

**WILKIE D. FERGUSON, JR.**  
**UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE**

Miami, Florida



**WILKIE D. FERGUSON, JR.**  
**UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE**

Miami, Florida

- 4** A Dynamic Urban Landmark
- 10** A Contemporary Vision that Respects Tradition
- 16** Focus: Architecture and Glass
- 20** Art in Architecture
- 22** General Facts about the Courthouse
- 26** Profile: Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr.
- 28** Biographies: The Architects and the Artist
- 30** The Design and Construction Team
- 34** U.S. General Services Administration  
and the Design Excellence Program





**You see this monumental building that is a  
United States Courthouse, but it feels inviting  
and friendly, not intimidating.**

Bernardo Fort-Brescia  
Architect, Arquitectonica

## A DYNAMIC URBAN LANDMARK

Miami is a vibrant American metropolis. Its cultural diversity is evident in the vitality of its many ethnic neighborhoods. Its economic vitality finds expression in an expanding skyline of high-profile offices, condominiums, and hotels. Reaching beyond political boundaries, the city is a center of regional and global commerce.

The Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr., United States Courthouse complements this dynamic reality. As an urban landmark, it is the terminus of the NW 4th Street Promenade that runs east to Biscayne Bay. As part of a larger enclave of public buildings, it completes a complex of judicial facilities that includes the Post Office Courthouse, a tower known as the Dyer Annex, the Lawrence King Building, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. It is also next to the Dade County government center and the Miami Dade Community College campus.

Architecturally, the courthouse profile is characterized by the layering of different forms and details. Courtrooms, judges' chambers, and court-related office space are defined as two glazed towers edged in sand-colored precast concrete. Located

on what were once separate blocks, the towers face east and west and are sited to frame the NW 4th Street Promenade. Each is dramatically lifted three stories off the ground by massive free-standing and engaged limestone columns. The façades are "scored" with a pattern of mullions suggesting the different functions within—from tall, broadly spaced lines that announce public spaces to shorter, more densely packed divisions that delineate the offices on the lower levels.

Joining the two towers is a 14-story curved glass form that appears as the hull of a great ship held inside and rising above framework of the towers. With its prow pointed south, this volume is defined by an expansive blue curtainwall highlighted with slender horizontal sunscreens in various lengths and locations. It is an image that recalls Miami's nautical culture. As this "glass ship" touches the ground under the southern tower, it becomes the public entrance to the courthouse. Above the fourth floor, it is a multistory atrium-bridge that unites the towers into a single building. This same design decision also creates a monumental open portal above the

Promenade. Overall, it is a strategy of bold massing and contours that makes the courthouse a unique and significant public building.

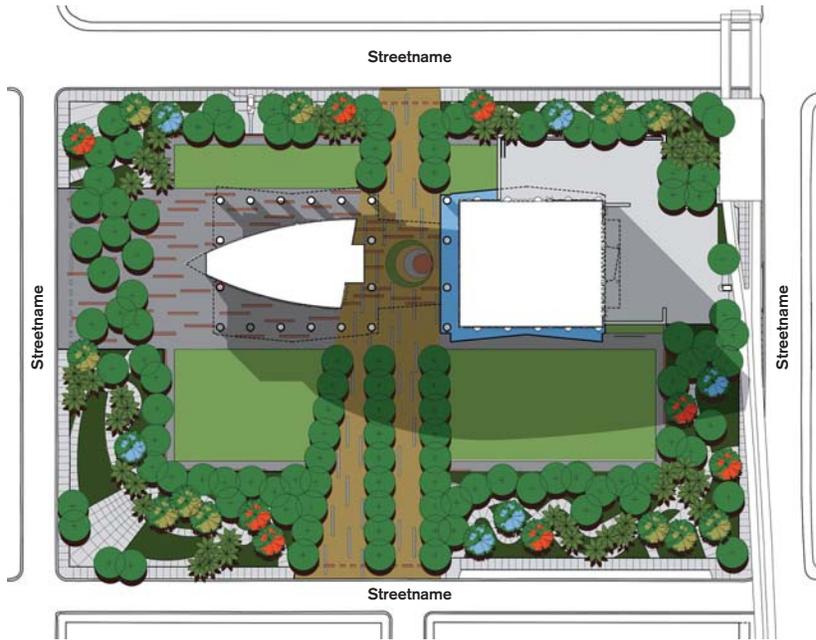
More nuanced are juxtapositions in the design that add visual interest and subtly symbolize the two sides of a judicial argument. In the paired east and west tower façades, the precast concrete frame is thicker at the bottom edge of one and the top edge of the other. In the same elevations, the wall of one building moves out while the other is pulled back. On the northern and southern sides of the towers, contrasting vertical and horizontal windows are used to create a striking graphic effect.

