



INTERAMA

MIAMI AND THE PAN-AMERICAN DREAM

By Jean-François Lejeune

Given its location near the southern tip of the continental United States, Miami has routinely envisioned and promoted itself as a crossroads of the Americas. Though the idea of a hemispheric city was advocated in various forms before World War II, this vision found an institutional home in 1951 when the State of Florida established the Inter-American Center Authority. The objective was to build a large-scale, permanent trade and cultural center called *Interama* that would attract participants and visitors from throughout the Americas. The selected site was to the north of Miami, in the bay between North Miami Beach and Sunny Isles.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, Robert Bradford Browne served as the chief architect, while the internationally known architectural renderer and visionary Hugh Ferriss prepared many plans for the project. The *Interama* design peaked during the mid-1960s, when the Authority recruited seven world-renowned architects—Marcel Breuer, Louis Kahn, Edward Durrell Stone, José Luis Sert, Paul Rudolph, Harry Weese, and Minoru Yamasaki—to design a complex of buildings and outdoor spaces that would represent the idea of pan-American cooperation. Across this “mini-city” would be room for every participating country to present its products and artistic traditions.

Planning for a downscaled exhibition continued into the early 1970s, but came to a definitive end in 1975 when the Authority was disbanded. Today, Florida International University’s Biscayne Campus and the Oleta River State Park are located on the site where *Interama* was imagined.

While a full socio-political history of the project remains to be written, this essay “*Interama: Miami and the Pan-American Dream*” offers both a review of the idea and design of *Interama* during a pivotal period in our city’s history and a discussion of its urban and architectural importance.

Pan-Americanism and Miami: 1898-1959

The idea of Pan-Americanism as advocacy of political, commercial and cultural cooperation between the nations of the Americas was born in 1823, when the independence struggles of Latin American nations and the support given to them by the United States through the Monroe doctrine forged a sense of regional solidarity. Pan-American collaborations continued through jointly-held conferences such as the Conference of American States (1890), the formation of organizations such as the Pan-American Union (1910), and the organization of major Pan-American Expositions in Buffalo (1901), San Diego (1915), and San Francisco (1915). Initially welcomed as a source of protection from the European powers, the Monroe doctrine later came to be seen by many Latin American countries as a mask for U.S. imperialistic ambitions. Indeed, the U.S. led more than forty invasions or “interventions” during the 20th century alone—not counting the support given to dozens of military coups.

Miami came to play an early and important role in the development of Pan-American relations and political events throughout the twentieth century. In 1898, the young city hosted seven thousand Spanish-American War troops bound for Cuba. Beginning in 1928, Miami-based Pan American Airways played

Conceptual drawing of an installation in the Industrial Area at *Interama*. Early 1960s. *Miami News* Collection, Historical Museum of Southern Florida, 1989-011-8794.

a pivotal role in linking North and Central America when the Federal Government awarded it the first foreign air routes. Recognizing the city's increasing importance as a commercial and cultural hemispheric hub, business and civic leaders proposed the construction of a Pan-American trade mart in Miami as early as 1919 under the leadership of Miami Mayor Ed Sewell. The first slogan for the newly founded University of Miami "Keep the World Coming" (1926) clearly drew on the state's hemispheric ambitions, while Mrs. Clark D. Stearns organized a Pan-American League (1930) in order to promote "peace and understanding among the Americas" and offer various classes and services to both local residents and visitors from the south.

In 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt established the Good Neighbor Policy toward the countries of Latin America. On March 4, 1933, he stated during his inaugural address that: "In the field of world policy I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor—the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others." Renouncing unpopular military intervention, the United States shifted to other methods to maintain its influence in Latin America: Pan-Americanism, support for strong local leaders, the training of national guards, economic and cultural penetration, export-import bank loans, financial supervision, and political subversion.

Miami benefited clearly from this dramatic changes and its position as the major port of entry, both by sea and air, improved dramatically. In 1933, Miami's Bayfront Park appeared as a major feature in Thornton Freeland's film "Flying Down to Rio", starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in their first major dance duo, "El Carioca." One year earlier, architect E. Kingston Hall designed a Mediterranean-architecture complex containing a major exhibition hall and a landmark tower to be built on Watson Island across from Biscayne Boulevard in downtown Miami. During Everest G. Sewell's third term as mayor (1936-38), another version of this complex, this time in a more Deco-modern streamlined style, was designed by a team of high-level Miami architects led by August Geiger and including Kiehnel & Elliott, Paist & Steward, Weed & Reeder, Russell T. Pancoast, V.E. Virrick, and others. Although nothing concrete was initiated on the ground, the young Florida Senator Claude Pepper and other delegates at the Florida State Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution in 1939 proposing that a Pan-American trade mart be built in Miami.

