

Interview with Teri D'Amico

Kathy Hersh: Today we're talking to Teri D'Amico for the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs Project. It is June 13th, 2019, and we are in Teri's office. My name is Kathy Hersh, and this is for the Miami Beach Visual Memoirs Project. So, Teri, let's start by talking about what attracted you to come down here to Miami, and Miami Beach.

Teri D'Amico: I was working in New York City, and I was doing a campaign for an ad agency where they mentioned Art Deco in Miami, and I went, "What? I didn't know Art Deco was in Miami." About two years later, I ended up down here on a three-hour tour, and I fell in love, and I went back and decided to pick up everything and move down here, and start my design career in hospitality.

Interviewer: How did that begin?

D'Amico: It was wonderful. When I came down here, the first people that I met were through the tour, and the Miami Design Preservation League. That was what drove me down here, and the Bauhaus movement, because I studied industrial design. Industrial design — it was just like a magnet to the buildings, so I wanted to know all about them. I took a tour, and then at the end of the tour you go into the welcome center, and actually I think I applied for a job, and [phonetic][01:26] George Neary got the job, and he had just started.

George had said that I should meet these two people, [phonetic][01:34] Nancy Ganner and — [phonetic][01:36] Diaz now — and [phonetic][01:38] Randall Robinson, and I went to the tour school, and [phonetic][01:43] Jeff Donnelly led the tour — my mentor there — and he invited me to dinner. I didn't know a soul in Miami Beach, and so basically those were the beginning of my friends, as well, and having the design, but more community, which was very exciting, because I didn't experience that at all in New York.

Interviewer: So, what about Art Deco appealed to you?

D'Amico: Well, I studied industrial design, and you know, the Bauhaus movement is all about architecture, textiles, design, landscape design, that all design has similar elements, and they taught all the disciplines together, and I always thought of myself as the little Jack of all trades, and in studying what it was that made that design special — you know, coming down to Miami Beach for the first time, and seeing Ocean



Drive, I couldn't believe that all these buildings were so unique, but they had this similar flow. It was like candy.

I mean, I just couldn't stop gasping at each one, and just that one drive — you know, I came down A1A. I think I went from Bay Harbor over and came down, and the excitement of finally getting down to Ocean Drive, because there's nothing else like that. That was just special.

Interviewer: Had it colorized itself by then?

D'Amico: Yeah. Definitely. Leonard Horowitz had...you know, I was in college during Miami Vice, so I never saw one. It was on Friday nights, and I was in college, but I knew all about the colors, but it didn't occur to me that that was Art Deco at the time. It wasn't until they mentioned — and it's funny, because they mentioned Art Deco, and then I called up the Chamber to see what pictures, because I had to get an artist to do a painting of the Art Deco in Miami. I repped illustrators at the time, and it ended up that they sent me the picture of the [phonetic][03:40] Fontainebleu, and I'm like, "This isn't Art Deco."

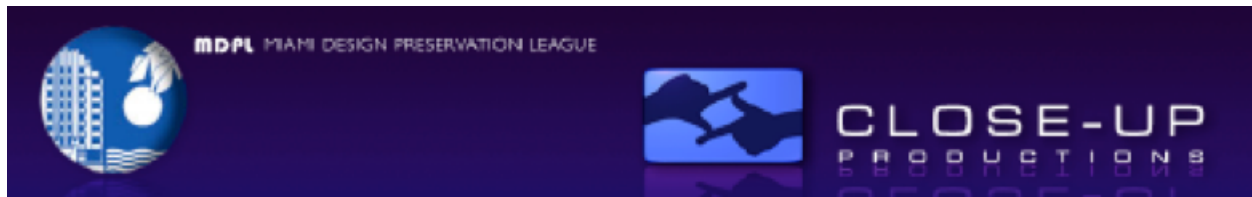
I don't think until I really came down and experienced it did I really understand. You're being immersed, you know, in a period, and as I said, it's like candy, you know? Just everywhere you look, it's fascinating.

Interviewer: So, then, through your friends, and then you started making connections, and then what was the next phase of what you were doing?

D'Amico: I became a tour guide, and that was the goal. I think it was in the first six months. My very first tour, I did meet my first employer here. He was an architect, and he introduced himself, and by the end of the tour he said, "Would you like a job?" and I ended up working on the buildings, which became very exciting.

Interviewer: Who was the architect?

D'Amico: It was [phonetic][04:34] Coby Karp, [phonetic][04:34] Elaine Pettigrew and [phonetic][04:35] Simon Wood. It was LPWK. I worked there for about a year and-a-half, and there were times that I presented five different projects in-front of the Design Review Board for him. They were very small little projects back then. Very small, but they were fun, and I got to learn how to work with microfiche. You know, there was little. I was taking autoCAD at the time, but you know, when you're drawing — I'd be able to get into the rhythm of drawing three



lines...you know, the racing stripes, and then you go like this.

So, I worked a lot of hours and gave tours, so I really met — a lot of my friends are from the [phonetic][05:18] Wilsonian, as well. Talk about Art Deco back then — [phonetic][05:22] Dennis Wilhelm and [phonetic][05:24] Michael Kinerc, my friend [phonetic][05:29] Kim Stillwell, at the time, worked for Dennis, and there was a...is it Art Deco, or is it Art Nouveau? There were all of these fun little historic things that were going on in design talk, and it was really fun to talk about design.

Interviewer: There were plenty of people to talk about design.

D'Amico: Yeah. A lot of social things were about the design elements. We were really experiencing the discovery of it — like how much there really was.

Interviewer: And you experienced the Art Deco weekends?

D'Amico: Yeah. Well, I eventually came on the Board of Directors of the MDPL.

Interviewer: You did?

D'Amico: Yeah. I was a tour guide for a while, and then what...we formed this little group called the [phonetic][06:19] DPAC Committee, and it was [phonetic][06:21] Randall Robinson and I, and [phonetic][06:23] Ellen Shulman, and we're all the same age. We sat there at night, and we would review all the projects before they went in-front of the Design Review Board, and the Historic Preservation Board. Then we would put a statement together saying, "This is MDPL's statement," and we would go to all the meetings, and we would present our statements.