Like the architecture, the landscape that surrounds the courthouse is diverse and layered. A broad band of the site's perimeter has been transformed into a lush native grove of XX, XX and XX. It is an urban arboretum that celebrates Miami's balmy climate and vivid colors. It provides shelter from the tropical sun. It invites people to stroll along winding paths and relax for a moment on benches. It is a buffer—a courthouse oasis—that softens

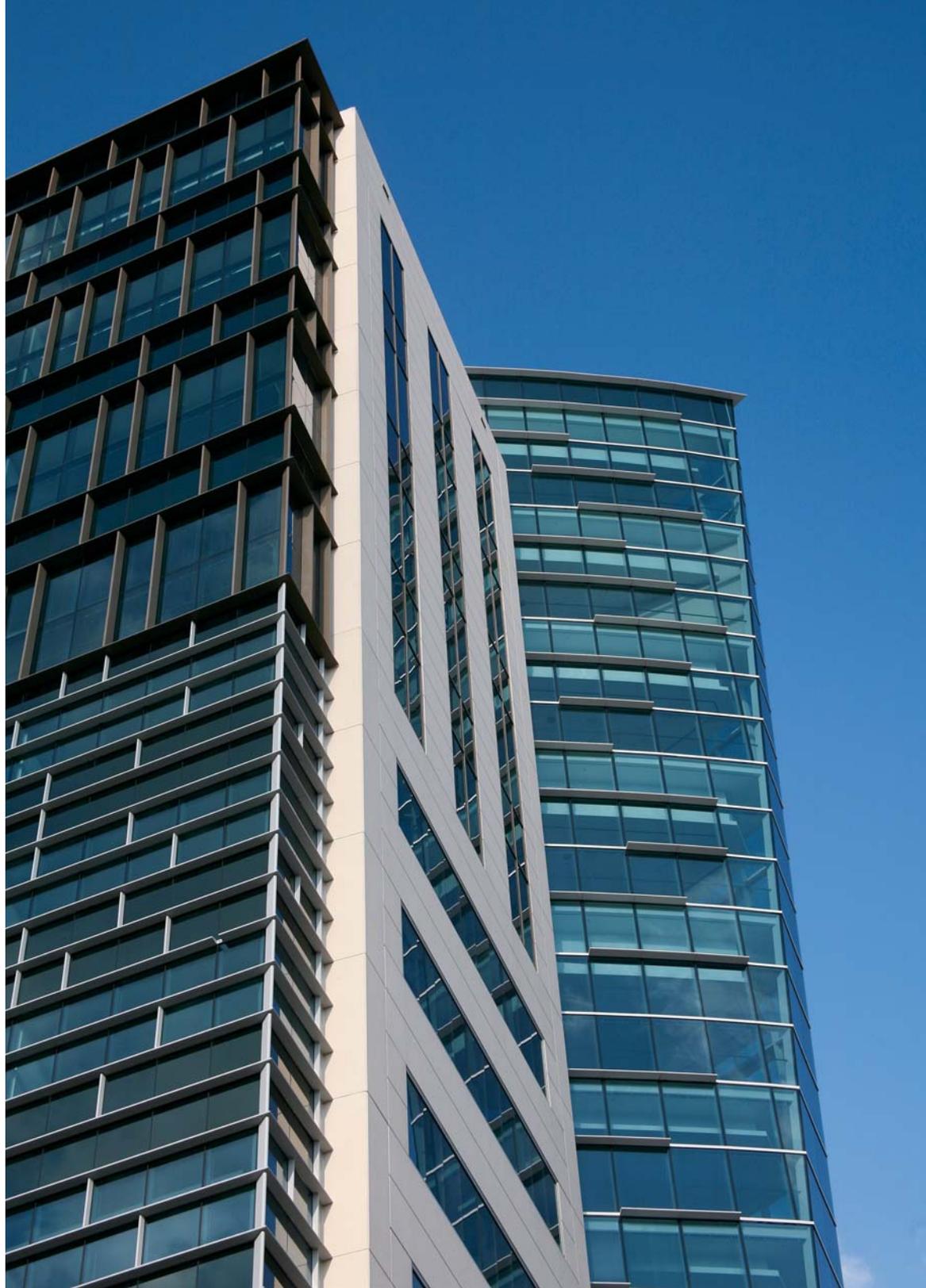
the edges of the block and offers a sense of sanctuary.

