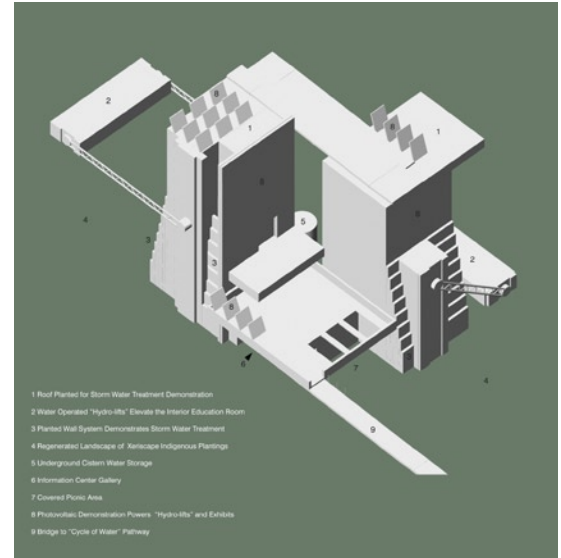


Michael Singer Studio

Freshwater Gateway Belle Glades, Florida, 2003

The South Florida Water Management District asked Michael Singer to propose a new innovative visitor and education center at the District's site, a pumping facility in Belle Glades, near Lake Okeechobee. The goal of "Fresh Waters Gateway" is to engage citizens and tourists with one of the most precious natural resources of Florida, fresh water. Through dynamic interaction with programs and design at the visitor center and site, the public will have an opportunity to understand the complex issues and systems of water management, the strategies and history of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, and the role of the District in their everyday lives. The site, with its convergent geography, offers a unique view of the connections between the diverse interests of agriculture, development, and the natural environment. The 60' towers relate to the elevation drop from Lake Okeechobee to the southern tip of the Everglades. Two program rooms in the towers' interior can accommodate forty people sitting around a large boardroom table, similar to the District's executive meeting room. A "Hydro-Lift" made of two counterweights fill and empty with water, allowing the room to rise in the tower and descend. All surfaces of the room are capable of receiving projections and sound from multi-media presentations that inform the visitors about history, conflicts, and resolution strategies. Exiting the towers, visitors emerge onto a boardwalk and bridge walking trail taking them into the landscape demonstrations of conservation strategies and models of the Restoration Project. The building visitor center site and buildings demonstrate sustainable practice in development, conservation and agriculture. The buildings are powered with photovoltaic cells. Storm water is treated at the site. The landscape is naturalized, demonstrating xeriscape principles.



Vision:
FRESH WATERS GATEWAY, is a proposed innovative visitor and education center at SFWMD's SSA site in Belle Glades, that could engage citizens and tourists with one of the most precious natural resources of Florida, fresh water. Through dynamic interaction with programs and design at the visitor center and site, the public will have an opportunity to understand the complex issues and systems of water management, the strategies and history of Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), and the role of the SFWMD in their everyday lives. The SSA site with its convergent geography, offers a unique opportunity to set a precedent in public education about the connections between agriculture, development, conservation, and the natural environment.

A SENSE OF TIME:
Not so long ago, but for a very long time, the Everglades was a pristine wilderness. Native Americans living in and around the river called it Payhayokoe, the "grassy waters". James Audubon came to paint the birds; others came to collect their plumage for fashionable hats of the day and almost decimated them. Today, we come to watch, participate and understand our roles.