This is when everyone was coming down and wanted a piece of Miami Beach. I remember an Italian gentleman saying, "We have wars over this stuff. We get it. We understand," but they weren't respecting the building. They liked the building, but they wanted to tear literally 90 percent of it down.

So, we were, I guess as designers, understanding what a set of drawings is showing — a dash line means you're going to remove something. So, knowing how to read a set of plans helped, you know, because most people don't know how to read, so you can submit a set, and back then, again, before the computer, the renderings were by



hand, so if you didn't want to show the relationship to the building next door, you just kind of blurred it out a little bit, and with the computer, it's kind of "garbage in, garbage out".

You can't make it up. So, it shows more of a true...well, still, renderings can be misleading, and a lot of people in politics and so on, they just go by the pretty picture, and we actually knew what they were doing, and so we worked...we got that same group, and we worked to get [phonetic][08:01] William Carrey the position as a full-time administrator within the city for preservation, and that was very exciting.

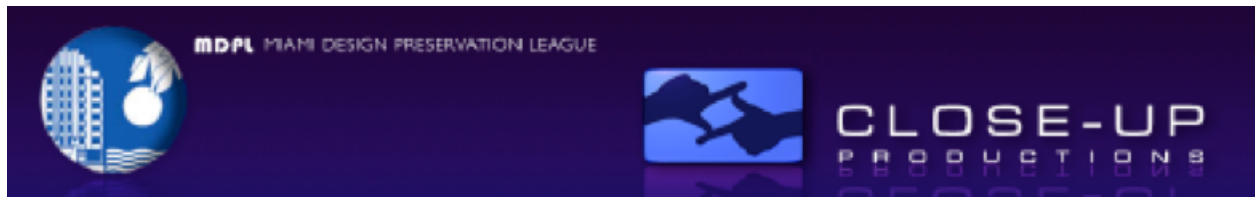
We actually wrote how to work with...the criteria for the preservation boards, and what kind of makeup there should be. There should be a good balance between law and real estate and design and community, and then we did write the — we worked up the color palette for the city. That was one of the first things William did when he came in. We made it official, because they used to just review it, whether they liked it, so we came up with what is really appropriate, you know, in respecting the buildings, because the buildings were always white, and they had a darker tennis-court color, you know, on the eyebrow, because the pigmentation didn't last that long back then.

So, we started to want to make sure that we weren't leading people down a path...we wanted to have guidelines. We wanted people to know that when they came into Miami Beach, these are some of the things you should be working with, so you're proactive and not reactive. Then we got a bunch of districts and all sorts of stuff.

Interviewer: You were seeing the pastel palette beginning, then, and you made it official?

D'Amico: The pastel palette started back with Miami Vice, with Leonard Horowitz, but we were making it official so people understood that you can't just throw 100 colors on a building and respect the historic nature of the building. It's to make sure you were painting — that you weren't making up details, and like with all the relief-work, that you didn't go and put tons of colors in the relief, because you weren't seeing it for really what it always was, which is a solid color. So, those were some of the standards we were starting with.

Interviewer: Can you give us an example of any building that...a design where you saw the dashes, that things were going to be removed, and you caught it and were able to correct it?



D'Amico: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you saw which?

D'Amico: No, but I found out a lot when I caught it. I found out a lot about the process.

Interviewer: And you were able to stop some of it?

D'Amico: Well, I will tell you about one, okay? Because there were a number of them. One was the [phonetic][10:39] Astor Hotel, and they have [phonetic][10:43] Vitreolite that goes all the way around the lobby, and at that time, the lobby was to be preserved. We said, "The rest of the building, alright, but the lobby, the rest of the interiors..."

This is a very rare product. It's all over the architecture books for Art Deco, and we had very little of it here in the Beach. The Colony Hotel has a beautiful fireplace with it, and this was clad all the way around the Astor's lobby, and the designers did not want to keep it because they did not like the color, and I was in the meeting, and I said, "I know that you're supposed to be working with the city on this," and they said, "We will not have it," and they took the hammer, and I watched them smash it in front of me into pieces.

At that point, I was having some issues with understanding what should be done, and being fair about the process, but it should have been documented. Actually, there's a big mural the size of this window; it's downstairs, and they covered it. I feel lucky that I got to see the buildings when they're in their purest form, because they've changed beautifully, but I did remember them, and I remember the spirit. They were very different than they are today.

Interviewer: Is there anything that particularly sticks in your mind that's kind of haunting?

D'Amico: That one was an issue, because I was doing the design review criteria at the same time, and that became controversial. You know, someone was investing in the building, which — you know, everyone was very positive. You know, I was working, and so it was conflicting. So, I definitely lean towards the preservation when the preservation law is in place, and I think that I always try to be sensitive to the developer, going, "Yes, we understand you want this, and there is definitely a way to blend all of your ideas in there, understanding" — and it became a lot about appreciation. Not history, not listing the architects and the



dates, but really making people understand what was beautiful about the buildings, and why they should save it.

If you look at flooring, how expensive flooring is, and you've got beautiful terrazzo floors that tell a huge history in the floor, and it's just repairing it — I mean, that's the kind of thing that...you know, making people realize that that tells you about the pattern in the building, and it was getting all the Deco — you know, getting it publicized as to what...beautiful, beautiful shots of it. People were coming down and doing all the modeling shoots, so they were showing off Miami Beach beautifully, and we talked about the light — how beautiful the light is.

I started...I got into a car accident right before I left. It was a taxi accident in New York. I said, "I'm going to buy something" with it. I got a camera and went back to school. I was studying autoCAD, and I started to take pictures of all the buildings, and the silhouettes against the light, or the light and shadow of a palm tree against a building — it was just beautiful. I couldn't stop taking photographs, and that's with film back then, and they were better quality, you know, as far as the actual picture. Then [phonetic][14:16] MIMO came around at one point, and we realized...

Interviewer: Tell us about that transition.