At the inner edge of this shaded park, a one-meter-high retaining wall encloses a raised lawn. Along the building's front façade, this is divided into two fields, each sculpted by artist Maya Lin as an earthwork of soil and grass that mimics the gentle roll of water waves or rippling sand. It is the surface upon which the courthouse floats.

To mark the procession from the street, broad paved plazas penetrate the green landscape. One moves from 3rd Street on the south under the tower, while the primary axis brings visitors west from North Miami Avenue, narrowing as it rises to the open portal that marks the courthouse entrance. Echoing the linear façade motifs, the paving incorporates stripes that focus movement toward the entry under the building. There, the north-south and east-west paths cross, and a circular paving indicates arrival. This concept is further reinforced by the presence opposite the exterior doors of a cascade of water over a 40-foot high folded slate wall.



**Site Plan**





**The architecture of United States Courthouses has historically been one of the most visible expressions of the federal government's presence in our communities. Our design objective was to provide a visual testimony to the dignity and stability of the American government and the seriousness of the federal judiciary's mission.**

K. Michael Moore  
Judge, U.S. District Court  
Florida Southern District

## **A CONTEMPORARY VISION THAT RESPECTS TRADITION**

Unlike the hermetic quality common to this building type, the Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr., United States Courthouse is about openness. Its exterior and interiors engage each other as if in dialogue. Courtroom lobbies have vistas into the city. The courtrooms themselves are designed with clerestories to bring in natural light. Lower level exterior columns move into the building above the fourth floor and can be observed continuing to rise through the curtainwall glazing. Most strikingly, this transparency is evident in the hull's central section where floors seven through 14 are a multistory atrium penetrated by a downward expanding cone of colored glass panels. As this focal element descends into the building, its hues shift from yellow to green to blue to purple. At night, the cone is illuminated and can be seen through the façade—a glowing surface that conveys the idea of justice enlightened by truth.

Other aspects of the design also take the courthouse beyond tradition. On the one hand, the colonnade that surrounds the south tower entrance lobby alludes in its mass and scale to classical porticoes. On the other hand, its lines are unambiguously

contemporary. These columns are the threshold to a four-story lobby surrounded by glass walls. Past security, the ambiance of this vast hall is formal but open and welcoming. The floor is slate, and interior walls are covered in three pale earthen hues of irregularly staggered vertical limestone tiles. At the north end of the space, elevators rise to upper floors. To the south, an escalator dramatically crisscrosses the lobby to the fourth floor jury assembly area.

Above the entry portal and lobby, levels five and six are the only ones that span the entire length of the building. On levels seven and higher, the light-filled atrium divides each floor. The courtroom levels are ten through 13. There are four district courtrooms on ten, 11, and 12 (two in each tower), and two district and two special proceedings courtrooms on 13. On these floors, the south tower elevators open into waiting areas that include the atrium as well as exterior halls with expansive views of the city. These public spaces are unusually large to accommodate the spectators, media, and families that attend the frequent multiparty trials held in this judicial district.

Simple, elegant details endow the courtroom floors with a sense of color and diversity tempered by civic refinement and restraint. Walls are lined with the same limestone tile found in the main lobby. Courtroom plans in the east and west towers are mirror images of each other. These spaces have clerestory windows that bring in natural light. Finishes include fabric acoustical panels and overlapping, multidirectional cherry wood paneling. The furnishings and fixtures of the attorney well, bow-fronted jury box, and the spectator gallery are walnut. In the rear center of each courtroom, the judge's bench is faced with teak and limestone in front of a backdrop of wenge panels scored with inlaid lines of stainless steel. Of particular visual interest are the folded, origami-like courtroom ceilings. These provide acoustical benefits and reinterpret a signature detail of the building that visitors first encounter in the water wall under the open portal.