Ferriss' visions for Interama in the 1950s: Science, Art and Industry

On September 27, 1950, the House and the Senate in Washington approved a proposed Inter-American Center in Miami in a joint resolution (Public Law 853) beginning with the words, "Whereas, the national security and prosperity of the United

States require the development of improved relations and increased trade with the Latin American Republics...." On October 12, the preliminary approval of those republics was registered through their representatives attending the Columbus Day conference in Miami, at which the architect's preliminary plans were shown. One year later, the Florida Legislature established the Inter-American Authority and appointed its first chairman, Dr. W. H. Walker. At the same time, the Authority selected a 1600-acre bay-front site, five miles north of downtown Miami, known as the Glades Tract and originally purchased by the City of Miami with the intention to create an airport. From the start the Inter-American Center was conceived as a permanent international exposition of the Americas with cultural, educational, and trade activities, thus combining the features of an amusement park, world's fair and trade fair. To some extent, it was a "planned city within the city" and, as such, the 20 year-long design saga that began in 1950 generated the most interesting urban design schemes in the history of Greater Miami.

The beginnings of the design process are still unclear in the state of current research but thanks to the archives of Hugh Ferriss (Avery Library Columbia University), the New York architect and visionary renderer who from 1950 to 1956 was the main visual interpreter of the first master plans, it is possible to reconstruct the sequence of events for those first years of planning. Trained in St. Louis, Hugh Ferriss (1889-1962) moved to New York in the early 1910s where he started to work as a delineator for Cass Gilbert, architect of the Woolworth Tower. He quickly developed a unique style of representation, particularly of early skyscrapers, frequently representing the buildings at night in a manner that would generate powerful "emotional" responses from the readers and viewers. In 1929 he published his seminal and very influential book *The Metropolis of Tomorrow*, whose drawings were instrumental in creating the mythical image of the New York skyscraper for decades to come. He later worked as official renderer for the 1939 New York World's Fair, which no doubt influenced the Inter-American Center design board's decision to employ him for the project (other early Interama employees who had experience with previous world's fairs were planners and consultants Paul Massman and Harvey Maxwell).

The first plans for the permanent fair—developed in order to influence the decision to pass the federal resolution of 1950—were published in a two-page spread in Sunday *Miami Herald* on June 21, 1950 (Ferris would later publish the very first rendering in his *Power in Buildings* of 1956). The first plan was the work of a group of architects directed by architect Robert Fitch Smith and including Russell T. Pancoast, Alfred Browning Parker, John E. Peterson, and Robert Law Weed (as well as William K. Jackson from Jacksonville, Archie Gale Parish from St. Petersburg, and James Gamble Rogers from Winter Park). As shown in the two renderings that Ferriss was paid to realize (\$1500.00), the project had a strong naval theme and seemed inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright postwar civic projects. The

complex consisted of a quasi-circular arrangement of buildings around a one-mile perimeter long lake and was organized in three areas—Science, Art, Industry—expressing the “culture of the American countries at this time in history.” Arriving from the boulevard, counterclockwise, the visitor would encounter the United States and Latin American pavilions to reach the palm tree-lined “Allée of the Arts” heading to the Grand Plaza, the Hemisphere as theme center, the Spire and the Hanging Gardens. Passing the small bridge, one reached the science area with the aquarium, and other research and industry pavilions (on the other side of the outside basin were planned a marine amphitheater, a beach, the Water Gate and the Club Island). According to Ferriss’ memorandum reproduced integrally in the special *Herald* edition, the Spire and its two ascending-descending cars “like many historic shafts, [would serve] as a site-marker. This shaft, however, is conceived and designed as embodying a massive spiral movement; it is as though a number of forces, or of national aspirations, having sprung from the soil of the Americas have now united into one force which spirals, or aspires, upward and in unison.” As for the 150-foot diameter Hemisphere it was supposed to include a decorative map of the Americas and be the central gathering place. As Ferriss suggested, “The President of B... will speak tonight at the Hemisphere; someone may say to his girl ‘meet you at 8:30 at the Hemisphere (sic).” Ferriss also addressed the modernity of the Interama buildings and mentioned in *Power in Buildings* that the original character of the Center “would be surmised from recently constructed buildings in Florida.” For the New York architect, these buildings differed “completely from the ‘Spanish-American style’” popular in the 1920s, and by now constituted “an indigenous architecture” developed by the participating architects for the sub-tropical climate.