D'Amico: Well, that was...okay. It was a couple years in, being a tour guide, and Versace was buying the place on the corner of...I think 11th and Ocean Drive. He was tearing down the Riviera Hotel — the [phonetic][14:43] Revere Hotel, and it was post-war, and he wanted...you know, he had...I forget the name of the [inaudible][crosstalk][14:51]...

Interviewer: [inaudible][14:52] or something...

D'Amico: Yeah, right. So, he bought that, but he wanted to knock down the building on the corner to make an addition, and additions are not supposed to look like they're authentic. You're supposed to be able to tell the difference. So, when you add on to an older building, it's supposed to be of its time, or reflect that it isn't a part of that building, and that's the one thing that not only were they knocking down a building that we said, "Oh, this is where all the propaganda artwork started".

I took all the architectural drawings, and you have 50-foot lots, and you have 40-foot buildings, and there's a — [phonetic][15:38] you know, like teeth. All of a sudden, boom, you take one down and you make it



look like a big one, and it really, really destroyed the pattern that was on the street, and we didn't have big mansions on Ocean Drive, so we felt as though people weren't paying attention. It was a big name, so it kind of — people divided. Kind of the hard-liners.

Things were getting more and more popular, but you couldn't give up the ideals of preserving the buildings, and not just a picture of it. You need to actually save the building, or portions, or what part. So, it became more political.

Interviewer: Did you ever have a conversation with Versace himself about it?

D'Amico: No. No. I remember he was in town quite a few times, and we'd hear he was hanging out here or there, but no, we didn't. I didn't.

Interviewer: So, that eventually...it caused a schism?

D'Amico: It was post-war. Basically, William Carrey was...I'm trying to think. Maybe he had just started, but the post-war architecture was not protected, okay? So, the only thing that [phonetic][16:57] Barbara Kaplan and Leonard Horowitz got designated was the Art Deco and the Mediterranean, so anything built after the war was not considered. They called it "post-war", and we said, "Oh, that's a little depressing," but that's...none of them were protected, so that building could come down, even though it was a part of a district, and they didn't have so many of those contributing buildings.

So, it was enlightening first the city, because the city was starting to make even better suggestions than sometimes MDPL's more political side, because he knew architecture, and he knew where those boundaries were.

Interviewer: "He" being William Carrey?

D'Amico: Yes, William, and our DPAC group had actually somebody at the city that we were able to work with, and understand the buildings. The [phonetic][17:51] Bancroft building — I remember that was a really big one. We came up with the...well, I'm sure the word existed, but we used the word "facadism", because basically they wanted to keep the 8-inch block wall, and knock down literally everything behind it.

There were wonderful compromises that came out all of the...you know, those meetings were quite entertaining at the design — you know, HP, because you had to do the big names, and we'd say, "We'll



keep this and work on it,” and they’d come back, and if we didn’t do it, I can’t imagine. The [phonetic][18:32] Guess — the one on Lincoln Road, we made them retain the bank vault, and now they have it as the dressing rooms, and that’s the big attraction.

You know, so we worked out, “How does retail show an historic building?” with the Guess, so we allowed them...we came up with that you could only remove so much of the percentage of a floor plate. So basically, when you go in there, they wanted the two-story look, but we said, “Okay, you can only...you can do that for 40 percent of the area.” So now they have a great little store that’s got a double — you know, so it’s worked out. That was the excitement, some ways, being in design, and really seeing it all happen.

Oh, the back of the [phonetic][19:22] Delano — you know, they took the ballroom, and now it’s their outdoor. We didn’t mind outdoor. It’s just how they were doing it. They came with their ideas, and it was how they were going to implement them — to, you know, make sure that they also followed the standards and guidelines from the National Trust, because they wouldn’t be able to get their grants or their incentive for their tax rebates and so-on if they didn’t follow the rules. So, that way we had that documented for them, if someone took advantage of that.

Interviewer: Well, thank God that Barbara [phonetic][20:03] Kappadman was able to get that designation.

D’Amico: Yeah.

Interviewer: You said that you met her?

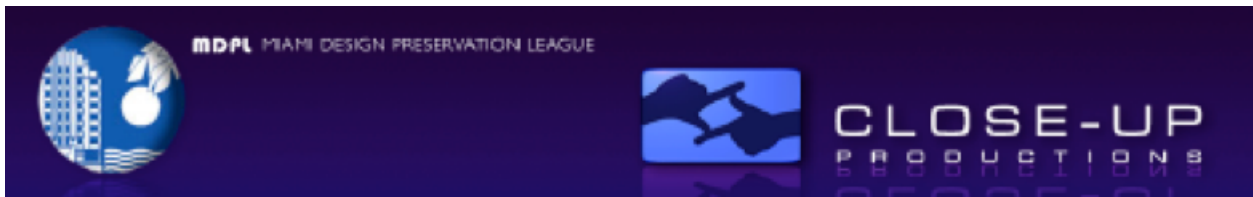
D’Amico: No, I didn’t.

Interviewer: Oh, you didn’t meet her?

D’Amico: No. No, both she and Leonard had just died. I think it was 1990, and I was here in January 1992, and that was six months before Andrew, so...

Interviewer: So then, it sounds like you saw the need to try to promote [phonetic][20:33] MIMO, because it was going to get destroyed.

D’Amico: Right. That’s exactly where...we lost that. We started to...Randall and I were very close. We would spend the evenings reviewing projects, and we came up with our own little terms and things, and had fun with it,



because we liked talking about design, but as we were taking photos we were able to see the similarities between the post-war buildings. So, what we'd have to do is basically say, "You think that buildings are saved, but not all of them are, and what's redeeming about these, Mid-century" — but the whole thing is, we knew about [phonetic][21:18] Lapidus and the [phonetic][21:19] Fontainebleu and the [phonetic][21:20] Edenroc, just north of us.

We all knew that part of — from design, Mid-century. So, we all loved Mr. Lapidus when he first came to town. He was here, and I do know him well. I'd say I've had many opportunities to get to know him and talk design, and understand his theory in design, because I also design hotels. So, he has great theories.

Interviewer: What were some of his theories? Because he was controversial.