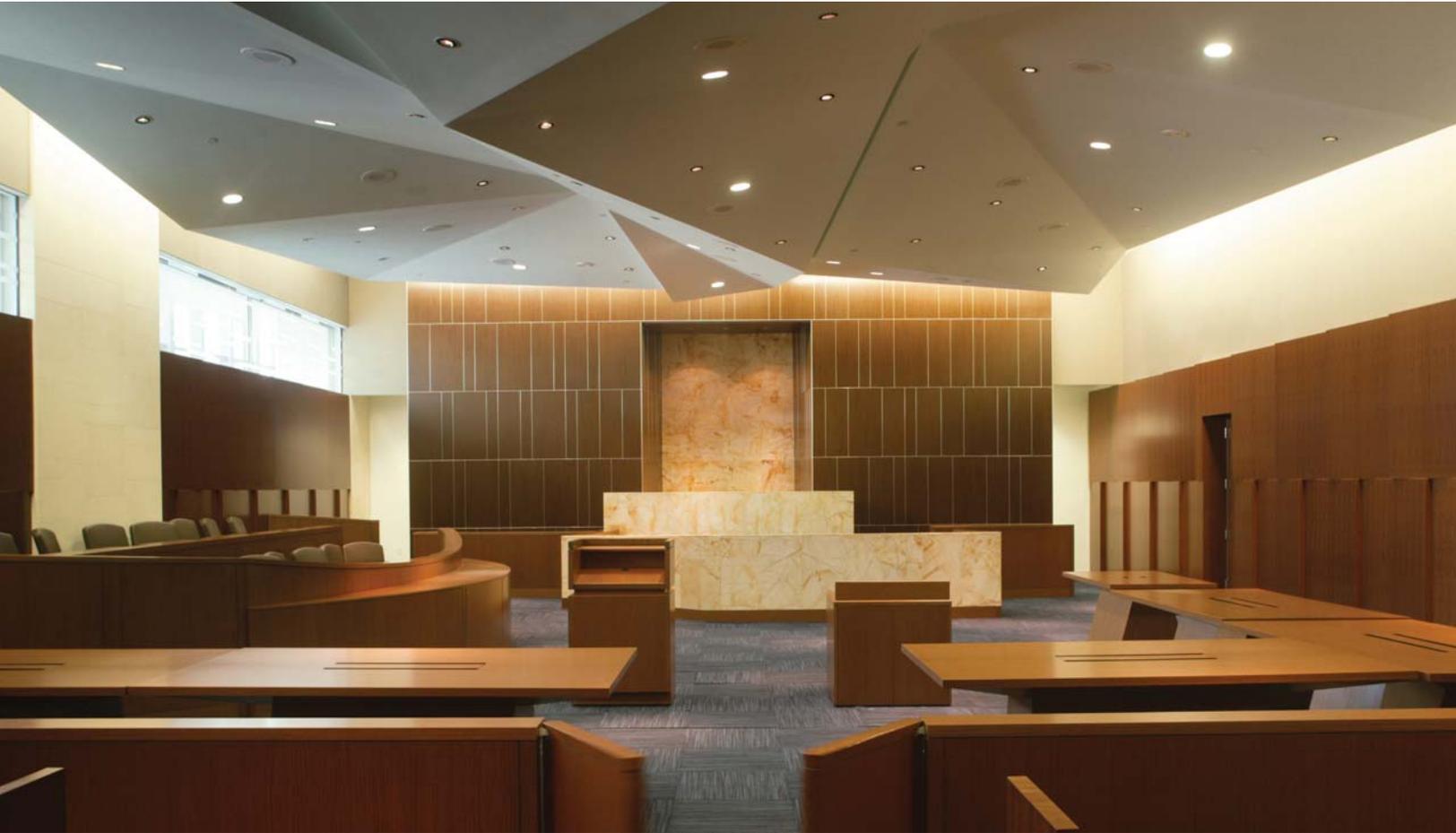
The singular design of the Ferguson courthouse captures the enlightened attitude of government toward the presence of justice in American society. The serious functions of the courts proceed in spaces

where certain elements, notably the positions of judges, juries, plaintiffs, and defendants, have scarcely changed from courtrooms built when the nation was young. At the same time, the spaces, materials, and details reflect its locale and the contemporary diversity of the constituents it serves.









## FOCUS: ARCHITECTURE AND GLASS

Among the most fascinating aspects of the Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr., United States Courthouse is its utter transparency, a seeming lightness of construction that belies its painstaking engineering for strength and security. The glazing holds up to hurricane-force winds, the trauma of a bomb blast, and the withering tropical heat. In all, 18 different types of laminated glass are installed throughout the courthouse.