Ferriss’ colored drawings kept at Columbia University and the Florida State Archives in Tallahassee show that in 1954-55 the project was simplified in terms of overall planning but kept its characteristic semi-circular structure of a lagoon surrounded by concentric layers of exhibition buildings, canals and parking. At the same time, the architectural concept of the Hemisphere developed as a concrete multi-arched structure that partially covered and screened a multi-functional open-air plaza for meetings, events, and other performances (variants of the 1954-55 Interama scheme can be also be seen in J.E. Peterson beautiful black and white “expressionist” renderings). According to the Ferriss’ archives, a selected group of international architects also participated in the design process as consultants. Paul Rudolph (who would continue his involvement in the 1960s) was one of them, along with the landscape architect Dan Kiley. The group also involved two Latin American architects and, in fact, the only ones to be involved over the two decades of planning:



The 6 renowned architects who worked on Interama c. mid 1960s. HMSF 1989-156-1

Fernando Belaunde (1912-2002), who started his studies at the University of Miami in the early 1930s and served two terms as president of Peru; and, more importantly (as some drawings of his concept remain), Venezuelan architect Luis Malaussena (1900-62). Along with Carlos Raúl Villanueva, Malaussena was the second most important architect of post-1930 Caracas, rapidly being transformed from provincial capital into a oil-driven metropolis. In his sketches for Interama, Malaussena employed the same Beaux-Arts (European classical) principles that he used in his most renowned works in Caracas, the Sistema de la Nacionalidad (1945-55) and the Military Academy (1951)—two interconnected ensembles of buildings and monumental public spaces that marked the years of military dictatorship. His vision for Miami also resembled previous World Fair designs in Paris, Chicago or New York, with his characteristic mix of classicism and modernism (The Fantasy Land area, for instance, was also a feature of the New York World’s Fair of 1939).

One year later (1955-56), Smith, Ferriss and their



International Area at Interama. Inter-American Center Authority booklet, 1962. Historical Museum of Southern Florida

collaborators produced what can be described as the most complete and compact vision for the Inter-American Center. With Sunny Isles in the background, Ferris’s impressive aerial color rendering—along with many preparatory drawings—illustrate this third version of the Inter-American Center as an extraordinary riparian city, organized as a densely built and landscaped grid of islands, canals, plazas, streets, and shaded parking areas. There is no trace in these perspectives of the formerly radio-concentric scheme. Interama now appears like a highly geometric, almost abstract modern urban composition—almost a modern image of an Aztec-inspired center. The central island was dominated by a revised version of the Hemisphere as monumental three-arch concrete structure on the edge of the bay. Next to it were a series of platform plazas and gardens, including a suggestive grove containing hundreds of palm trees. Around the center, the network of canals and pedestrian esplanades led to a series of campuses with a variety of modern courtyard buildings and complexes. All buildings used screening, ventilation, and lighting devices that corresponded to the contemporary trend of tropical architecture as seen in the projects of Alfred Browning Parker, Rufus Nims, and others

(those architects were more than likely involved in this version of the project as well).

With these projects concluding the decade and analyzed in the context of the history of American world’s fairs, Interama’s “organic” but urbanistically close-knit layouts reached a level of sophistication worthy of Chicago in 1934 and New York in 1939. Mixing open urban forms and civic plazas, tropical architecture, and landscape, the Inter-American Center, particularly in its version of 1956, purported a unique symbiosis of tropical architecture and landscape—a unique vision of what a “tropical civic urbanism” could be in Miami.

Progress with Freedom: Interama 1960-1968

During the 1960s, while Interama officials and architects were pursuing visions of an ideal inter-American community modeled as a World’s Fair of the Americas, Miami itself was increasingly becoming a hemispheric city. In 1959 a new passenger terminal opened at Miami International Airport to support the emerging jet fleets of Pan Am and other airlines. During the 1960s, a large-scale expansion at the Port of Miami facilitated both cargo and cruise ship traffic, while the construction of I-95 linked Miami to the Interstate Highway system. In tandem with this expansion of transportation infrastructure, businesses increasingly opened Latin American offices in Miami.