D'Amico: Right, because he gave the people a little of the flashy glamour when the architectural world was "less is more", and he's coming up with, "If I can have one scoop, why not three?" So, for me...he started out in retail on 5th Avenue, and if you know 5th Avenue like I do — I grew up in New Jersey, and we'd take the bus in, and we really just would walk up 5th Avenue and have to go back to New Jersey by the end of the day, but it was...the storefronts.

He came up with basically cutting into the front of the door and having — you know, instead of 10 feet of storefront, now you've got like 20 feet, and you're actually in the store, almost, before, and he said, "People are like moths; they go to the light."

Basically, you're dragging them in. They see that back wall that's all lit up, so they just keep on going, and they're going to see merchandise, and it was about lighting things, and paths, and then fun — whimsical. It was just...and his theater. He wanted to, you know, design stages, and he ended up studying architecture at Columbia, so the theater — you know, the stairs, and I've been told many things...you know, the "stair from nowhere" quote? There is a card-room on that floor, but...

Interviewer: You're talking about the [phonetic][23:27] Fontainebleu?

D'Amico: Yes, and I got to go into...I think I was at the Copa. I'm not sure what the name of it was back in the day. I forgot. I never experienced a space like that before, and basically, when you walked in, you walked down, and you could see everybody, and everyone could see you. I couldn't believe it.



Interviewer: That was the whole point, right?

D'Amico: Yeah. I mean, I don't think anyone had ever discussed it, but it was circular, and we saved the...Randall and I noticed that they had put one of these little — it was a sculpture. It was like 45 feet long, and it was curved around the back side, and tried to save portions of that, [phonetic][24:12] which has lived, you know...so, it goes on, but that was a really amazing space, as a space planner, and understanding volume. We, as designers, have kind of the ability to manipulate guests and how they experience space.

You know, we say, "We're going to get a path of light — a focal point," and he used all that in retail. So, I just...I was teaching at the FIU School of Architecture at the time, and he had just donated his inspiration books, and we decided — he was 93 — that we wanted to replicate his home, so we could bring it to a museum. I had five great students, and we documented his dining room area, so we could rebuild it. We were doing it on the computer; we were having a blast.

We hung out in his apartment every Wednesday for a couple of hours, and we actually threw a dinner party there for the dean, and a few of the professors at the school. So, I know everything that was in his...I know all about his dishes, and the toothpaste holder, and I have it documented. I went through his entire house. I have every...he built everything. He designed everything. He designed the lighting. He had a reason for everything.

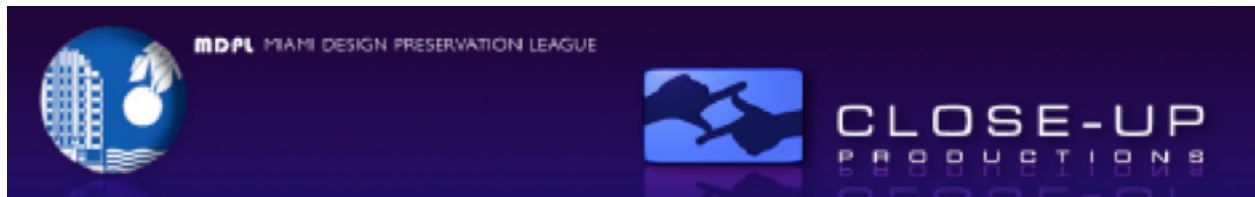
Interviewer: Kind of like Frank Lloyd Wright.

D'Amico: Yeah. The opposite, kind of. You know, just different lines, but still decorative.

Interviewer: He wanted everything to be in synchrony.

D'Amico: Yeah, and it was. It was. There was a flow to the space. We learned all about the proportions of the...there was this little, tiny dining room, but it looked so grand. He used the lucite, and we took all the measurements because we wanted to replicate it. A seat was 13 inches off the ground, which is very low.

So, everything was a little lower, and the columns were proportional, but they were thinner, so it actually made the place look bigger, and the [phonetic][26:33] Capi shell that he had wrapped around...and we'd sit around that table and talk about his chandelier. So, that was



really special, to get to know him like that.

Interviewer: Now, that's in the [phonetic][26:47] BASS Museum?

D'Amico: No, I don't think they donated...I don't know where it's been.

Interviewer: I've seen it — the dining room. I've seen it somewhere. I thought it...years ago.

D'Amico: Yeah. I'm not sure where it is.

Interviewer: But you've documented it, so...

D'Amico: Yeah. It's all documented.

Interviewer: Where would the furniture be?

D'Amico: I don't know where...well, the [phonetic][27:07] Capi shell was on the wall. The columns were part of the building, so...not the building. They were fake columns, but...

Interviewer: Okay. So, you documented his entire house.

D'Amico: Yes.

Interviewer: Are there any plans for the house to be replicated anywhere?

D'Amico: I don't know. I don't think the family was interested in doing anything like that. I let them know. I'm not sure what happened to the...I'm sure they took his things. I mean, I don't know of anything really being on display.

Interviewer: Okay. Interesting. I'm asking because we know that some of his paperwork is at the Jewish Museum. I've seen a lot of his plans at the [phonetic][27:50] BASS Museum. They have it in storage downtown. I know I saw the dining room in person, and I believe it was at the BASS Museum, but I guess that wasn't a permanent display. I guess it was temporary.

D'Amico: Yeah. I'll have to...we'll look into that.

Interviewer: So, let's talk about the transition into [phonetic][28:11] MIMO, and your and Randall's work in making people aware that that was...I know that it didn't set out to be a genre, but in looking back at it, it's become a



genre.

D'Amico: Right. Well, I had moved from South Beach to Bay Harbor Islands, and so now I would go down to South Beach probably three times a day. So, I was up and down Collins Avenue many times, and I started to recognize the buildings. You know, even though the Fontainebleu is large, you see the mini version of it, and just as a designer, I started to see the architectural details that were representative of the Mid-century, that were not Deco. It was clear as day, the further you went up the beach, the more it got to be, you know, Mid-century, and the further away from Deco.