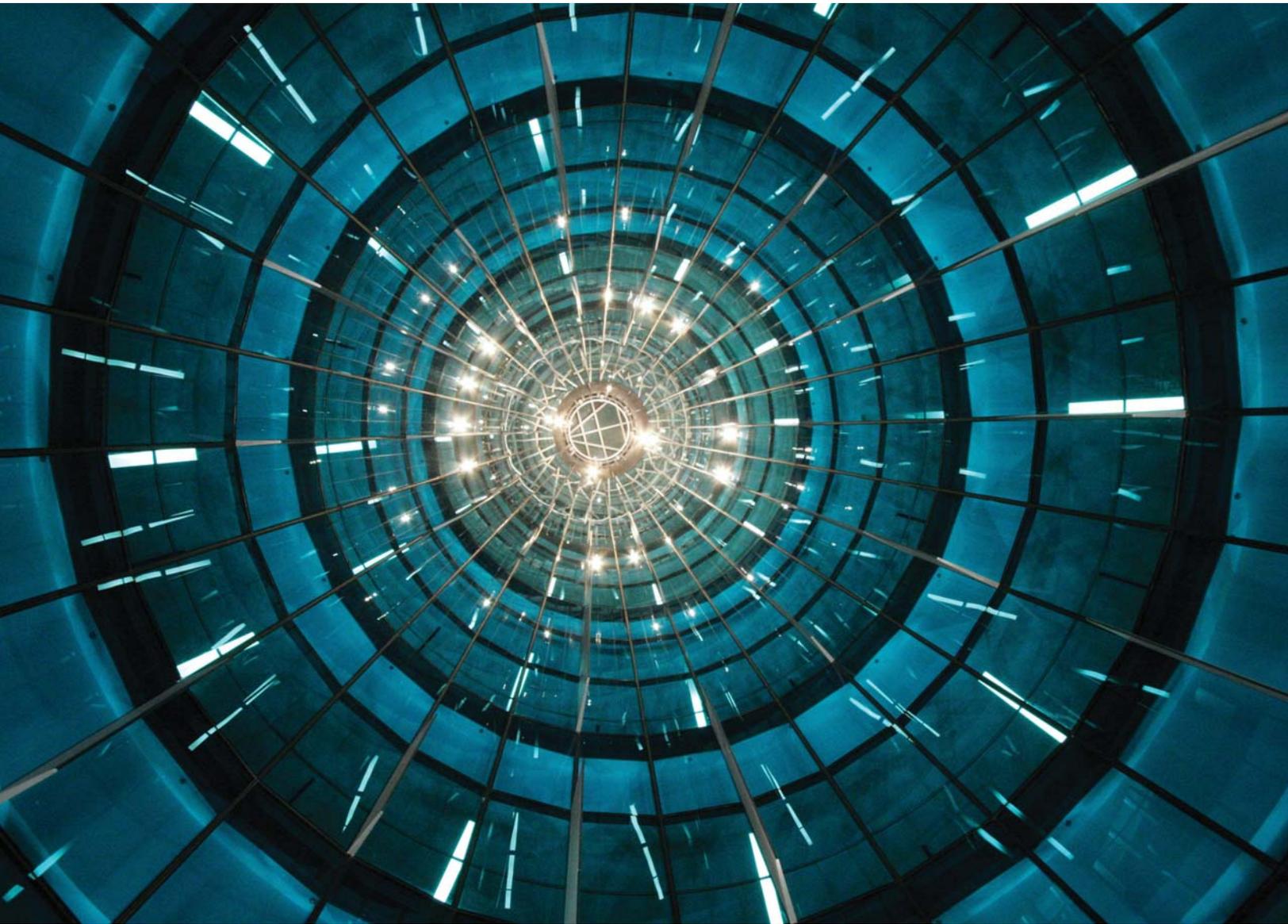
The main vertical façade incorporates insulating laminated glass that has a structural interlayer for extra strength against large missile type objects. This glass also has a solar-screen coating that blocks 99 percent of the ultraviolet rays that damage interior elements such as fabrics and furnishings. In essence, the various types of glass literally form a revealing but protective veneer, guarding internal functions much in the way skin regulates and shields the human body.

Symbolically, the ability to see clearly between the inside and outside of the building makes a crucial statement about citizens' abilities to hold their government to account. Even the courtroom interiors, the heart of

the courthouse, are infused with the gentle light of day through clerestory windows that face the outer glass walls. Visually, the design gives perimeter offices and public halls spectacular views of the city's skyline and waterfront.

In the atrium, the seven-story blue glass cone animates the public space between the towers. Visitors are compelled to move around and look across the sloped form, and depending on the floor, can also peer up and/or down its seven-story open interior. It is a memorable experience that at night, seen from outside the courthouse, is transformed into a civic landmark—a dramatic glowing form inside the building's glazed skin.







## ART IN ARCHITECTURE

Art has always been an important feature of great architecture. A landscape installation has been created specifically for the Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr., United States Courthouse in Miami, Florida.

### **Flutter**

Earthwork of Soil and Grass

459 Feet by 105 Feet

*Two Lawn Areas in Front of the Main  
Courthouse Entrance*

Maya Lin

Taking her cue from the boat-like image of the new courthouse, Maya Lin has created an earthwork of soil and grass that undulates in waves as if to give the building a surface to float upon. In this commission, two sculpted lawns mimic gentle rolls of water waves or rippling sand.