During this same period, Miami’s future was being shaped by international political events of worldwide impact and dimension. In the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution of 1959, tens of thousands of Cubans started to emigrate to and settle in South Florida. The ever-growing exile community quickly established Spanish as Miami’s second language and helped to shift the city’s orientation toward Latin America, a trend that would be reinforced by other waves of immigrants from politically troubled countries like Nicaragua and El Salvador. At the national level, President John F. Kennedy implemented an Alliance for Progress (1961), with the objective of providing economic assistance to Latin American countries and encouraging more cordial relationships with the U.S. The aid was primarily intended to counter the perceived emerging Communist threat from Cuba to U.S. interests and dominance in Central and South America. Kennedy declared in March 1961: “...we propose to complete the revolution of the Americas, to build a hemisphere where all men can hope for a suitable standard of living and all can live out their lives in dignity and in freedom. To achieve this goal, political freedom must accompany material progress...Let us once again transform the American Continent into a vast crucible of revolutionary ideas and efforts, a tribute to the power of the creative energies of free men and women, an example to all the world that liberty and progress walk hand in hand. Let us once again awaken our American revolution until it guides the struggles of people everywhere—not with an imperialism of force or fear but the rule of courage and freedom and hope for the

future of man.”

In 1962, South Florida became a focus of international attention with its specter of nuclear war. During the following years, Cuba became the major factor in U.S. policy toward other countries in the Caribbean and Latin America. During the Kennedy administration, the U.S. suspended economic and/or broke off diplomatic relations with several countries which had dictatorships, including Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Peru. Yet, following Kennedy’s assassination, President Johnson resumed support of military intervention and anti-Communist coups and initiatives throughout Central and South America.

As Michael Hoover has shown in his important essay, “Before Walt Arrived: Florida’s Ill-Fated Attempt to Build Interama Theme Park” in the *Florida Historical Quarterly*, from 1960 onward, Interama was promoted as an instrument of “free world” propaganda, but also a public project intended to boost morale and work opportunities in a economy gravely impacted by the Cuban immigration tsunami. The Center appointed a new director, Irving Muskat, a businessman and retired scientist, and defined a new theme: “Progress with Freedom.” Billed as a “national contribution to further develop Inter-American progress and amity,” Interama’s plans were embedded with the democratic and anti-Communist rhetoric of the 1960s. U.S. and Latin American exhibits planned for the project would represent, among others, “the economic, social, and spiritual phases of life under freedom.” Kennedy and Johnson after him embraced the Interama concept and promised both limited financial aid and guarantees for development and construction bonds to be launched by the State of Florida.

In the early 1960s, Miami architect Robert E. Browne took over the direction of the Interama design team and a definitive site plan was quickly approved. The compact and “urban” character of the 1955-56 version gave way to a more organic assemblage of man-made and finger-like land masses or “islands”, globally oriented toward the south to provide easy water and automobile access, and whose general configuration prefigured Epcot Center in Disney’s Orlando, with each island functionally and thematically defined. The islands converged to surround an inlet of water at the center of which arose the 1000-foot Tower of Freedom, whose main access was through a spectacular underwater tunnel. In the design of 1962 (the many unsigned sketches suggest that the scheme might have developed from Hugh Ferriss sketches of 1956), the Tower of Freedom was in fact made of three towers, perhaps inspired by some Japanese Metabolist organic-like projects, and would have featured pod-like elevators that visitors could take up to an observation deck and restaurant.

Automobile access to the site was provided by Biscayne Boulevard, by Interstate 95 then under construction, and, more



Underwater tunnel and Tower of Freedom, circa 1962. Courtesy of the Florida State Archives

spectacularly, by the proposed Mid-Bay Causeway. The Mid-Bay Causeway was a unique, complex project that would have enabled motorists to “float” over the water landscape in the manner of the Overseas Highway to the Keys—beautifully captured in Ralston Crawford’s painting of the same title of 1938. In 1947, a group of real-estate interests proposed to build a 14 mile-long Mid-Bay causeway to be built on bay bottom between the blimp base on Watson Island and Hallandale Beach to the north. The causeway was to be financed by private interests in exchange for the rights to develop new islands along the way for apartment houses, hotels, and other homes (Launched within the optimistic climate of the post-war, this extraordinary drive over water lost momentum and was finally rejected as the environmental movement of the 1960s gained favor and the disappointment over crass commercialism grew among the public.)