You'd see a little Deco in buildings in-between, and they got larger, but [phonetic][29:13] Bay Harbor Islands was this little garden apartment island, and it was very much like South Beach. I love the charm. So, going back and forth, I would share this with Randall, because I was still meeting and sitting on the [phonetic][29:26] DPAC. So, we would get all excited about it. We'd start taking pictures, and we'd start looking up the architects' names, and we started to realize who was doing what, and then — [phonetic][29:41] Mr. Lapidus and Mr. [phonetic][29:41] Giller — Norman Giller — was alive...very much alive. He was on the Design Review Board, when we used to go in front of him.

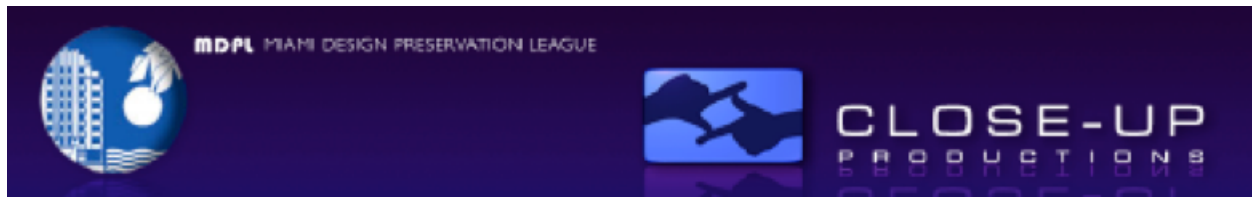
So, we had a wonderful time getting to know him as now a very relaxed, successful architect, that he was now enjoying, and also Mr. Lapidus. They were enjoying the fame, and they had brought...we had lectures, okay? We would have Mr. Lapidus and Mister...that was our way, and the first people we worked on educating were William Carrey's staff, because they were the ones making those decisions.

Interviewer: Who was giving the lectures?

D'Amico: Randall and I were pulling people together that had a common...like and educational...I have it here. We'd put a whole evening of lectures together, and we would do...um, the gentleman who wrote [phonetic][30:48] Populux, and then we would have Mr. Giller, and then we would...so, whoever we could find.

Interviewer: Did Lapidus participate?

D'Amico: Yeah. That was in 1998. It was when MIMO first came out. What was happening...it's really called International Style; that's the real term for it, and I say it's the son — that Art Deco and MIMO are like brothers with different fathers, because they're very similar. They're very similar.



There's stucco. It's just the angles and the kinds of details, and the drama of severe angles, and bringing your attention, because all of it was done after the war, and people were prosperous.

They had cars, and one of my favorites — Lucille Ball and Ethel came down to the [phonetic][31:50] Edenroc, and it was like three episodes. They were in the car most of the time, but they were talking about it, and talking about it. They actually didn't film too much there.

Realizing how the car changed the architecture, and how after the war...because we went back, and we looked at the architecture of Tel Aviv, and that was pre-war. It was British, and then, during the war...there were people who were traveling, and architecture is all over the world, so it's kind of stripped of some iconic things that are more, I think, cultural, so it kind of translates a little bit. The best thing was, guys love it, because it's fast. It's cars. You know, it's all based on the fins and speed, just like Art Deco.

Interviewer: So, let's talk about how...what I'm hearing, it sounds like post World War Two, quote-unquote, which you said was kind of a depressing way of describing it, to Mid-century modern.

D'Amico: Right.

Interviewer: Then...when did the "MIMO" term come into this?

D'Amico: We were having one of our lecture series, and we give tours. I have them here. They're fun. It's like going through...we would have a theme to it. One time, we had it at the [phonetic][33:20] Deauxville Antique Show, and they would give us the auditorium. So, we had Mr. Lapidus, we had all these people, and we...it was right then that Randall and I were making the plans, and we said, "Well, it's a movement. We want to make a movement of this — of saving the buildings, and appreciation," and we went "Miami Modern Movement", and "MIMO" just kind of came out.

Interviewer: Kind of like [phonetic][33:50] SOBI.

D'Amico: Yeah. I mean, it ran off the tongue, though, versus, you know, looking at the words...I mean, I don't know how "SOBI" came out, but I'm from New York, and SoHo...

Interviewer: Yeah. SoHo is the same thing.



D’Amico: Yeah.

Interviewer: South of [phonetic][34:08] Houston Street, right?

D’Amico: Yeah, and it was funny. It was Miami Modern, and it’s MIMO, and a lot of people said “Mee-Mo”, and that would drive Randall crazy, and I would say, “No, it’s ‘Mai-Mo’ for ‘Miami,’” but no, it really made people appreciate it. Those lectures went further, because then we were in the design community — I think Randall was teaching a little bit at UM, and so was [phonetic][34:33] Alan, and so in the year 2000 it was Design Week, and we had Randall, myself and Alan — we all had projects for our students, and they adapted a MIMO building to show that they were...so, I went on [phonetic][34:53] Biscayne Boulevard, and those were the buildings that my students used and re-adapted, whether it was a hotel or they used a different use, and then we brought the politicians in to be the judges.

So, at that point, that’s when...you know, we had gotten a little savvy, working in Miami Beach, and we realized that you had to embrace it. We decided on MIMO, too — like, “It would be un-American to vote against it.”

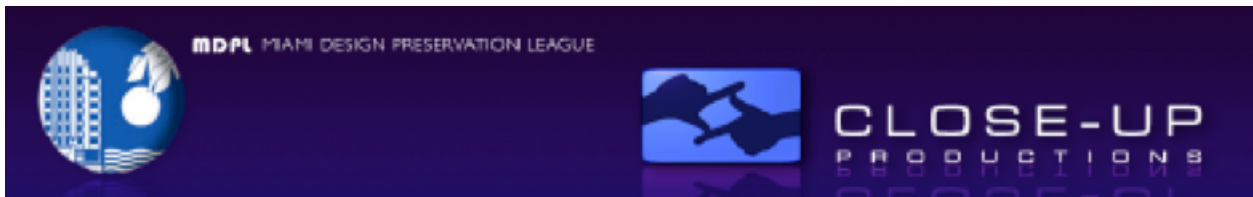
You know, it’s Miami, and it became another reason to come to Miami, and it brought the attention outside of just South Beach, and then of course for Biscayne. Randall and I would drive in the car all over town, and we documented where the best pockets of this Mid-century were, and we found places — the state park, the office park...I’m chuckling. It was in here. Oh, what we did was, we had an art exhibit. Let’s see...