*Flutter*, like Lin's other large-scale earthen installations, reflects her passion for exploring natural phenomena, landscape and topography, and translating naturally occurring environments into sculptured form. Lin's view of landscape is distinctly twentieth-century, based on aerial views, sonar mappings, and photography.

In addition, she draws inspiration from diverse cultural sources, including Indian earthen mounds, Chinese paintings from the Song Dynasty, Japanese gardens and woodcuts, and earthworks created by artists in the 1960s and 1970s.

### **Art in Architecture Program**

GSA's Art in Architecture Program commissions artists, working in close consultation with project design teams, to create artwork that is appropriate to the diverse uses and architectural vocabularies of new federal buildings. These permanent installations of contemporary art for the nation's civic buildings afford unique opportunities for promoting the integration of art and architecture and facilitate a meaningful dialogue between the American people and their government. A panel composed of an art professional from GSA's National Register of Peer Professionals, an art professional from the city or region, the project's lead design architect, and individuals representing the federal client, the community, and GSA provides guidance in selecting the most suitable artist for each project.



## GENERAL FACTS ABOUT THE COURTHOUSE

The Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr., United States Courthouse in Miami, serving the Southern District of Florida, stands at 400 North Miami Avenue in the city's downtown. The building completes a judicial quadrant created by the historic Post Office Courthouse (the David W. Dyer Building), the Tower Building, the James Lawrence King Justice Building, and the U.S. Bureau of Prisons building. The 14-story building measures 224 feet high. The majority of the site's ground plan constitutes an open lawn and landscaped perimeter, which also furnishes a generous security margin around the courthouse.

The courthouse includes 14 district courtrooms, two on floor ten and four on levels 11 through 13. Each courtroom suite includes conference rooms, detention cells, jury deliberation rooms, chambers, and a judge's library.

The grand jury suite occurs on level seven. There are also spaces in the building for the U.S. Marshals Service, the U.S. Attorney, and probation and pretrial services. A public cafeteria occupies part of level seven.

To protect judges, the public, and prisoners, the building contains three separate and secure methods of circulation. The entire structure is outfitted with the latest in audiovisual and security technologies.

Because this District's high volume of cases continues to grow, the master plan for the site contemplates expansion over the next 30 years by inserting a four-story structure perpendicular to the new courthouse on the north side of the site, creating an L-shaped enclosure. The new building would hold six courtrooms, two per floor on three floors. Secure connectors for prisoners and for judicial staff would join the addition to the original building.

### **Location**

The courthouse's generous two-block site, measuring approximately six acres, lies between Third Street to the south, Fifth Street to the north, Northwest First Street to the west and North Miami Avenue to the east.



**Size**

605,823 gross square feet  
224 feet high  
14 floors above grade  
Some parking below grade

**Time Frame**

Site Feasibility Study: October 1997  
Design Awarded: August 1998  
Concept Approved: October 1999  
Design Completed: December 2002  
Construction Started: July 2002  
Occupancy: Spring 2007  
Dedication: February 23, 2007

**Major Building Component**

All Court Functions: 351,311 square feet

**Parking**

101 interior spaces

**Foundation**

Spread concrete footings on Augercast piles

**Structure**

Reinforced concrete columns, beams,  
and slabs

**Mechanical**

Central cooling tower for chilled water

**Exterior Walls**

Architectural precast concrete panels;  
Italian limestone (bianco avorio, grigio  
argento and giallo dorato); glazed  
aluminum curtain wall; architectural  
aluminum eggcrates and louvers.

**Public Area Interior Finishes**

**Main public lobby:** Black slate floors,  
multicolored limestone tile walls,  
suspended plaster ceiling, stainless steel  
security desk, raised stainless steel lettering.

**Courtroom lobbies:** Black slate floors,  
blue glass atrium cone, wood paneling  
(wenge, walnut, and cherry), multicolored  
limestone tile walls, raised stainless steel  
lettering.

**Courtroom interiors:** Custom cherry wood  
wall panels, custom walnut furniture, teak  
judge's bench with limestone front, wenge  
feature wall with stainless steel inlay behind  
judges bench, carpet tiles (green, blue, or  
rust) over raised flooring; fabric-wrapped  
acoustical panels, limestone pilasters,  
acoustically sealed fritted glass; suspended  
folded plaster ceilings.

**Elevator lobbies:** Black slate floors,  
multicolored limestone tile walls.



## PROFILE: WILKIE D. FERGUSON, JR.

Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr., leaves a judicial legacy that amplified the presence and voices of citizens on the margins of American society. Born on May 11, 1938, Judge Ferguson was the son of Bahamian immigrants and rose from humble origins to receive a business and accounting degree at Florida A & M University and a master's degree in financial administration at Drexel University in Philadelphia. He served in the Army and Army Reserves from 1960 to 1965. In 1968, he received his law degree from Howard University in Washington, DC.