Between 1960 and 1962, Robert Browne’s team worked frenetically and produced dozens of beautiful and imaginary sketches and drawings (unfortunately unsigned) that provided captivating glimpses of the various sections of Interama, from the Mediterranean-style entertainment area and the open-air theater at the edge of the bay to the science-fiction-like skyline and views of the Tower of Freedom (many of these drawings were published in a brochure in 1962). Particularly striking were many miniature sketches of the proposed system of aerial capsules connecting the fair to the mainland and the various islands to each other. The Authority soon moved to the hotel built at the new Miami International Airport where various models were

built and filmed for television news. In September 1964, the first phase of construction began. The work included clearing, dredging, filling, and bulk-heading 680 acres of the low-lying tract in the bay. The opening date was moved, optimistically as time would reveal, to July 4, 1968.

The 1960s “Star” Architects Design the International Area

In 1964-65, lobbying for the project by Irving Muskat, Congressman Claude Pepper, and the Florida legislature



“Community C” at Interama, with a parliamentary building (left), exhibition halls, auditorium and houses for participating nations (right). Designed by Marcel Breuer. 1967. *Miami News* Collection, Historical Museum of Southern Florida, 1989-011-8765.

intensified. By October 1965, Congress had authorized initial funding for Federal exhibits and limited financing for the United States and Latin American pavilions. Interama was thus promoted nationally and internationally as a permanent international center for the exchange of ideas between “free” nations, specifically rejecting any country within the Soviet orbit. Interama became a “Cold War” project and ideological product. Exchanges were to be not only commercial, but also cultural and political: Interama was increasingly seen as the “scene” of future “diplomatic” and inter-cultural exchanges between north and south, even though the U.S. was to remain the principal vector of reference. As Muskat declared to the *New York Times* in 1967, “when completed, Interama will portray the American way of life—Progress with Freedom.”

To reflect these important ideological changes in direction, the Interama Authority commissioned, at the beginning of 1966, six world-renowned architects to design that section of the master

plan designated as the “International Area.” The selection was of exceptional quality and timeliness as the six architects were at the peak of their national and international careers: at the top of the list, Louis Kahn (1901-1974) had started work on the Government Center in Dacca, Bangladesh, in 1962, and had just completed the Salk Institute at La Jolla in 1965; Marcel Breuer (1902-1981) had inaugurated the Whitney Museum in 1966, the year when Harry Weese (1915-1998) started work on the Washington Metro and the Pantheon-inspired concrete vaults of its tunnels; Edward Durell Stone (1902-1978) was the celebrated author of the American Pavilion at the Brussels Expo 58 and the 2 Columbus Circle museum in New York City (1962); Paul Rudolph (1918-1997), one of the leaders of the Sarasota School, was the controversial architect of the just finished Yale University School of Art and Architecture in 1964; that same year, Spanish architect José Luis Sert (1902-1983), Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Design, was in the news for the Peabody Terrace Housing at Cambridge, and the newly-opened Maeght Foundation in the South of France. Sert was in fact the only one of the six who had significant experience within Latin America where he had worked on various urban plans, including the Pilot Plan for Havana of 1955-56. Sert accompanied Muskat and others on their promotional tours in Latin America and he was a good friend of Brazilian architect Sergio Bernardes, the only Latin American involved in this latest phase. The absence of other Latin American architects was a missed cultural opportunity (even though names like Oscar Niemeyer and Roberto Burle Marx appeared in preliminary lists) but this fact should not diminish the importance of the selected group: the combined work of the six architects would have been a milestone in the history of North American and even world architecture.

The six architects met at regular intervals in New York and Miami to discuss their proposals and the way they would connect to each other. Sert and Kahn appear to have been leaders in the process as printed records and sketches in their archives bear witness to. Together, Kahn, Rudolph, Breuer, Weese, Sert, and Durrell Stone designed an uncanny ensemble of great urban and architectonic interest. On the long rectangular site developed along a central canal and surrounded by water on all sides, they designed modern public buildings whose volumes, plazas, patios, and elevated terraces created a contemporary version of a Pre-Columbian and tropical center. For Rudolph, “the buildings are dependent on water, walkways, and planting. They should not be thought of as individual structures, but rather as a whole. Each architect has imagined his project in relation to the others.” Sert, a long-term advocate of the “heart of the city” in modern planning, wrote at the time, “Interama has the same principles and size as the center of a city. There is a distillation of the designs and open spaces so they all fit together.”

