



CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN WOOD ARCHITECTURE
2014-15 NORTH AMERICAN WOOD DESIGN AWARD WINNERS



Paradise of mixed woods blend historical
and modern in the heart of Miami

North America

Brillhart House

Brillhart Architecture

“Wonderfully transformative in the way the
building transforms to address its climatic zone.”

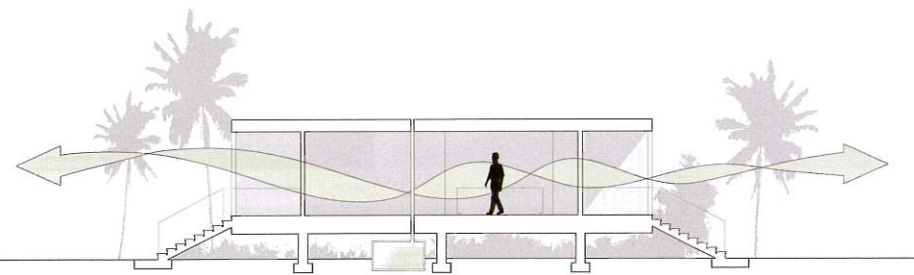
— JURY

This 1,500-sq.ft. house, which draws upon the glass pavilion typology and principles of Florida Modernism, provides a tropical refuge in the heart of downtown Miami. Elevated off the ground, the house features 100 ft. of uninterrupted glass, with four sets of sliding glass doors that allow the house to be entirely open. The house includes 800 sq.ft. of outdoor living space with front and back porches. Wood was used throughout in an effort to be contextual with the historic neighborhood in which it resides and to provide warmth to the modern glass house.

In keeping with the context of the neighborhood, which is one of the oldest in Miami, references were drawn from the “dogtrot house,” a dominant image representing Florida Cracker architecture. Historically, the dogtrot was comprised of two small wooden buildings – connected by a central breezeway – under one roof. This simple, practical building is both modest and rich in cultural meaning; it maximizes efficiency, space, and energy, relies on vernacular building materials, and celebrates the breezes.

The floor plan is a modern interpretation of the dogtrot, with sleeping quarters on the left, a central corridor (with kitchen), and living space on the right. Similarly, this house is also clad in wood, specifically five-in. wide Ipe boards that were shiplapped to give the exterior a more contemporary look than the traditional board-and-batten-style cladding. A dense hardwood, Ipe





works best in tropical climates and withstands the test of time. A light coat of Ipe oil provides an initial layer of protection.

Sixteen shuttered doors – made of Western red cedar – span the front elevation. Set at the outermost edge of the front porch, they create a cool, outdoor room with ever-changing shadows throughout the day while also providing privacy and protection from the elements. Like Ipe, Western red cedar is also highly durable, but it is much more lightweight and easier to work with than the exotic hardwood. In this case, no stain was used. The intent was to allow the Ipe and the cedar to weather into a similar silvery gray over time.

To seamlessly merge the indoors with the outdoors, the interior flooring and outdoor decking were matched as much as possible. The interior floors are six-in. wide natural white oak floors. For consistency, a light decking material was needed, and a select grade of cypress was chosen. Both the interior and exterior woods were stained the same color. The species selection for the floors was predicated on the use of American cherry for all of the other millwork inside, which had been stored in a family barn in New Hampshire for many years. The cherry wood, which was lightly oiled, was used for all of the door frames, interior louvered doors, and bathroom and kitchen cabinets. This mix of woods provides a rich material palette, complementing both the marble finishes inside as well as the steel and glass superstructure.



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