

# first impressions



CARL JOSTE/HERALD STAFF

**HOME, SWEET HOME:** Sandy and Arturo Belkind joined two apartments in Aventura into a 4,200-square-foot space.

**BY JO WERNE**  
Special to The Herald

Arturo Belkind's designs influence first impressions of luxury condo shoppers.

The architect chooses the finest marbles, woods and fabrics so that this impermanent place — a sales center — conveys the lifestyle buyers seek.

"They are buying air," says Belkind, 64, president and owner of Salini Design in North Miami. "I want to give them the feeling that what they see is what they will get. When I began designing sales centers in the 1980s, they were just a little trailer. There was no competition between projects. Now they are called sales pavilions and feel like a home."

**SOMETHING TO ENJOY**

Belkind, who has designed about 400 sales centers in South Florida and other areas, says even the salesmanship has changed. "In the old, small sales centers, visitors were stopped when they entered. They were put into a little room and bombarded with a sales pitch. Now people are left to wander on their own, to check out the kitchen and bath," he says. "We're treating sales centers as museums, as something to enjoy, and it makes people feel more comfortable."

Belkind believes showing a lifestyle helps with a sale, but he objects to one particular sales ploy: "When a project shows girls on the beach in a tiny bikini — I hate that! They should be pitching toward the older buyer, the one who can actually afford to live in a luxury condo."

He favors showing a slower lifestyle as a selling point. In the 8,000-square-foot sales and model center he designed for the high-end condo development for Orion in Houston, Belkind created visuals with "everything slow — a bird slowly flying by, a photo of a man's hand reaching slowly for a woman's hand." This romantic pitch helped him win "The Nationals 2005" award sponsored by the National Association of Homebuilders.

**NO MORE BANK WORK**

Belkind, whose grandparents emigrated to Mexico City from Russia, first specialized in bank design. When the Mexican government confiscated the banks in 1982, his bank work suddenly stopped. He moved his family to Miami and bought Baron Displays, which produced trade shows. Eventually, he sold the company and created Salini Designs, the name taken from the initials of his wife Sandy and their daughters Lizi and Nicole.

Because of the name, people sometimes mistake Belkind for Italian and address him as "Mr. Salini."

His name is associated with the sales centers of South Florida's most prestigious developments, including Solaris, Jade, Canyon Ranch, Las Olas River House, Aqua and Murano Grande, among many others. Recently he was selected to create an elaborate sales and model center for SKYLINE at Mary Brickell Village and to design the public spaces at Midtown 4, one of eight towers that will become the residential portion of Midtown Miami.

His own home consists of two apartments in Aventura that he joined 20 years ago to create a 4,200-square-foot space. Belkind kept the second kitchen when he joined the



**ARCHITECT LURES CONDO BUYERS WITH TOP-NOTCH SALES CENTERS**

SALINI DESIGN

**DRAMATIC ENTRANCE:** Yellow 'petals' form an umbrella over the lobby of the sales center Belkind designed for Solaris, a 138-residence condominium in Miami.



SALINI DESIGN



SALINI DESIGN

**HIGH STYLE:** Luxurious sales centers that Belkind has designed include ones for Solaris, left, and Midtown Miami, right.

apartments and now it's handy for visiting family.

Balconies, crowded with plants, surround the apartment on three sides and the walls are filled with Mexican art.

One thing he misses from working in Mexico is the close relationship architects have with artists. "There, when an artist sees a building going up, they will ask the architect, 'May I have that niche? That wall?' Art is incorporated into the building in every way possible," he says.

Empty nesters, the Belkinds enjoy visits from their blended family that include the four children Sandy had before she and Arturo met in Mexico. He had one child and together, in the second marriage for both, they had two daughters, bringing the clan up to seven children and, now, 11 grandchildren.



**PROFILE**

**Name:** Arturo Belkind  
**Company:** Salini Design, 1845 NE 146th St., North Miami; 305-949-9134 or www.salinidesign.com  
**Personal:** Born in Mexico City.  
**Education:** Degree in architecture from the University of Mexico, Mexico City.  
**Design philosophy:** The client should feel the design is theirs, that they came up with the idea.  
**Inspired by:** Frank Lloyd Wright



CARL JOSTE/HERALD STAFF

**ART GALLERY:** Mexican paintings decorate Belkind's huge Aventura apartment.