At the entrance coming from the south was Durell Stone’s American pavilion built on pilotis within the bay itself and containing a covered tropical garden; on both sides of the entry

canal were, to the east, Paul Rudolph's International Bazaar—a bold concrete structure that contained shops, restaurants, night club and a futurist transportation terminal—and, to the west, Harry Weese's Caribbean pavilions designed as a long multi-level barre building. Then came the ceremonial triangular plaza designed by Louis Kahn, bordered on two sides by the Central American pavilions. To the north of the plaza were the two groups dedicated to South America, Marcel Breuer's Mexican-inspired complex dominated by a pyramid, and José Luis Sert's urban group structured along a covered street and terminated by an open-air theater. An interesting feature of all the Hispanic pavilions was that they not only contain cultural facilities, but also were living facilities for international delegates and students who would serve as guides for their country's exhibits; particularly suggestive were Sert and Breuer's variations on traditional patio housing, and Kahn's Y-shape units that showed clear influences from his college dormitories at Bryn Mawr (Pennsylvania, completed in 1965) and the Government Center in Bangladesh (particularly the large circular openings).

Finally, at the end of 1967, Minoru Yamasaki was selected to design the definitive version of the Tower of Freedom, set in the water to "rival the Statue of Liberty for fame." Yamasaki, one of the architects of the 1962 Seattle World's Fair and the designer from 1965 of the New York World Trade Center, designed a 900-foot concrete tower, capped by a restaurant. Like the preceding design, the tower was set within the bay itself but was now connected to the three sections of Interama by three elegant suspended bridges.

Coda

By 1967-68, failed bond issues, big financial uncertainties, and flagging public and political confidence led to several reorganizations of the Inter-American Center Authority. Interama had failed to garner significant Latin-American participation or secure the full budget to begin construction of its buildings. Moreover, repeated U.S.-led interventions and bolstered dictatorships in Latin America throughout the 1960s had clearly undermined the goals of Pan-American cooperation and sparked anti-U.S. sentiment in the region.

In early 1967, Florida Governor Kirk appointed Gui Govaert, Honorary Council of Belgium in Miami, as new executive director of Interama. Putting the plans on hold (all architects involved had by then completed most of the working drawings for the structures), Govaert concentrated the efforts on building the tower as the landmark that could generate continuing interest and further funding for the International Area and the rest of the project. By the end of the following year, Govaert had resigned, disappointed by the loss of the public character and the intensifying commercialization of the project (he was followed by Elton Gissandamer, former mayor of Miami).

Recognizing the enormous costs embedded in previous design schemes, the new members of the Authority sought to develop new, less costly plans, outsourcing the management and financing to a professional management firm, and tying its implementation to the federal funds allocated to Miami as one of six designated sites for a 1976 bicentennial celebration. In its final set of plans, Interama was advertised as a regional park that would explore "a new facet of governmental, cultural and regional activity as the United States moves into its third century of freedom." Perpetual expositions of commerce and culture were proposed as well as a new Tower, a marina, a habitat park, a state university, and a 44-acre Garden of the Sun. The Authority disbanded in 1975 after the federal government withdrew support for bicentennial programs. In the end, only two of Interama's planned concepts ever materialized. The university, first proposed as part of its plans in the late 1960s, and now Florida International University, today occupies the site where Interama would have stood and continues to host the only building ever constructed for it. Miami, through advances in air and sea transportation, mass migration and the presence of international businesses has become a hemispheric city.

Over the last 30 years, the Interama saga has either been forgotten or almost exclusively discussed in terms of precarious financing and the steroid-driven egos and ambitions of Miami civic leaders. Unfortunately, the project was never examined for its intrinsic urban and architectonic qualities. Articles in the architectural press between 1950 and 1970 were few and sketchy, while references in recent architectural monographs on Kahn, Breuer, and Sert have been limited in scope. As this essay has attempted to show, the Inter-American Center in Miami generated unique and important visions for Miami that saw the unique contribution and collaboration of some of the most important figureheads of the 1950-1960s. That these have not entered the collective memory is everybody's loss.

-SFH