Interviewer: What year was that?

D’Amico: Okay. This was...here, that’s the park, and once you go through there —

Interviewer: That’s the Modern Age.

D’Amico: Yeah. Every single building is MIMO back there, and we took [phonetic][36:17] Nina and Don Worth, [phonetic][36:19] Clotile Luce, [phonetic][36:20] David Framberger...there was just a van of us. There must have been eight, and we couldn’t stop just gasping. It was one after the other. This was a tour that we gave at the [phonetic][36:35] Deauxville. So, the Deauxville really kind of started it off as formal, and then Don Worth got involved and wanted — oh, I know. It was so funny. Don would call me all the time and say, “Can you take my friends on a tour?”



So, he was getting more people involved, and Don's a lovely man, and he was able...we decided to have a kick-off party. This was at [phonetic][37:00] Lulu Swedrow's house. "Cinco de MIMO", okay? This was our fundraiser. Don was raising funds with individuals, and then we had this kind of for the younger folks to kind of participate, and it was the best party. It was one of the best parties, because her house is a beautiful [phonetic][37:24] Paul Verletsky building. At that time, we were starting to realize who the big architects were — who the pieces were — and we invited a lot of people there.

Interviewer: So, you really worked hard to market this, to promote the whole idea — the concept of the beauty of this period.

D'Amico: Why you should look at it. Yeah. It starts with appreciation, and it started with the name. I know when they interviewed us, when we were doing something on [phonetic][37:52] Biscayne with the students, she said, "Oh, MIMO. I like it." You know, it was catchy, and it was something that kids could get into, and we have wonderful programs that actually came out of it.

We went into the schools, and pride, and people understanding the neighborhood that they live in. We would teach...oh, this is one of my favorites: Hannah and [phonetic][38:18] Kira's MIMO Mania Walking Tour. They grew up in Bay Harbor Islands, at the school there, and they basically — I sat with them at my studio, and taught them what MIMO was. We went through the slides, and they were very bright. They understood the architecture. So, they went there and they did a tour for their Girl Scouts — so, for their silver medal, they did this, and they were adorable.

Hannah went on to work with Don, doing the documentary at the Marine Stadium, so she's the one who was interviewing people with their stories. Two dynamic young girls, and it was great. So, we took 300 Girl Scouts on a tour, and we had them all talking about mosaic tiles and columns and beanpoles, and it was very empowering to see all the little girls talking about architecture.

I said, "Go home, and I want to hear what architectural features you have in your building, or maybe next door," and they all came back with, "Oh, we've got beanpoles, and we've got [phonetic][39:32] slumped-grate planters." That was really one of the fun things.

Interviewer: I want to be clear about the term "MIMO". You said that it really is an



international genre, for lack of a better style?

D'Amico: No. Actually, it's called International Style.

Interviewer: International Style?

D'Amico: That's...

Interviewer: What distinguishes...is Miami International Style different?

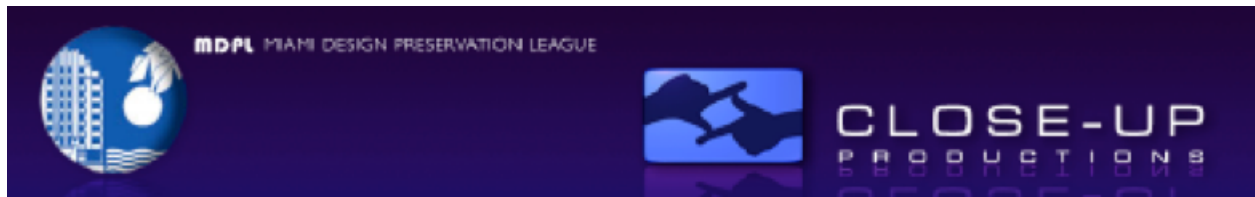
D'Amico: International Style is all over the world, and our MIMO would classify as International Style, and our architecture is different because of many things. One, the climate. So, we have things like [phonetic][40:18] breeze soleils — so basically, the breeze goes through. They're filigree panels. They're decorative panels, and the breeze will go through, but it blocks the sun. Those are used in different methodologies in architecture — you know, we have catwalks, and now we have these panels in front of them.

So, that became...here. The Fontainebleu. The cheese holes. That's a perfect example of all the architecture — what was making it different, and why. So, [phonetic][40:54] porco chairs, because of the car. One of the lecturers we had was the talent agent at the Fontainebleu, and he talked all about who we would book, and he said, "One of the craziest nights is when Lucille Ball" — I don't know, Bob Hope or someone was there. I think it was maybe Frank — "was there, and she couldn't get her car up, and get out of the porco chair," and he's telling these stories, and another one that was great was a girl with the Beatles.

They shot the picture actually at her house, because they were supposed to go to the Deauxville, but it was too crowded, so her mother — this girl, her mother was in the industry — and they knocked on her door. She was blow-drying her hair, and there's the four Beatles, and they hung out in her pool all day, and she couldn't tell anybody. She told the whole story. So, we were putting a time and place to it, too. I think many people remember these places, like the [phonetic][41:55] Wolfies and so on. They could relate to this history a little bit more than the Art Deco. More people alive to talk about it.

Interviewer: How secure is it, as a protected form?

D'Amico: We have quite a few districts, and some landmarks. That was the big thing when Randall and I started — saying, "What are the most important ones?" Again, being proactive instead of reactive. So, we got



Collins — basically, there's the Lapidus District, which is parts of Collins Avenue. There's SeaCoast Towers, the [phonetic][42:39] Arlin, there's Executive House right there, and then we have North Beach.