Early in his career, Judge Ferguson learned firsthand about the obstacles that ordinary people face in trying to improve their everyday lives. While working in the Civil Rights Division of the former U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and later as a staff attorney for Legal Services of Greater Miami, he came to view the legal system and the courts as often the only reasonable recourse for aggrieved citizens, especially the poor, disabled, and disadvantaged.

His experience as a judge began in 1973 when he became a Judge of Industrial

Claims. From 1976 to 1980, he served on the Circuit Court for the 11th Judicial Circuit of Florida, after which he joined Florida's Third District Court of Appeals. On both Florida courts, he was first ever African-American jurist. In 1993, President Bill Clinton appointed him to the federal bench where he was only the second African-American judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

The moral weight of his best-known decisions changed the lives of countless Americans. In a 1980 civil lawsuit in the Florida Circuit Court, Judge Ferguson overruled a jury's verdict and ordered a new trial after finding that black citizens had been systematically purged from the jury. Quoted in the *Miami Herald*, he asserted: "We've got to get away from excluding automatically those persons who are often caught up in the system as the accused or the victim. In that fashion, we can do a lot to restore confidence in the system, even if it does nothing to change the result of a trial."

In 1996, Judge Ferguson made two landmark rulings on behalf of disabled in Florida. In one, he fined the state for failing

to provide services. The fines were overturned but ultimately prompted a \$300 million annual increase in funding for programs for people with disabilities, a testament to Judge Ferguson's far-reaching compassion and commitment to justice for all people. Judge Ferguson died on June 9, 2003.



## BIOGRAPHIES: THE ARCHITECTS AND ARTIST

**Bernardo Fort-Brescia**, FAIA, is a founding principal of Arquitectonica. He earned a Bachelor of Architecture and Urban Planning degree from Princeton University and a Master of Architecture degree from Harvard University. Mr. Fort-Brescia is licensed to practice architecture in 21 American states, Peru and the European Union. He is the recipient of the 1996 AIA Florida Honor for Design Award and the 1998 AIA Silver Medal for Design Excellence. In 1992, Mr. Fort-Brescia was named a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, and in 1999, he was inducted into the Interior Design Hall of Fame. Mr. Fort-Brescia was honored by the Salvardori Center in New York with the 2000 Founder's Award. He has lectured and taught design classes at Harvard University, the University of Miami and at Florida International University. Mr. Fort-Brescia serves on the board of directors for both the New World Symphony and the Wolfsonian-FIU Museum. In addition to completing an architectural commission for the U.S. General Services Administration, he is also currently a National Peer for the agency.

**Laurinda Spear**, FAIA, is a founding principal of Arquitectonica. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Brown University and a Master of Architecture degree from Columbia University. In addition to the many buildings and interior designs she has produced, Ms. Spear has an extensive portfolio of product designs including furniture, watches and clocks, apparel, housewares, laminates, carpets, bus shelters, street benches and signage. Ms. Spear is the recipient of the Rome Prize in Architecture and the 1998 Silver Medal for Design Excellence. In 1992, she was named a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, and in 1999, she was inducted into the Interior Design Hall of Fame. Ms. Spear was honored by the Salvardori Center in New York with the 2000 Founder's Award. In 2002, Ms. Spear became a National Academician at the National Academy of Design. She has lectured and taught classes at Harvard University and the University of Miami. Currently, Ms. Spear is serving on the American Institute of Architects International Committee, the Board of Trustees of Ransom Everglades School, and the *Harvard Design Magazine* editorial board. Recently, Ms. Spear was elected to the Board of Trustees of Brown University, her alma mater.

**Maya Lin** first received international recognition when, as a senior at Yale University, she won the design competition for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. Setting up her studio practice in 1987, Lin has spent her ensuing career creating monuments, landscapes, houses, and other buildings, furniture, and works of arts. Among her many completed projects are the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama (1989), the Museum for African Art in New York, New York (1993), the Langston Hughes Library, Children's Defense Fund, in Clinton, Tennessee (1999), the Sculpture Center in Long Island City, New York (2002), and the Greyston Bakery in Yonkers, New York (2003).

Her work has been highly acclaimed and widely published. A film about her work, *Maya Lin, a Strong Clear Vision*, won an Academy Award for Best Documentary in 1995. Ms. Lin was born in Athens, Ohio, and lives with her family in New York City and Colorado.

## THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION TEAM

### Owner

U.S. General Services Administration  
Regional Office, Atlanta, GA

Mack Scogin  
Mack Scogin Merrill Elam Architects, Inc.  
Atlanta, GA

### Architects

Arquitectonica  
Miami, FL

Joseph Giovannini  
New York, NY

Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum  
Miami, FL

Bill Lacy  
San Antonio, TX

### Artist

Maya Lin  
New York, NY

### Art Peer

Suzanne Delehanty  
Miami Art Museum  
Miami, FL

### GSA Project Team

Donna Lamb and Richard Stephenson  
(project executives)  
Terry Fuquea (project manager)  
Juan Perez and Ismael Santana  
(construction engineers)  
Ron Butler (contracting officer)  
Dawn Norman (asset manager)

### Construction Excellence National Peers

Steve Hamline  
J.E. Dunn Construction Company  
Denver, CO  
  
John Tarpey  
Centex Construction  
Fairfax, VA

### Design Excellence National Peers

Thom Mayne  
Morphosis  
Santa Monica, CA

Walter Huber  
McKissack & McKissack  
Washington, DC

**Construction Manager**

Welbro EllisDon Construction  
Heathrow, FL

**General Contractor**

Dick Corporation  
Pittsburgh, PA

**Acoustical/Audio-Visual**

Wright, Johnson, Haddon Williams, Inc.  
Dallas, TX

**Blast**

Weidlinger & Associates  
New York, NY

**Civil Engineering**

EAC Consulting  
Miami, FL

**Cooling**

Tilden, Lobnitz & Cooper  
Fort Lauderdale, FL

**Codes**

Rolf Jensen & Associates  
Orlando, FL

**Cost Estimating**

Construction Management Services  
Deerfield Beach, FL

**Curtainwall**

Antamex International Inc.  
Concord, Ontario, Canada

Arquitectonica  
Miami, FL

Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum  
Miami, FL

Walter P. Moore  
Tampa, FL

Weidlinger Associates  
New York, NY

**Demolition**

Law Engineering  
Miami, FL

**Elevator**

Lerch Bates  
Lakeland, FL

**Geotechnical**

Professional Services Industries  
Miami, FL

**Kitchen**

CINI Little  
Fort Lauderdale, FL

**Landscape**

Curtis & Rogers  
Coconut Grove, FL

**Life Safety**

Rolf Jensen & Associates  
Orlando, FL

**Lighting**

L'Observatoire  
New York, NY

**Mechanical/Electrical**

Tilden Lobnitz Cooper  
Fort Lauderdale, FL

**Plumbing/Fire Protection**

Hufsey, Nicolades, Garcia, Suarez  
Miami, FL

**Programming**

Dan Wiley & Associates  
West Palm Beach, FL

**Security**

Tilden, Lobnitz & Cooper  
Fort Lauderdale and Miami, FL

**Signage**

The Bugdal Group  
Miami, FL

**Sustainability**

Arquitectonica  
Miami, FL

Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum  
Miami, FL

**Telecom/Information Technology**

Tilden, Lobnitz & Cooper  
Fort Lauderdale, FL





## **U.S. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION AND THE DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM**

*Public buildings are part of a nation's legacy. They are symbolic of what Government is about, not just places where public business is conducted.*

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is responsible for providing work environments and all the products and services necessary to make these environments healthy and productive for federal employees and cost-effective for the American taxpayers. As builder for the federal civilian Government and steward of many of our nation's most valued architectural treasures that house federal employees, GSA is committed to preserving and adding to America's architectural and artistic legacy.

GSA established the Design Excellence Program in 1994 to change the course of public architecture in the federal government. Under this program, administered by the Office of the Chief Architect, GSA has engaged many of the finest architects, designers, engineers, and artists working in America today to design the future landmarks of our nation. Through collaborative partnerships, GSA is implementing the goals of the 1962

Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture: (1) producing facilities that reflect the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the federal government, emphasizing designs that embody the finest contemporary architectural thought; (2) avoiding an official style; and (3) incorporating the work of living American artists in public buildings. In this effort, each building is to be both an individual expression of design excellence and part of a larger body of work representing the best that America's designers and artists can leave to later generations.

To find the best, most creative talent, the Design Excellence Program has simplified the way GSA selects architects and engineers for construction and major renovation projects and opened up opportunities for emerging talent, small, small disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses. The program recognizes and celebrates the creativity and diversity of the American people.

The Design Excellence Program is the recipient of a 2003 National Design Award from the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, and the 2004 Keystone Award from the American Architectural Foundation.

