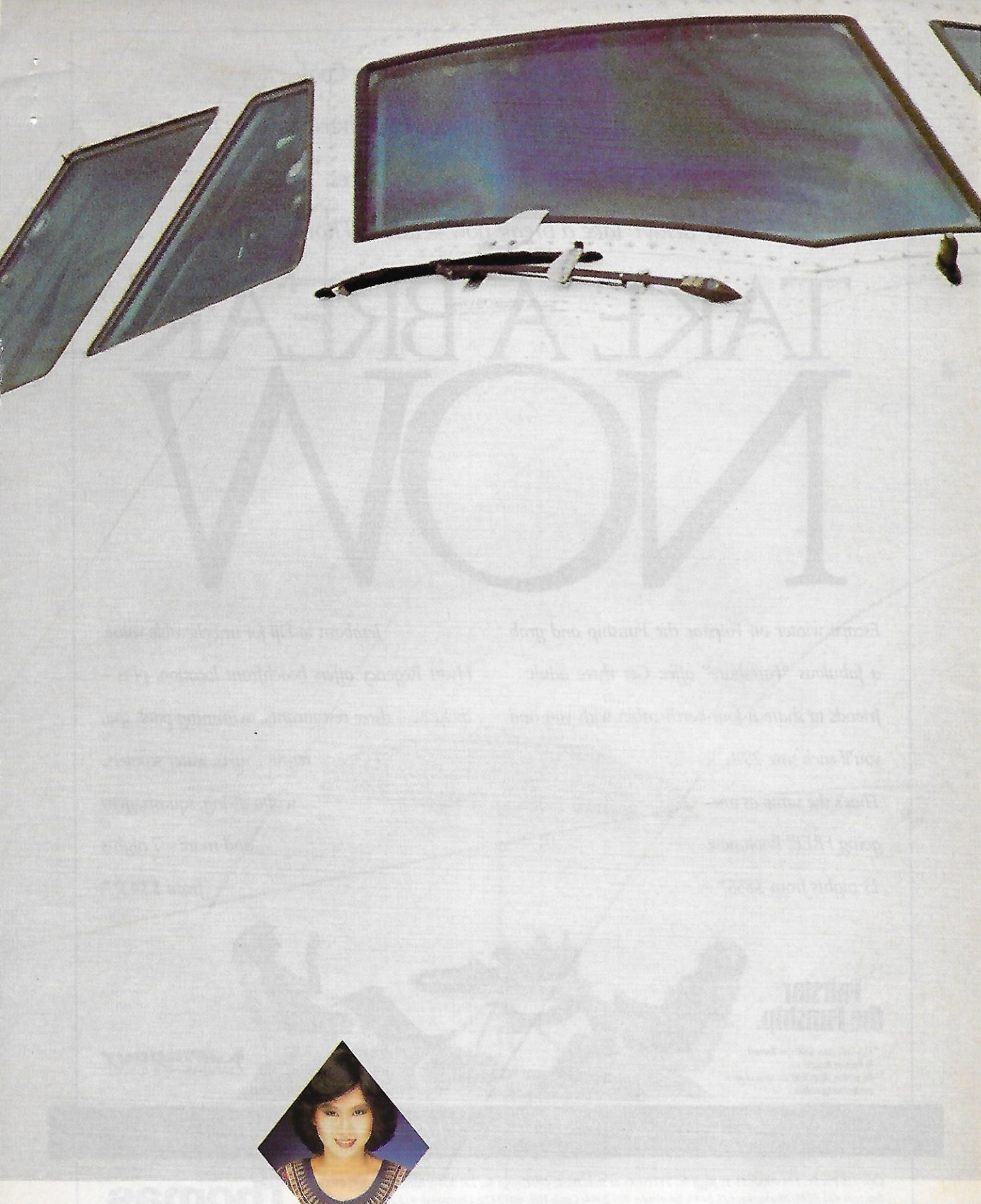
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**SINGAPORE AIRLINES**





Gerry Sanchez, whose company has been involved in the renovation of the New York Stock Exchange, the Brooklyn Bridge and the Capitol Building in Washington DC. Since 1984, as the popularity of *Miami Vice* brought the undiminished beauty of the area into focus, half of the 52 properties on the waterfront strip called Ocean Drive have changed hands.

Attracted initially by the beautiful buildings and low rents, the new residents of Miami Beach are mainly escapees of New York. They come seeking a fresh scene and the excitement of a budding art/cafe society, and include young, urbane artists, would-be entrepreneurs and professionals as well as a large group who actually work in the new hotels.

The youthful face of gentrification has, at least, afforded some protection to the architecture. The Miami Beach Historic Preservation Ordinance provides for a board that selects sites for "local designation" subject to review and approval by a city commission. This designation includes a six-month grace period for preservationist investors to acquire properties slated for demolition.

That protection, unfortunately, did not extend to the Biscaya, a grand hotel facing Miami on Biscayne Bay which was recently bulldozed by the city on the authority of the Board of Unsafe



HENRY GARFUNKEL

Sensitively restored building in the Art Deco district of Miami.

Structures, even though developer Gerry Sanchez had acquired a contract for purchase and restoration.

"The Biscaya was one of our huge failures," says Capitman. "It should never have been allowed to get so run-down. Had the city truly been concerned about preservation, they would have protected it."

The champions of Miami Beach's Deco district swear the Biscaya will be their last lost classic, and the restoration of buildings beyond the boundaries of the preservation area continues un-

abated. Sanchez has set his sights across the bay to the splendid Freedom Tower in Miami City while Capitman's preservation league is beginning work in the mainland's Arabian Knights fantasy community, Opa Locka.

"At this point," Capitman concludes, "we're kind of at the mercy of all these tug-of-wars, but it's perfectly true that the Deco district is completely unlike any place else and walking along Ocean Drive is one of the most exciting experiences in this country." □

*World Press Network*

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