There's development districts and so on that are all protected, so there's hundreds of buildings up there. It's really — Normandy Isle and that whole area up there is looking beautiful. Then we have Biscayne Boulevard, which is about 25 blocks of motels.

Interviewer: Where does that start?

D'Amico: It starts at 55th Street, and goes up to, like, 76th, I think, or 72nd. They were so happy with the district at that point. They had learned what happens with good, positive preservation, because the MIMO District was...on either side, you had single-family homes, so they were very much into preserving a little of the culture. They didn't want a highway going through, and big highrises, but that picked up. So, they were behind it as a neighborhood, and then they knew the success, so the restaurants kind of came in. It was slow, because it was 2006, so the recession kind of hit after.

So, we had to kind of put people on hold. Like, "Don't knock it down. People will come. It's just not a good time to build." The Vagabond Hotel — we were working on it at the time, and the gentleman didn't know what he was doing. You know, preserving...he said he couldn't do anything with it, and he turned it into a flea market, and we're like, "No, no, no; we've got to maintain the integrity of this building so if someone does come around, and sees it for its potential..."

Interviewer: And that happened.

D'Amico: Yeah, and it was a landmark. That was one of the first. That's kind of like the diva of the district — you know, being the landmark, and the rest is just the historic district.

Interviewer: It's a woman with an interesting background that took over that project, correct? The Vagabond?

D'Amico: Yeah. [phonetic][44:55] Avra. She ended up putting...transfer development rights became an issue with Miami '21, and so basically she was given an incentive that if she would sell rights to build over the property, higher, that she could sell it and put that money back into the preservation of the building, and she's seen great success. She has said that most of the success is just that it's a known, historic building



that kind of sells on its own.

Interviewer: Her last name is [phonetic][45:31] Jane?

D'Amico: Yes. Avra Jane.

Interviewer: Okay. What else? Let's talk about...I'd like to hear about...there are some ongoing challenges. I know that there's been some districts, and it's a been heralded as a great success.

D'Amico: Right. Like the Bacardi building — the fact [inaudible crosstalk][45:58] that now — yeah. I mean, it got people from thinking downtown and pulling people up. I mean, that's a significant building.

Interviewer: It's not in danger, is it?

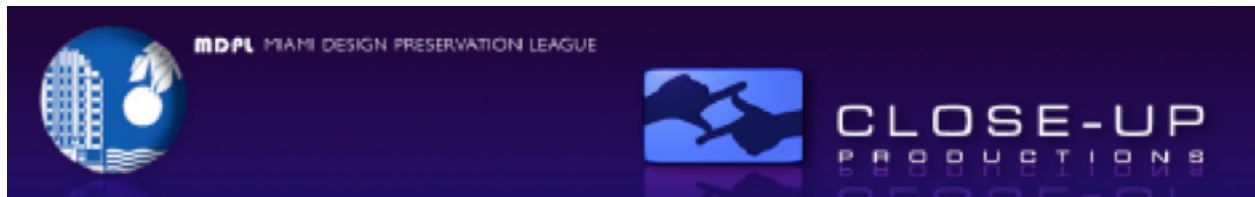
D'Amico: No, but it was. I mean, there was a time when it was. The Miami Herald building, we lost, and...let's see. There's a number, but I think what's being saved — you know, focus on that, and to be fair to everybody and be proactive about preservation, and not reactive, and wait until someone buys is to say, "You can't do it." Let them know ahead of time what the boundaries are, and that way preservation kind of works for everybody, but if you have a strong group that, you know...Randall and I went out and we documented, because we found the University of Miami was very significant with its architects. We found out Bay Harbor Islands was a treasure trove of the biggest architects of the time, and is still one of the most significant areas of concentration.

Then we started really to kind of team up with Palm Springs. I went out...a gentleman has written a book — the [phonetic][47:07] GUGI books — and working with all the architecture of Palm Springs and L.A. We got to be friendly with them, and so the community of Mid-century, and then the Polynesian theme that you have up in Broward, so we got involved in some of Broward's things. So, it's really kind of exciting for a little bit.

Interviewer: I want to just clarify — the DPAC: you, Randall, [phonetic][47:40] Alan Shulman...anybody else?

D'Amico: I think...there was one girl for a very short period of time. I forget who it was.

Interviewer: But it was really the three of you.



D'Amico: Yeah.

Interviewer: And the DPAC — the “PAC” I can get, but the “D” stood for...?

D'Amico: Design Preservation Committee. DPAC.

Interviewer: Okay.

D'Amico: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you just...

D'Amico: Oh, Advisory. Design Preservation Advisory. “Advisory” is in there.

Interviewer: Okay. Preservation Advisory Committee. Did you appoint yourselves, or...?

D'Amico: No, the board of directors appointed us.

Interviewer: The board of directors of MDPI?

D'Amico: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay.

D'Amico: Yeah. We spoke on their behalf.

Interviewer: Okay. You interacted, then, with the design...what do they call it...?

D'Amico: The Historic Preservation Board for the City of Miami Beach. Basically, you had a young town that didn't know a lot about its history, and what was really making these buildings significant. You know, you had a lot about, “We know it's great, but why?” It's setting the boundaries for developers when they come in. That portion of — you know, the education part, the political part...I mean, that was just — and it's making it.

It was exciting, because you'd see all these big architects come into town, and tackle — you know, trying to be sensitive to our laws. It's the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines that everyone has to be...we have to adapt our rules to their standards in our own way.

It was hard, because it was so new. It was the history of the recent



past. I think people appreciated what happened, and they saw the success of the Art Deco district, so they live in harmony together.

Interviewer: One of the things that I think certainly helped the Art Deco movement was getting people elected to the Commission who were supportive. Is there a conscious effort on the part of the MIMO enthusiasts to do the same?

D'Amico: We had [phonetic][50:04] Dave Erdermer in office, so at that point, it was very positive. The success we were seeing...he was putting those boundaries together, too, that...you know, we're not going to have a conflict of interest. People sitting on the design review boards can't have more than three buildings a year and take advantage of it, so...

Interviewer: So, there were people actually on the design board who had skin in the game?

D'Amico: Yes. Yeah.

Interviewer: So, they were limited to three?

D'Amico: Well, for many years they hadn't been.

Interviewer: Interesting.

D'Amico: So, you would have architects sit on the board together, and then they'd bring in their own work. They would, I guess, recuse...no, they would present, but they're presenting to their own board members, so you have a little...so, more than three a year, you would say that you're in a position where you're peers with them, and if they're presenting in front of a board, you can see where that, you know..."I'll help you, you help me."

Interviewer: I can see where...

D'Amico: Especially design. It's subjective like that.

Interviewer: It's very subjective.

D'Amico: Yeah. Yes, it is. So, he brought in that kind of standard, but people [phonetic][51:27] weren't respecting Miami for design, so it was kind of an easier sell back then, and then of course it got popular again, and then you're faced with those pressures, because I really stepped back



from the whole preservation, because a couple years ago, Bay Harbor was voted the 11th-most endangered sites, because they were just knocking them down just to spite — like, “We just don't like these old buildings,” and they weren't representing preservation and really what it does.

It became very negative, and an uphill battle, but at the same time there was so much proof, so that got frustrating. Then it ended up that just recently, probably in the last couple years, the only things I've been to were [phonetic][52:21] de-designation building, and designating. So, they're actually taking the designations away, so again, that's a little frustrating. I saw it happening a couple years ago — a number of years ago.

Interviewer: This is for MIMO?

D'Amico: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, the —

Interviewer: These buildings had been designated, but the designation was being taken away?

D'Amico: Yes. Yes.

Interviewer: By...?

D'Amico: City officials worked to have it de-regulated.

Interviewer: The same as giving a variance, in a sense, to...

D'Amico: It's a little after-the-fact. It's part of the process. It is a part of the process that you can designate...you know, someone can say, “I think you should look into this designation,” and then the city planner or the city preservation officer would then do a study, and then they'd come back with a recommendation. “Yes; this is a very significant building. You should...”

So, if that happens and it's recognized as significant, someone can come back and say, “I'm the owner. I have a hardship. I cannot do this.”

Interviewer: They appeal it?

D'Amico: They appeal it, and they appealed the designation, and we saw de-



designation, and it got a little...especially when they're fighting their own neighbors.

Interviewer: This is recently?

D'Amico: Yeah. In the last...I want to say probably about four or five years ago.

Interviewer: Is it still going on?

D'Amico: Yeah. I mean, as far as the development. We had really a lot of pressure from one town — my town, Bay Harbor Islands, that I moved to. They wanted to destroy the entire county-wide preservation ordinance after this came out.

This is one of my favorite articles that came out: the national report in the New York Times. It talks about Mr. Lapidus, and it talks about the MIMO — you know, a push to make old buildings cool again in Miami Beach.

Interviewer: What year was that?

D'Amico: That was 2004.

Interviewer: What is the date on there?

D'Amico: May 16th.

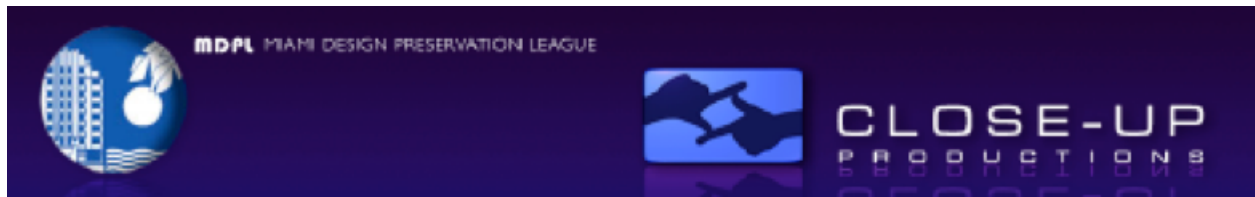
Interviewer: Okay.

D'Amico: And then this...

Interviewer: Carl, if we could get some of these on camera?

D'Amico: So, I have...I mean, it's been fun. You know, the real estate markets, how they talk about MIMO. It was in the London Financial Times. It becomes a tourist destination, and that's what we were always about: the success of Miami as a tourist destination, and that we protect our beautiful skylines in the sky. If the buildings aren't seen in some kind of sunlight...I know that you would probably be pretty disappointed if you didn't have that and you moved to Miami.

I remember Randall saying, "Oh, is it okay? People kind of jump on when it's going to affect them," and I said, "Well, that's where they learn." It's really where the political power is, too, to get involved. You've got to get involved in the community, and understanding what



zoning is going on, and there's so many benefits.

This is the booklet we did for the show in New York City, with the Municipal Art Society, and we raised money for a photography show. We went up with the current commission, and it was [phonetic][56:18] Maddie, [phonetic][56:20] we sent Garcia and [phonetic][56:21] Dermer...they went up, because here New York City was having an art exhibit on Miami Beach architecture, so that was a really wonderful moment. We realized it was all compromised, and if we all stayed involved and if we respected each other, you could get a lot done positively.

Then, one of the things that we did a lot of was maps. So, we created maps with the tours. Basically, if someone was interested, they didn't have to take — so, these were all things that we raised money, and then we got a donation from the North Beach Development Corporation, so we kind of tied those things in.

Here. This is documenting all these buildings. So, Randall — basically, it was Randall and I and [phonetic][57:18] Clotile, and [phonetic][57:20] David Framberger. We would just spend our days in the cars, jotting down and taking pictures so others could appreciate it.

Interviewer: So, looking back on that now, what's your feeling? Are you optimistic?

D'Amico: Yes. They had a vote in my town, and I hadn't been involved, and...

Interviewer: Bay Harbor?

D'Amico: Yeah, and they're starting to understand what new development is. It's called urban planning, okay? People do not realize that there is a profession that understands, you know, between the landscape, between the history, between building and construction methods — you know, what's important to keep. One of the biggest things that was helping us was some of the exiting — you know, evacuation. How big a building do you want? The bigger buildings just aren't respecting the little buildings that are already there. That's all we want: a cohesive, quality development.

This is North Beach. It's just charming as can be. I would recommend riding your bike around there. It's fun.

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